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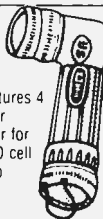


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Sizes - 6 7/8 to 7 3/4. (Not sure of head size? Tell us how many inches around your head where you wear your hat. We'll send the right one) \$13.75/each

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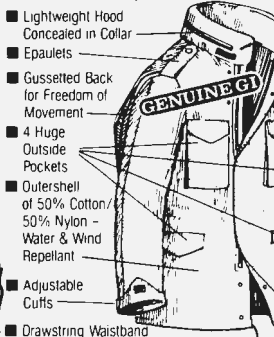
Genuine military clothing isn't the cheapest. But as every ex-GI knows, the clothes seem to last forever, they're very, very warm and designed to be functional.

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

Field Jacket - Type M65

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

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



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Ranger Combat Cap - Woodland Camouflage

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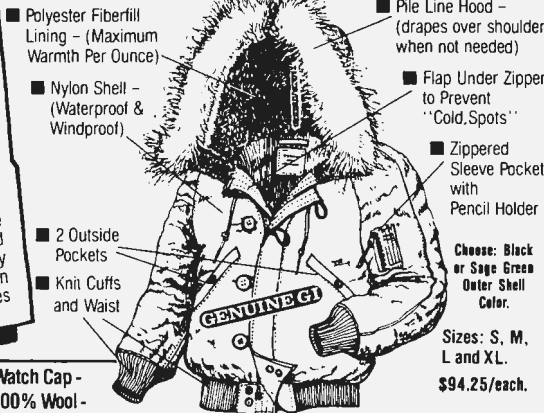
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- Flap Under Zipper to Prevent "Cold Spots"
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Choose: Black or Sage Green Outer Shell Color.

Sizes: S, M, L and XL. \$94.25/each.

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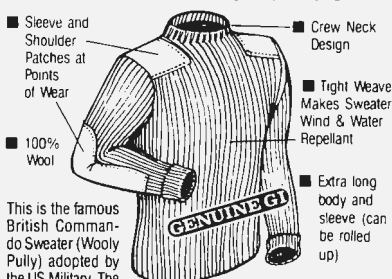


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- Crew Neck Design
- Tight Weave Makes Sweater Wind & Water Repellent
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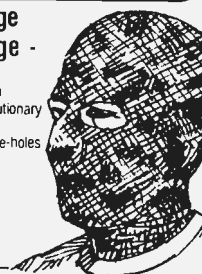
Commando Sweater - Commercially made

patterned after the GI ones, these are commercially made in easy care 100% acrylic. Although they are copies, they are constructed surprisingly true to the all wool ones, complete with sleeve and shoulder patches. Choose between: Olive Drab (OD) Green or Black. Specify Size: S, M, L, XL \$22.75/each.

CAMOUFLAGE

Commando Camouflage Headnet - Spandoflage

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COVER: Snipers have found their place in today's Marine Corps order of battle, due in part to the extraordinary exploits of a single Marine. Carlos Hathcock's 93 confirmed kills during the Vietnam War proved that snipers can form the tip of the commander's spear point in battle. His exploits in Vietnam are the subject of a new book and this month's cover story, "Marine Sniper," beginning on page 64. Join Hathcock in the jungles of northern I Corps as he stalks an NVA general. Photo: Fred Maroon

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

MERCENARY. Derived from the Latin *merces*, meaning wages. A simple enough beginning for a word that has come to mean a hundred things — mostly bad — to a hundred different people. A confused Eugene Hasenfus laid bare before a Nicaraguan People's Tribunal? He's a merc to some. Canadians who joined up to fight in Vietnam? They're mercs to others. Mike Hoare cutting a deadly swath through the Congo? He's probably the closest thing to a mercenary — as I understand the word — that I've ever known.

But the word mercenary seems to embody a lump sum sort of perception on the public's part.

Hairy chested, long on muscle and short on brain, a psychopathic defiler of women and overthrower of governments — just add a knife between the teeth and more than a hint of blood lust in the eyes, and you have the man-on-the-street's TV-dinner view of a merc.

Dictionaries are a bit more pedantic when it comes to defining the word. "Motivated solely by a desire for monetary or material gain," or "hired for service in a foreign army," or "a professional soldier hired by a foreign country." Take your pick. They respectively fit the folks I mentioned above.

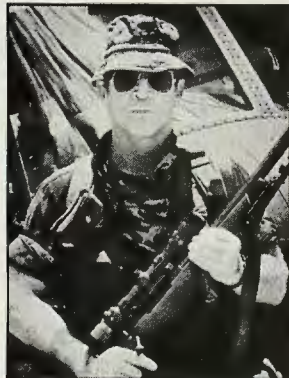
Then again, so do a lot of other people you and I know. People who don't necessarily fit the stereotyped, blood-drenched jacket some call mercenary. People who fight for the hell of it — and for the cause of it.

Why do you think men went to fight in the French Foreign Legion and Lafayette Escadrille in the early days of World War I? For the money? Hell, a couple hundred

francs per month weren't nearly worth the misery of the trenches or the scratch-and-bite dogfights in the air. They went to war for the adventure — and to fight against Prussian Germany.

Or their successors, the Americans who flew in the Polish Kosciuszko Squadron against the Russian Bolshevik invasion in 1920. Rapists and crazed killers? Hardly. Just pilots who thought the underdog should have a fighting chance to survive.

How about the Yanks, including Ernest Hemingway, who flocked to the Spanish Civil War to serve in the international brigades? Their pay was the bloodcurdling screech



of the German Condor Legion's Stukas; their fight was against fascism. That same spirit carried over to the men who flew with the RAF's American Eagle Squadron. They violated U.S. neutrality laws by battling the Nazi blitzkrieg before Uncle Sam officially joined the fray, but they didn't give a damn. The cause was

just, and they knew it.

And in recent decades, a few Americans — undaunted by dark State Department edicts — have still gone off to fight and sometimes die for just causes. In Afghanistan against the Soviets; with the Israelis against fanatic Arab nationalists; as regular soldiers in the Rhodesian security forces fighting Soviet- and Red Chinese-sponsored terrorism; or as volunteer trainers working with the contras against the Marxist regime in Nicaragua — these are men willing to put their lives where their ideology is.

Mercenaries? The image that the word evokes is in the eye of the beholder. To me, they're soldiers of freedom. ✎

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AUTOMATICS: FAST FIREPOWER, TACTICAL SUPERIORITY

by Duncan Long



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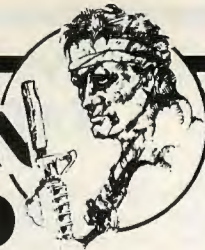
INSURGENCY FLOUNDERS...

Despite limited successes, some communist guerrillas in Colombia and Ecuador appear to be on the ropes. One attempt to improve their cash flow ended with five dead guerrillas.

Kidnap ransoms are second only to drug smuggling as a means for raising revenue for communist insurgency movements. The Ricardo Franco, a violent faction of the Moscow-aligned Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), kidnapped Mrs. Flor Alba de Ocampo, member of a prominent Colombian family, and held her for two months awaiting delivery of almost \$1 million in ransom. But she was freed after the Colombian National Police stormed a house in the Suba district of Bogota and killed the five guerrillas holding her. A police spokesman said that of the 94 persons kidnapped in the country in 1986, 67 remain missing.

But internal dissension apparently is killing more guerrillas than the police. Ricardo Franco faction's leader, Fernando Rey, became convinced that most of his followers were plotting against him. In the resulting violence, the proverbial True Believers killed over 175 of their own number. If that wasn't enough, the Ricardo Franco faction was trounced on yet again by the government, this time by the Colombian armed forces. One SOF source says Rey is hiding out in Panama, licking his wounds, recruiting and seeking financial support from Libya and elsewhere.

BULLETIN BOARD



The Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund continues to help the anti-communist resistance with money and equipment donated through the generosity of SOF readers. The accompanying photo, published by *TIME* Magazine shows mujahideen with Steiner binoculars and radio equipment furnished by SOF. If you want to help, send your donations to: Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund, c/o SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. Please specify if you wish to remain anonymous or would like recognition in Bulletin Board. Photo: *TIME* Magazine

TENSION IN THE FALKLANDS...

Great Britain and Argentina have been rattling sabers again over fishing rights off the Falkland Islands [*Islands Malvinas* if you side with Argentina]. The British, who extended the territorial limits out to 100 miles, have detained three Argentine commercial fishing vessels.

But there are other signs of at least a small improvement in diplomatic relations. Argentine citizen Isaias Gimenez and his daughter were granted permission by the British Foreign Office to fly to the Falklands for the burial of his son, Flight Lieutenant Miguel Angel Gimenez. The wreckage of the Argentine aviator's jet fighter, shot down over four years ago during the 10-week war, was discovered 29 August 1986 by British servicemen on a mountaintop. The body was recovered two days later. Darwin Cemetery, west of the capital of Port Stanley, now holds the bodies of 223 Argentines killed in the conflict.



SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown, left, offers a congratulatory bottle of champagne to Mr. and Mrs. Bill Zukauskas, who were married at the SOF Convention in Las Vegas. She is the former Robbie Morris and serves as a sergeant in the U.S. Army. Bill is employed by Kennedy & Kennedy Law Enforcement, Inc. in Lake Park, Florida.

HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

Richard J. Bednarz, D.W. Millison, Ranse E. Clark in Germany, Daniel W. McGrath, Steve Layman, John Earley in W. Australia, William E. Parker, Michael McChesney, Jimmy Fletcher, D. Gordon Brown, and Paul Stonehill.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund:
Loren Roberts.

Numerous donors requested their name not be printed.



Barry Sadler, Green Beret balladeer, former Special Forces medic and SOF's contributing editor for martial arts, treats an ailing villager near his ranch in Guatemala. Sadler, who was the subject of a July 1986 article in *People Magazine*, continues to publish action novels about men at war. His latest, "The Shooter," was published by Tor Books in January.

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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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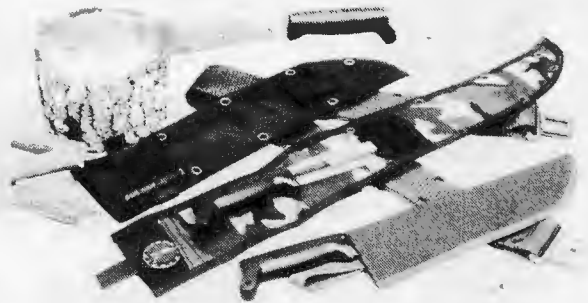
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SOVIETS COPY BLAZER ARMOR...

An Israeli-produced reactive armor capable of neutralizing shaped charges probably is being copied by the Soviets. Israel's so-called Blazer armor comes in box-like sections that bolt to the outside of a tank's main armor. When a Blazer panel is hit by a shaped charge, the armor itself explodes and disrupts the penetrating ability of the anti-tank round. About 70 percent of all modern anti-tank rounds use a shaped-charge concept. Blazer has been highly effective in protecting Israeli tank crews.

But some Blazer-equipped Israeli tanks were disabled in Lebanon in 1982. They were hauled away by Syrians, who turned samples over to their Soviet allies for analysis. Reports in *Jane's Defense Weekly* and elsewhere indicate that the Soviets now are making their own reactive armor based on the captured samples. Soviet T-64 tanks are reported to be equipped with additional box-like panels of reactive armor.

This could spell big trouble for the anti-tank capabilities of NATO forces. NATO, which has far fewer tanks than opposing Warsaw Pact forces, depends heavily on anti-tank weapons to stop any communist thrust into Western Europe. That would be nearly impossible if Warsaw Pact tanks are equipped with reactive armor.



TURNING A BLIND EYE...

Many people wonder why *Soldier of Fortune* would locate its headquarters in a liberal town like Boulder. One reason is all the free entertainment. For instance, there's the case of the benign Boulder bozos who returned from the Soviet Union to hold a press conference about what a good time was had by all. If that wasn't enough to capture our fancy, former city council member and Boulder columnist Paul Danish mirthfully chastised them in the leftist *Colorado Daily* for exercising selective memory in recounting their trip. They neglected to mention, Danish wrote, that they had been detained by the KGB.

Boulder wants to establish the same sister city relationship with a Soviet town that it already has with Jalapa, Nicaragua. So a delegation went to discuss the proposal with civic leaders in Dushanbe, the capital of Soviet Tadzhikistan, the province just north of the border with Afghanistan. On the way, their bus caught up to and began passing a large Soviet military convoy also headed for Dushanbe, the major staging area for military men and equipment bound for war-torn Afghanistan.

Acting like typical American tourists, the Bouldenites began snapping photos through the bus windows ["Oh, look! Look at all the soldiers."]. Given the country and the circumstances, this probably is a very good indication of the precise depth of their naiveté. Their little field trip obviously came to a near-screaming halt as plainclothes security agents hustled them off the bus and into an unmarked building for a couple of hours of questioning. Film presumably was confiscated.

It's fun to imagine what conversation must have ensued. The inquisitors probably wondered inwardly as they eyed the middle-aged hippies and colorfully clad designer yuppies. The wide-eyed Bouldenites no doubt proclaimed their innocence, probably threw in something about peace and the cosmic oneness of humanity, then tried to convince the dour Soviets of how much everyone in the room really had in common.

The do-gooders were released. But when their magical mystery tour got back to the People's Republic of Boulder and held a press conference, no one mentioned the incident. Maybe they were afraid the public might get the right idea about life under communist rule. Fortunately, Paul Danish learned the truth and set the record straight. Apparently ignorance is bliss. And bliss is turning a blind eye. Next case.

REUNIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS...

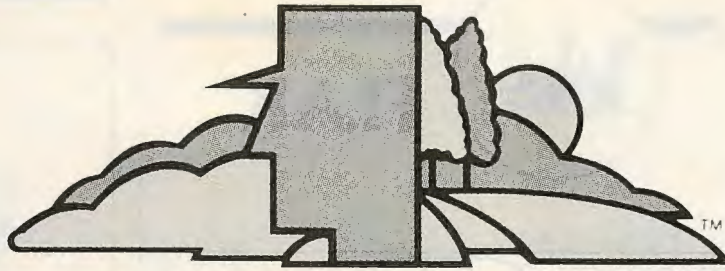
A reunion of Iwo Jima veterans is set for **21 Feb. at 5 p.m.** at the **Camp Pendleton Staff NCO Club**. It is open to veterans of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions and attached units, as well as combat correspondents who covered the most costly battle in Marine Corps history. For further information, call or write: **Jack Claven, 403 Primrose Place, Glendora, CA 91740, phone (818) 335-2483; or Bill Moore, 795 Narwhal St., San Diego, CA 92154, phone (619) 423-0681.**

The following U.S. Army reunions are scheduled as indicated: **3rd Inf. Div., 22-25 Jan.; 4th Inf. Div., 29 Jan-1 Feb.; 8th Inf. Div., 5-8 Feb.; 10th Mtn. Div. & 10th Inf. Div., 12-15 Feb.; 29th Inf. Div., 19-22 Feb.; 34th Inf. Div., 26 Feb.-1 March; 37th Inf. Div., 5-8 March; 40th Inf. Div., 12-15 March.** For further information, call or write: **Phillip Wernick, P.O. Box 14461, Philadelphia, PA 19115, phone (215) 676-7748/673-4489.**

Organizers are seeking volunteers, ideas, suggestions and/or donations to help put together **'Nam Fest '87, tentatively scheduled for May 1987 in Dallas, Texas.** Interested persons should call or write: **Stan Hall, 811 Barnes St., McKinney, TX 75069, phone (214) 542-6095.**

The **11th Armored Cavalry Regiment** will hold its third annual reunion **28-30 May in St. Louis, Missouri.** For further information, write: **David Summers, 3923 Burgen St., St. Louis, MO 63116.**

If you are among the one-third of U.S. military veterans discharged after World War II, Korea, or Vietnam who did not ever receive the medals to which you are entitled, there's a way to still claim your prize. A group of Korean War veterans offers a free brochure telling how *qualified personnel* can claim medals to which they are entitled. Send your letter with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **Korean Veterans International, P.O. Box 52033, Tulsa, OK 74152.** ✕



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F¹ GRENADES...

Sirs:

I have been perplexed for some years over the facts contained in an article that ran in the September 1983 issue of SOF. Sorry to be so long in writing.

In a piece on grenade fuzes by Larry Dring, he describes the zero-second fuze and the problems thereof. Can you tell a neophyte what purpose is served by these fuzes, other than as a booby-trap for the enemy to pick up? Can they ever be thrown, even by a very nimble expert?

Alan F.P. Moyler
Redding,
Connecticut

While researching the subject of guerrilla weapons for his article "Guerrilla Arsenal" (see SOF, August '86), Peter Kokalis had the opportunity to test the "variable fuzes" and had this to say: "Several years ago I was responsible for perpetrating the myth espoused by my friend, the late Larry Dring, to the effect that the UZRG pyrotechnic fuzes on these grenades had variable time delays from zero to thirteen seconds, and were so marked on the fuze body. Not so. I have now thrown at least ten of these grenades and detonated an equal number of UZRG fuzes, variously marked 0, 1, 3, and 7. In every instance the time delay was three to four seconds, exactly as specified. The numbers on the UZRG fuze body do not indicate a time delay."



FLAK



BRIT'S-EYE VIEW...

Sirs:

I have recently read, for the first time, a copy of SOF. Being British, I was drawn to two letters printed in Flak entitled "The Ire of Ireland." After reading these, I felt compelled to write to you.

Mr. Bob Bisbee referred to "British troops performing in Northern Ireland against very nice, proper, Christian people."

Well, Mr. Bob Bisbee, "very nice, proper, Christian people" do not go around blowing up pubs full of innocent people and shops full of Christmas shoppers.

Every evening I go home and listen to the early evening news on television, only to hear that the IRA have shot someone or blown up a few soldiers and/or policemen. Quite frankly I'm sick of it, and I'm sick of Americans passing judgement on Britain. America is 2,000 miles away and doesn't really feel the repercussions of the IRA's cowardly actions.

The troubles in Northern Ireland are centuries old and a solution will not be found until terrorism is condemned by all nations.

Mrs. D. Simpson
Havant, England



THE SHADOWY WORLD OF NEWSWEEK...

Sirs:

I'm writing because of *Newsweek* Magazine's 3 November 1986 cover story, which purports to characterize SOF readers as crazed killers and witless daydreamers. First of all, I would like to say that I am not a bloodthirsty homicidal maniac, nor do I claim to be any type of mercenary. Contrary to popular belief, I read SOF because its articles give an unbiased, factual account of recent and ongoing events in our world today.

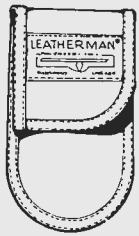
This so-called "action journalism," as *Newsweek* calls it, has more substance in it than any politically motivated article that I have read in a mainstream news magazine like *Newsweek*.

As for *Newsweek's* focus on SOF correspondent Steve Salisbury, it is clear that *Newsweek* picked and chose the details of the incident to help sensationalize their article. Given this kind of incomplete coverage, of course the average American citizen relates to this sort of behavior as if it happened in the streets of the U.S. and not in El Salvador, where things are in a state of confusion and chaos.

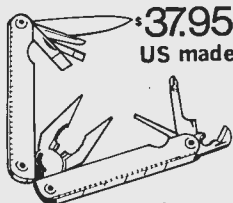
George Wynn
Toledo, Ohio

Thanks for raising the obvious (to SOF readers) point that *Newsweek* overlooked in favor of its sensationalistic exaggeration: SOF provides complete, up-to-date, you-are-there coverage of the conflicts that are changing our world. We report the stories that America should know about, stories that mainstream mags like *Newsweek* don't pick up on until months later because they've been too busy hunting down material that will sell the most copies.

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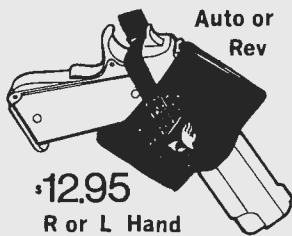


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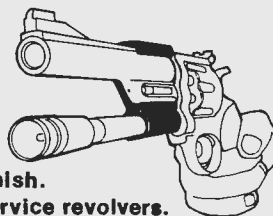
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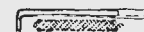
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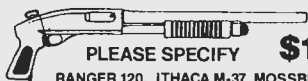
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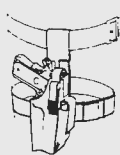
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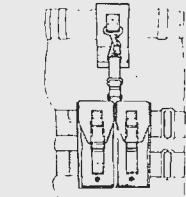
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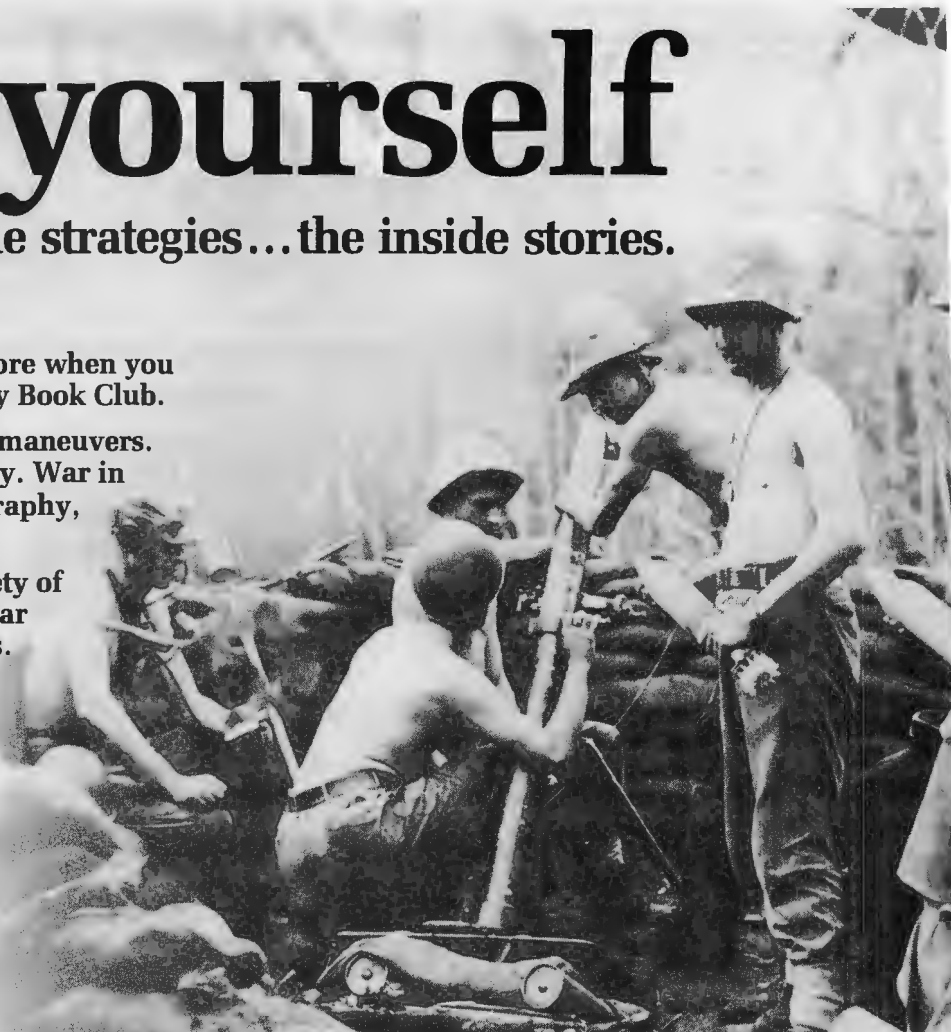
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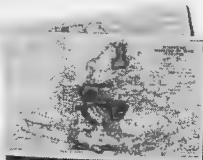
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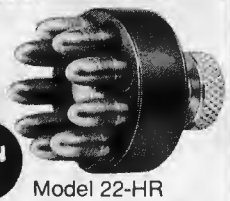
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MISSING RANGERS?...

Sirs:
 A couple of times I've noted references in your interesting magazine to Rangers in the U.S. armed forces during the Vietnam conflict.

The reason I write is I recently found a piece in the British publication *The Elite* stating that there were no Rangers at all in existence during the Vietnam War. I wonder if you'd care to comment on this?

P.O. Jansson
 Katherine N.T., Australia

Even a cursory look through any number of historical references which deal with Vietnam will show that the U.S. Army Rangers served with distinction throughout the war. Confusion about their role sometimes arises because they operated as independent companies attached to higher commands — usually brigades — as per their mission orientation.



"...Okay, men, let's try this one, which is the road to Managua?!"

BAYONET BLUES...

Sirs:
 I am an enlisted man in the U.S. Army. As an infantry soldier I have great interest in your magazine and what it stands for.

When I saw the new bayonet in your September 1986 issue (Bulletin Board), I let out a groan of dismay. Once again I asked myself the question, "Am I going to win with my equipment or in spite of it?" This new technological wonder apparently does everything but attach itself, but is it an improvement over the "old" M7?

If possible, try to obtain one of these multi-purpose knives and run it through its paces.
 V.C. Zvorsky
 Ft. Ord, California

SOF has plans for a T&E of the new bayonet as soon as one becomes available for testing. If nothing more, the services at least still recognize the need for the sharp end of a rifle.

SOF CONVENTION...

Sirs:
 I have just returned from the Seventh Annual SOF Convention in Las Vegas. This was the first of these conventions I have attended. I was so impressed that I felt compelled to write.

I attended the Three Gun Match as a spectator and had a very enjoyable time. The range crew was excellent. They answered my questions and it was obvious that they took great pains to be sure each shooter understood what was required. Range safety was well handled. I have spent time as a firearms instructor and have never seen a range better handled.

The convention activities were well thought out in content and timing. There were seminars of one type or another running for most of each day. Free transportation to the range was convenient and accessible.

The Combat Weapons Expo is certainly worthy of commendation. It was one of the best displays of combat weapons and related equipment I have seen assembled. There were items of interest for the military collector, the shooter or the professional. The expo alone would make it worth attending the convention.

I met a lot of interesting people and made some friends this year. It was my first convention, and it will not be my last.

Scott E. Anderson
 Salem, Oregon

Look for coverage of the Seventh Annual SOF Convention, Combat Weapons Expo and Three Gun Match in the April issue.

VIETNAMESE RESISTANCE...

Sirs:

I need help to support existing Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese resistance units currently fighting the communists in Southeast Asia.

These freedom fighters are not refugees, but are carrying on the fight to free their countries after the collapse of their legal governments.

As a morale boost and to make their already difficult life a little easier, we are preparing small cloth bags, known as "Freedom Fighter Kits," containing hygiene-type items. That is the purpose of this letter — to ask you to donate any or all of the following items: soap, aspirin, razors and blades, band aids, combs, buttons, vitamin tablets, toothpaste, needles, thread, safety pins, small penlights, small pocket knives, chloroquine, toothbrushes, iodine, disposable lighters, and salt tablets (unimpregnated).

If you can help, please send the items to the address below. Your efforts will be appreciated.

Lawrence R. Trapp
Special Assistant for Asian
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United States Council For
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SOF encourages support of the United States Council For World Freedom's efforts to assist these and other anti-communist groups around the world. Those wishing to contribute should send the requested items to Lawrence Trapp, 14815 Black Oak Place, Salinas, CA 93907.



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SOMETIMES there's only a millimeter or two between fame and obscurity. The French MAS Model 1938 submachine gun was compact, reliable and in many ways a brilliant design — all ingredients of a great weapon. But it was wrapped around one of the most feeble pistol cartridges ever stuffed into a burp gun's magazine. Only slightly more powerful than the .32 ACP, the woeful 7.65mm French Long round doomed the MAS Model 1938 to undeserved oblivion.

Adopted by the French Army in 1938, it was developed and manufactured by *Manufacture d'Armes de St. Etienne* (MAS), based on the Type SE-MAS 1935 prototype. Few of these were produced and the earlier model differed only by virtue of its skeletonized buttstock fabricated from tubular steel and sheet metal. Production of the Model 38 was continuous from 1938 through 1949. Limited production was maintained during the World War II German occupation of France, when it was issued to Vichy French forces and German occupation units. Its German designation was 7.65mm MP 722(f). Substantial numbers were brought to Indochina by French troops and quite a few of them ended up in Charlie's hands.

Firing from the open-bolt position by means of unlocked blowback, the Model 38's receiver is pitched at a slight downward angle to the barrel's axis. The bolt moves in a cylindrical recess in the receiver body. As it recoils rearward it drops into a tube in the wooden buttstock that contains the recoil spring. The bolt face is cut at an angle to mate correctly with the barrel's chamber. When the bolt returns in counter-recoil, it must travel up an incline, which diverts enough energy to lower the cyclic rate to 600 rpm. This permitted the designers to reduce the bolt's mass to a minimum. Forty years later, this modified principle was applied to the Finnish JATI submachine gun (see "JATI," SOF, April '85).

At only 6.38 pounds, empty, the Model 38 was the lightest submachine gun of its era. An 8.8-inch barrel, with four grooves and a right-hand twist, was threaded and indexed to the forged receiver. The receiver and all other metal components were phosphate finished. Overall length is only 24.9 inches, including its non-retractable buttstock. This is just one-tenth of an inch longer than the German MP40 with its stock folded.

There are a number of other unique features on the Model 38 SMG, not the least of which are found in the trigger mechanism. The trigger housing itself resembles that of the Lewis Gun. There is no selector or provision for semiauto-



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

MAS Model 1938 — Almost Perfect



The French MAS Model 1938 SMG and Model 1935A pistol in 7.65mm French Long.

matic fire. However, with a cyclic rate of only 600 rpm, an experienced operator can fire two-shot bursts with consistency. To engage the safety, the shooter must push the trigger forward and up. This locks the bolt in either the retracted or closed position. Since the bolt travels well behind the sear, down into the stock tube, by the time it has returned to the sear in counter-recoil, considerable momentum has been generated. To prevent damage to the sear, the sear itself rides on a strange spring-loaded buffer — a feature found on no other submachine gun.

Both the retracting handle and its ejection-port dust cover are non-reciprocating and must be placed to the rear during firing sequences, so that a lug on the retracting handle remains disengaged from the bolt. There is also a hinged dust cover, of dubious value, over the magazine well.

In some versions, the firing pin has been machined into the bolt face. On most examples I have observed, it's a detachable pin which nevertheless remains fixed as the system fires by advanced primer ignition; i.e., the car-

tridge is fired just prior to complete chambering, before the bolt has stopped moving forward. It's more cost effective to replace a broken firing pin than a complete bolt body. A substantial milled extractor, pivoted by a heavy coil spring, grabs the case groove with unusual firmness.

Disassembly of the Model 38 poses no problems. Remove the magazine (the magazine catch release-button is located on the left side of the magazine well). Clear the weapon by retracting the bolt, then move it forward to the closed position, under control. Push the spring-loaded buttstock catch on the underside of the stock assembly and rotate it to the right until the interrupted threads disengage. Separate the buttstock and recoil spring from the receiver. Pull the trigger to lower the sear and withdraw the trigger group from the receiver. Retract the cocking handle and slide the bolt out of the rear of the receiver. Drift out the large retaining pin on the bolt body and withdraw the bolt's counter-weight. The firing pin will then drop out the rear of the bolt body. Both the extractor and spring can be removed by punching out their small, hooked retaining pin. Disassembly of the magazine is self-evident. No further disassembly is

necessary as the trigger group can be cleaned without removing its components.

The buttstock is fitted to the receiver by means of interrupted threads, in a manner reminiscent of the Solothurn Model 1930 light machine gun. Date of manufacture and arsenal are usually stamped on the right side of the buttstock with the serial number on the left side. Quality of wood varies and, because the bolt group and recoil spring reciprocate in a steel tube within the stock, cracked buttstocks are common. Two wood screws hold the unchecked, steel buttplate in place. A fixed sling swivel has been screw-mounted over a recess on the stock's left side. A simple leather sling, typical of the era, was attached to this swivel and a "saddle ring"-type swivel mounted to a stud on the left side of the receiver. The tapered end of this stud passes through the receiver wall to serve as the ejector.

Because the stock is in a straight line with the receiver's axis, high-profile sights were required. They're not high enough and you really have to crawl the stock to align them properly. Both are offset to the left. The wide, fixed-blade front sight is equipped with a peculiar narrow square notch. This must be aligned with a double-leaf aperture rear



The cartridge that doomed the French MAS Model 38 to obscurity. Left, an original 7.65mm French Long, with a Cartridge Specialties custom load on the right.

sight. The front leaf is marked for 200 meters, the rear for 100 meters. Raising either will lower the other. There is no provision for the adjustment of windage or elevation zero.

Most submachine gun magazines of

this period were of the single-position-feed type (Sten, MP40, M3A1). They cannot be loaded by hand without difficulty and are prone to stoppages. Like those of the Italian Beretta series of submachine guns, the Model 38 magazine is a more efficient two-position-feed design. Less bolt energy is required to strip rounds from this type of magazine and a loading device is not required. Of sheet-metal construction, the Model 38 magazine



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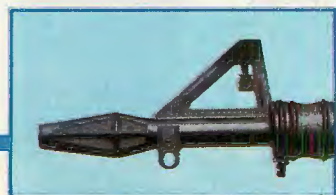
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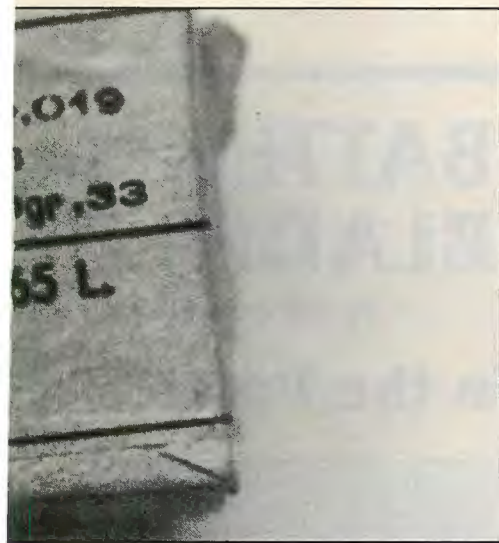
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holds 32 rounds.

But 32 rounds of what? Most authorities believe that the 7.65mm French Long pistol cartridge is a copy of the .30 Pederson round (developed for the so-called Pederson device, designed in 1917 to replace the Springfield 1903 rifle bolt and operate the weapon as a semiautomatic blowback). First produced for the French Model 1935A pistol — thousands of which have recently been imported as

a result of the Dole Amendment — it should not be confused with the Luger or Browning cartridges of identical caliber designation. Original factory ammo featured a Berdan primed steel case with five grains of cut sheet flake-powder behind an 85-grain steel-jacketed projectile with a lead core. Although this ammunition (head-stamped 'VE 1946') charges out of my Model 38's barrel with an average velocity of 1,328 fps, it cannot be trusted to stop anything larger than rodents. Furthermore, this ammunition is almost impossible to locate at shooters' prices and more than 30 percent of the time your firing pin will strike a dead primer.

Not to worry. You can shoot your Model 38 SMG or Model 1935A pistol. Richard Doolittle of Cartridge Specialties (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 28067, Detroit, MI 48228) answers the call of those who can't keep their fingers off the triggers of ancient military small arms. Starting with .32 S&W Long cases, Richard cooked up 1,000 rounds of 7.65mm French Long for SOF using 3.5 grains of Bullseye (very close to the original .30 Pederson loading) and 100-grain half-jacketed .30 caliber "plinker" bullets. This gentle load chugs out of the Model 38 at only

950 fps, but with enough energy to operate the weapon reliably. Dr. Doolittle custom loads an amazing assortment of strange numbers at reasonable prices.

When employed at the short ranges best suited to submachine guns, the Model 38 is very accurate. Felt recoil is nonexistent and muzzle climb is imperceptible with two- to three-shot bursts. If the correct stance is used, all shots in a short string will be hits — very close together. Except for its sights, there is little to complain about.

During the late 1950s a substantial quantity of these submachine guns were imported and sold through the mail as "dewats" (deactivated war trophies) for \$39.95. Some of those that were registered during the November 1968 amnesty were subsequently legally reactivated. Current prices range from \$650 to \$800.

Light, handy, accurate and innovative, the French MAS Model 1938 exhibited numerous desirable characteristics lacking in most of the submachine guns designed during its time. But cursed by the 7.65mm cartridge, it was adopted by no other country. If only it had been chambered for the more efficient 9mm Parabellum round. ❧

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Magazine, empty	14 oz.	RH 6 GROOVES
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LENGTH		SIGHT RADIUS
Stock folded	29.8 in.	12.2 in.
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A FIGHTING knife is deceptively simple in appearance. The casual observer who looks at a fighting knife sees a double- or single-edged blade with a sharp point, a type of crossguard and some form of handle. To most people, the majority of combat blades look about the same, and the assumption in most quarters is that one knife works about as well as another. Many modern knives are designed and made on the basis of visual appeal, and very little real thought goes into what works and why.

Men who really know knives are aware that there is a big difference between the majority of knives and those few knives that really work. Truly great knives are hard to come by, and a knife that falls into this category does not happen by accident. It's the product of the analysis of need and function, and a blend of applied physics and engineering. It is devoid of fantasy, hype, and stupidity, and every aspect of it, no matter how small, is executed with care. Attention to detail is the name of the game. Subtle, often unseen touches provide real performance gains in a knife blade, and a good example of this is to be found in the point of your knife and the way that it's constructed.

The point of a combat knife is probably the most misunderstood and misused part of it. It's certainly the most abused. It should be designed to give maximum slashing performance, as a man is most vulnerable to a slashing attack, and the last two inches of your blade are the most efficient if used properly. Here's why.

Reach is vital in a knife fight. If you can cut your enemy at a greater distance, you minimize your own risk and exposure. A cutting, slashing point lets you work at a greater distance from your opponent. Also, as a blade is swung, the point more or less follows the path of a circle, and the velocity or speed of the point is greater than that of other parts of the blade. This means that a properly shaped point will cut with the advantage of superior velocity. The idea, then, is to shape the point so that it takes full advantage of the properties of reach and speed. Here's how it's done, and how a little additional touch gives a superior and devastating backstroke capability.

A first-rate fighting knife should have a sharpened clip point that's concave in shape, and that means double-edged daggers are out. There's a very good reason for the concave clip — its shape hooks or pulls itself into what it's cutting. If you doubt this, look at the claws and fangs of the birds and beasts of prey; Mother Nature puts curved cutting instruments on her predators because they are the most efficient. Or



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

To the Point



A concave, sharpened clip point coupled with a rounded knife tip can give you the optimum edge in a knife-on-knife contest.

just talk to a guy who lays carpet and linoleum for a living and look at his carpet knife. The carpet knife blade is little more than a pointed hook that is sharpened on the inside of its curve. It is made this way because it cuts rather than slides when moved through the medium that is to be cut.

Daggers and single-edged knives with clips that are convex or spear point in shape simply do not dig in and bite at the point when used in a slicing or slashing attack. On the other hand, the concave clip point gives the capability of an extremely effective backstroke with a simple backward snap of the wrist. A properly executed combat blade with a well-made concave clip point will inflict very real and lethal damage on the backstroke. This is a quality not to be overlooked in a fighting knife. A single-edged blade finds itself at a serious disadvantage when

called on to go head-to-head against a knife like the bowie, which has an effective clip point.

There is another aspect of this business of proper point shape which is extremely subtle and not readily apparent unless the very tip of the blade is examined carefully and closely. The point of a proper fighting knife is not needle sharp. Close examination of a properly constructed point reveals that it's actually rounded, and that the knife is sharpened around the point. This radius is so small that it cannot be seen unless you're looking for it, and in a photograph of the blade it's not apparent at all. It may look as if it has a needle point, but as I said, subtle touches yield real performance gains. The rounded point is far superior to the needle point because it cuts and slices while the needle point has to tear its way through. On a given stroke, either forehand or backhand, the properly designed and executed blade will slice and cut to the full extent of its blade length.

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that's an unwise and generally dangerous move. If you're close enough to your opponent to stab him, he's close enough to grab you. You may kill him first, but he may get in a potentially fatal wound before you can disengage yourself. While the tactic of stabbing may be generally ill-advised, the point design we're talking about lends itself very well to this use.

The point on a properly designed fighting knife is located on the centerline of the axis of thrust. This is not necessarily the center of the blade, but it is the center of applied force as it comes through the handle and travels up the blade. This concentrates pressure directly over the point, and the concave clip provides a narrow point well-suited for penetration. This, coupled with the fact that the tip of the point is sharpened so that it cuts and slices, enables the point to slip itself inside the target with minimum resistance. A combat knife with a properly shaped and sharpened clip point does in fact pierce and penetrate flesh nearly as well as a dagger, and the resulting wound channel from the bowie-style blade is larger than that from the dagger.

For all its strong points, the clip style of blade does have one shortcoming: The point shape, if carried to an extreme and overblown in its proportions, is structurally weak. The key issue here is adequate strength, and a slight clip gives the requisite geometry for efficient cutting on the backstroke. It's the extreme clip with the pronounced concavity of shape that produces the point which is prone to snap. In actual practice, problems seldom occur with the point of any knife, regardless of shape — if the knife is properly used.

Most knife points break off when someone uses the blade as a crowbar. A knife is a cutting instrument, and a top-of-the-line fighting or survival blade represents an advanced form of technological development. A blade that opens tin cans is not as valuable as one that may be called upon for use against man or beast in deadly combat. Your combat blade is a serious implement designed for serious work, and should be used and cared for as such.

In a nutshell, the point on your combat or survival knife should be one that will do the greatest amount of damage to flesh in the shortest amount of time. The superior qualities of the sharpened concave clip point, placed on the centerline of the axis of thrust and sharpened around the point, are such that they give the blade's user a very real — and even lifesaving — advantage in a knife fight. Given a choice in the matter, a thinking man will select those tools and weapons that make his work easier and safer. That is why my front-line knife has a sharpened concave clip point. ✕



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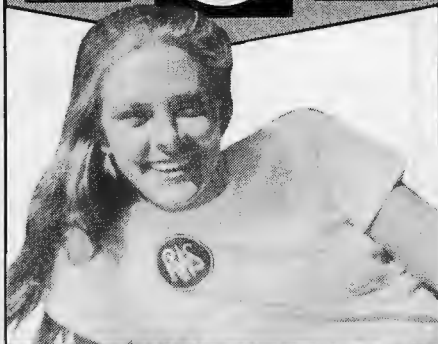
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I WAS THERE

by William Stodgel

Wading through the War



Two battle-weary Marines take cover from the downpour during the monsoon season. Photo: Dept. of Defense

THE climate in Vietnam comes in two phases — rainy and hot, or dry and hotter. If I had to choose between the two, I'd go for the dry season. It's much more bearable than the continuous rains of the monsoon season. Psychologically, the rain gradually digs and picks its way into your consciousness until you either love it or hate it. There is no in-between.

When it rains in Vietnam it's nothing like the showers we have in the United States. The Vietnamese downpour falls in blinding sheets that permeate every aspect of daily living. It's a veritable deluge upon your being. You eat and sleep rain for months on end. It is an all-encompassing downpour with little respite.

While waiting for your meal to be served you must hold your mess kit upside down to keep it dry. Once you've gotten your food, you have to run for cover or everything will be afloat within a matter of seconds. If you choose to sleep on the ground, you had better sleep with your head uphill on a slope or you're apt to find yourself adrift. Should you be fortunate enough to have a cot, you must first pour the water out of it and then lie down. Canvas holds water quite well.

After a few weeks it begins to affect your equipment as well. If you don't maintain your weapons on a daily basis, they quickly turn to rust. Your jungle boots rot off your feet and your fatigues wear out faster than normal. If you store anything in your duffle bag, you'll remove it to find green fungus growing its way into the material.

But the worst part is that Charlie likes to maneuver in the rain. He likes the rain because it is concealment personified. How can you hear the enemy skulking about with the noise of a torrential rain beating on the jungle's foliage? The Western mind just doesn't seem to cope with that much water.

In the end, you are virtually inundated. You find your soul taken, as if by an undertow; drawn unavoidably to the point where you are one with the cascade. Your mind is enraptured with the cool, liquid symphony.

A haunting summer's downpour back in The World is never the same again. ☘

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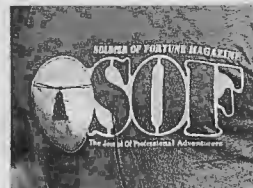
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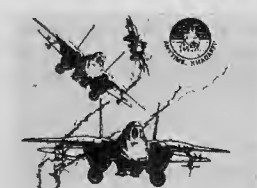


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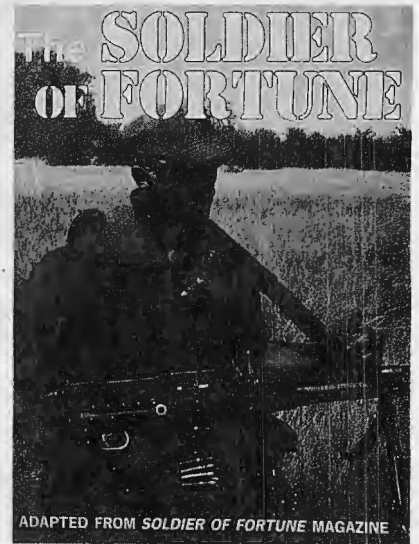
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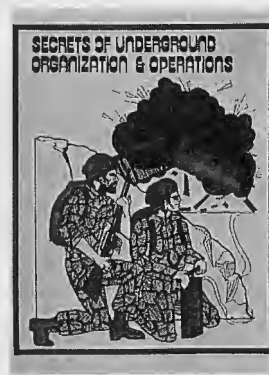
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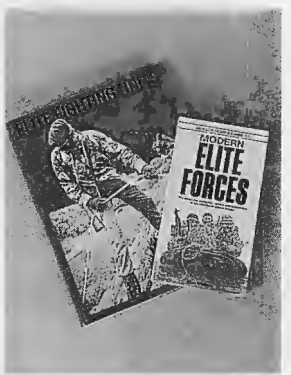
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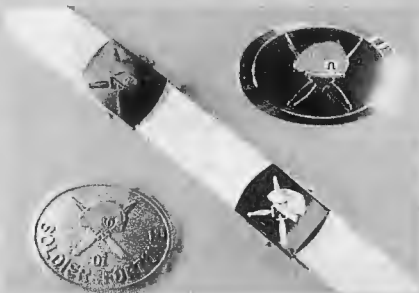


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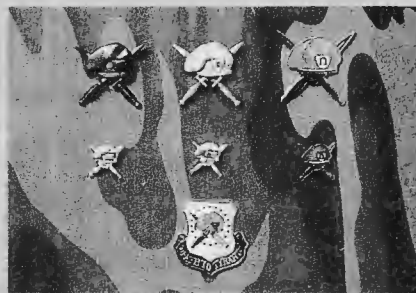
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THE PARAS. By Frank Hilton. British Broadcasting Corporation, U.S. edition available from Presidio Press, 31 Pamaron Way, San Francisco, CA 94947. 1986. 248 pp. \$18.95.

COMBAT has never been far away for Great Britain's Parachute Regiment, be it in the Falklands or just across the water in Northern Ireland. And wherever the paras go, success is not far behind.

Much of that success can be attributed to the regiment's tough, well-trained soldiers. In 1981 Frank Hilton, in conjunction with the British Broadcasting Corporation, followed a platoon of prospective paras through their training at Aldershot. The result was a BBC television series, followed by **The Paras**, a companion book to the program.

Hilton's book focuses on the 41 would-be paras who make up the training group of Platoon 480. Hilton follows the "crows" from their arrival at Browning Barracks to their graduation seven long months later. Between descriptions of the recruits and their training are chapters that focus on the history of airborne forces. These flashbacks give the reader a sense of historical perspective and a notion of the traditions that apprentice soldiers aspire to uphold.

Only 21 of the original platoon went on to become paras, while the remainder ended up in other regiments, at home — or in the hospital. The men who survived the training are really what this book is all about. Why and how they survived is as interesting as it is entertaining, and that makes **The Paras** well worth reading.

IN REVIEW



MAIN SELECTION, MILITARY BOOK CLUB

MARINE SNIPER

93 CONFIRMED KILLS

CHARLES HENDERSON

MARINE SNIPER: 93 CONFIRMED KILLS. By Charles Henderson. Stein and Day/Publishers, Dept. SOF, Scarborough House, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510. 1986. 274 pp. \$18.95. Review by John Aquilino.

AFTER every war, the United States military rushes to distance itself from its snipers. The same men called upon to perform impossible missions during combat quickly find themselves to be peacetime pariahs. World War I, World War II, Korea. It was the same. As soon as the shooting stopped, snipers, their equipment and training

vanished. Vietnam may have changed that. In fact, two Marines might be credited with reversing an unfortunate military tradition. Only history will tell.

Marine Sniper is the story of those Marines.

Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Norman Hathcock II is the hero of the book. Carlos Hathcock is a hero in the eyes of those who know him, who served with him or who received the benefit of his training in Vietnam or later at the U.S. Marine Corps Scout/Sniper Instructor School at Quantico, Virginia.

Hathcock's exploits are fascinating reading. He and his commanding officer, then Captain E.J. "Jim" Land, hunting "The Apache," a female Viet

Cong platoon leader who left her mark on the mutilated bodies of young Marines. Hathcock stalking the NVA's top sniper, a man totally consumed with killing Long Tra'ng (White Feather), the name given Hathcock by the Viet Cong. A man so good that Hathcock soon found himself stalked. The prey.

Hathcock's story is more than the story of one man. It's the story of snipers and sniping. It's the story of a common man from Arkansas doing uncommon work. A master of marksmanship. A genius of the sniper's craft. And it's the story of his commanding officer, fighting to keep the lessons of history and Vietnam alive in the form of the Quantico-based scout/sniper school.

The book's foreword, written by Jim Land, talks about the sniper and Hathcock. He calls the sniper the big-game hunter of the battlefield. He talks of the special courage of the sniper. The courage of being alone. Courage born of honor and discipline, and of respect for one's mission, comrades and enemy. Hathcock had it all.

Henderson's book is a main selection of the Military Book Club. It's must reading for anyone with even a passing interest in history, warfare and the human experience. **Marine Sniper**

doesn't end in Vietnam; it really doesn't end once the last page is read.

Hathcock's kinship with the reader is built by his courage on the battlefield, his personal decency, and by the gripping story of his fight to beat the odds after sustaining massive burns saving fellow Marines from a flaming amtrac. Hathcock the burn victim struggling to again function as a Marine and as a competitive shooter is as moving as any of his combat encounters. **Marine Sniper** has the uncanny effect of leaving Hathcock with yet one more friend and admirer — the reader.

OVER THE BEACH: THE AIR WAR IN VIETNAM. By Zalin Grant. W.W. Norton & Company, Dept. SOF, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110. 1986. 311 pp. \$18.95.

AS Vietnam War literature proliferates, choosing between countless new books becomes an increasingly difficult task. Among the current wave — most of which are dying the quick death they deserve — there occasionally surfaces one that offers some-

thing new and worthwhile. **Over the Beach: The Air War in Vietnam** fits into this category.

The subtitle is somewhat misleading. **Over the Beach** is not a blow-by-blow account of the air war in Southeast Asia. Instead, it focuses on a group of carrier pilots as they attempt to destroy the Co Trai bridge south of Hanoi. What makes this air-ground battle unique is that they go after the bridge on the same day in three different years: 1966, 1967 and 1970.

But this is more than just an airborne adventure book. **Air War** offers a telling glimpse into the lives of the men who flew in harm's way. By dealing with the air war's big picture within the context of three missions, author Grant has managed to portray these men in a way that evokes empathy and understanding. In developing their characters, Grant has neatly encapsulated the experiences of American airmen and the war they fought against North Vietnam. The frustrating and oftentimes fruitless nature of the conflict becomes painfully clear.

Over the Beach is a welcome and needed addition to the growing body of work on the Vietnam War. If you want a high-speed glimpse into the air war we waged against North Vietnam, this book is it. ✎

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IT'S been a long two hours. Private Jones went on guard duty at 0200; he's looking forward to a warm bunk when he gets off duty at 0400.

The post is on alert tonight — intel reported a possible enemy recon patrol in the area. And to make matters worse, a friendly patrol is expected to be coming in around 0330.

Sure enough, at exactly 0330, Pvt. Jones hears noise 25 meters ahead of his position. What Pvt. Jones does from this point on will have a direct impact on whether or not he'll be around for breakfast. An incorrect use of the password — sign and countersign — could cause a breach in the perimeter, resulting in many pointless casualties, including his own. Let's look at some of the considerations Pvt. Jones has to keep in mind when using signs and countersigns.

In choosing a password, care should be taken that it can't be guessed by the enemy. For example: if the sign is "Mickey," possible answers are 1) "Mouse" and 2) "Mantle." Too easy for the enemy to guess. Therefore, the countersign must bear no clear relationship to the sign whatsoever. A more secure combination would be "fork" — "door." The use of "door" cannot be guessed by using the word "fork" because there is no causal connection between these words.

Along these same lines, an even better system is to use the numerical password. I first learned about this system with the Rhodesian SAS in Africa. It goes like this: The password, for example, is "nine." When the sentry challenges the oncoming party with "Halt four," the correct response must be "five," since four plus five equals nine.

It's important not to use even numbers because it is possible for the enemy to guess at the proper response. For instance, if the numerical password were "eight," and the sentry challenges with "four," the person responding might assume that he should match that number. His reply, "four," would unwittingly complete the password, allowing an enemy to breach the security perimeter. The result of such a problem doesn't even need to be mentioned.

So by always using an odd-numbered password (less than 10 for simplicity's sake), randomness in the system is maintained and there is no way to luck into a correct response. However, it is also important that the actual pass number itself *never* be used ("nine" and "zero," for instance) since that would automatically compromise the password.

Let's now turn our attention to using the sign/countersign, remembering that this is a method of *positive* recognition at night. In the following exam-



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

Password by the Numbers



All the sandbags and concertina wire in the world won't prevent a breach in the perimeter if the enemy figures out your sign/countersign procedure. Photo: Dept. of Defense

ple, the numerical password "seven" will be used.

After the sentry is alerted to a presence in his area, he challenges with: "Halt, who goes there?" (It's important that the sentry be behind cover with his weapon at the ready.)

The senior man in the patrol then identifies himself: "Sunray 22." The sentry, in a low voice, then gives the sign: "Two." Sunray 22 should reply with "five" to complete the password. (Other combinations could have been one and six, three and four, etc., but never seven and zero.) If Sunray 22 doesn't give the correct reply, he will be met with a hail of bullets.

If the reply is correct, the sentry will tell the senior patrol leader to lay down his weapon and advance, with his hands in the air, to be recognized. After the sentry makes a positive identification of this unarmed patrol leader, he must then determine the total number of patrol members. If Sunray 22 says that there are a *total* of four men in his group, the sentry will tell the remaining

members to advance, and he must count each man as he passes by. The patrol leader remains with the sentry and counts with him, giving positive identification to each of his men. This simple control mechanism prevents the enemy from slipping one of its men into the friendly patrol. If more men are counted than should be there, a firefight is likely to occur. Under no circumstances can the sentry allow the defensive perimeter to be breached.

Small patrols should also have their own password system among themselves, even though there are only a few members. I remember once in the SAS when a patrol member went to take a leak only a few meters from where he was sleeping. Upon finishing, he was challenged by the sentry. Since they didn't have a password between them, the net result was one dead trooper, a compromised patrol and no enemy casualties.

Use of the sign/countersign avoids breaches in security and the needless loss of life that usually accompanies it. If you've ever been challenged by a sentry, you know the instant anxiety that comes with it. However, with proper use of the system you will be spared the humbling experience of being shot in your sleeping bag. ☒

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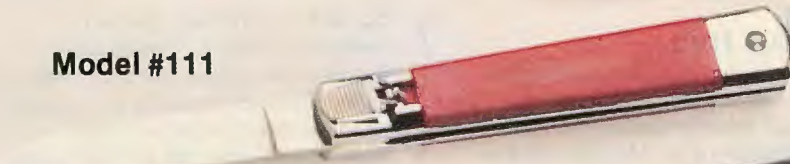
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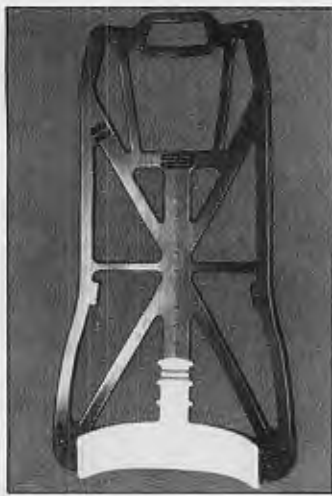
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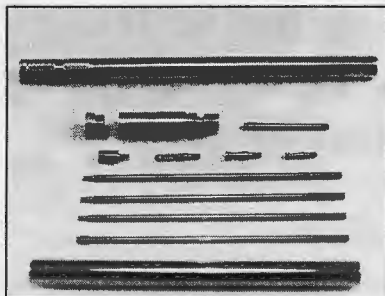
Lowe offers two bags for the new frame. Both attach to the frame via a drawstring and grommets. This

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For more information, contact Ray Sharrah, Streamlight, Inc., Dept. SOF, 1030 W. Germantown Pike, Dept. 62, Norristown, PA 19403. Phone: (215) 631-0600.

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LEBANESE AIRBORNE

Dropping in on Trouble

Text & Photos by Ned Kelly

PARATROOPS in Beirut? Well, with all the foreign military types I saw running around Lebanon during an earlier visit in 1983, I wasn't too surprised to see a variety of wings pinned to various international chests.

There were Marines from the Air Delivery Team of the Marine Service Support Group air-dropping cargo and then jumping in after it, and French Foreign Legion and Italian Army paras putting on performances of free-fall lunacy over the devastated city.

What *did* give me a bit of a surprise, though, was the fact that there are two units of the Lebanese Forces (LF)/Christian Militia with airborne status, as well as quite a few militiamen who have completed para school on an individual basis.

Parachute training for the LF began with a military assistance program run by

the Israelis, following their alliance with Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Lebanese Forces and who later went on to become Lebanon's president.

The Israelis started off their limited military assistance program on a strictly "cash and carry" basis. They offered officer training courses for platoon and company leaders of the LF, and some of these Christian officers were also allowed to attend the Israeli jump school as a form of aggression training during their stay in Israel. Later, other LF troops also attended jump school while they underwent various other types of specialized training in Israel.

Initial version of 101 Parachute Company shoulder patch shows parachute, bloodied double-edged jagged sword, and an attacking phoenix. The phoenix was chosen because, as myth has it, the bird can never be killed.

At that stage, ground training was conducted by Israeli PJIs (Parachute Jump Instructors) inside Christian Lebanon. Since that time, however, the LF have relied upon their own ground training school, and there are rumors that selected militiamen are attending jump schools outside of Lebanon. (Unconfirmed reports suggest that LF/militia troops may be jumping in France and South Africa.) And some LF officers, who first served in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) before joining the Christian militia, completed airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and still wear their U.S. Army jump wings.

101 Parachute Company

In March 1984 a parachute unit was formed to give departing members of specialized units of the LF —

77 Special Force Battalion, Magaweir Commando Unit, Anti-Tank Commando Battalion, Commando Engineer Company and Beirut Special Force — an incentive to stay in-service and comprise a "best of the best" fighting outfit.

It was called 101 Parachute Company, and the LF claim the unit's title was inspired by the legendary Israeli 101 commando unit. The LF's 101 company has been given the role of working behind enemy lines on operations in the traditional role of Ranger and other commando units: long-range recon patrols, raiding enemy garrisons, destroying vital bridges and other communications



Beret/cap badge of 101 Parachute Company features wings of the phoenix, parachute, sword with double jagged edge and hand grenade as its handle.



Current shoulder patch of 101 Parachute Company. Delta symbol (triangle within a circle) denotes military wing of the LF.



Unit flag of 101 Parachute Company.



assets, and just generally disrupting enemy operations.

While the company is trained to parachute into the enemy's rear areas, it has to date infiltrated by foot through the mountains that run the length and breadth of most of Lebanon. And, when the situation calls for it, 101's paras also fill the bill as a first-class assault unit. They can provide the LF with a frightening spearhead in any conventional, but difficult, infantry attack.

Members of this unit are hand picked, and the training is both thorough and brutally tough. Christian militiamen who wanted to volunteer for 101 first heard of it through a notice on the bulletin boards of every Christian barracks in Lebanon. Those men who

Israeli jump wings. Early Lebanese Forces parachute ground training was handled by Israeli parachute jump instructors inside Lebanon; troops then went to Israel to complete their training.



Training for LF 101 Parachute Company is rugged — and realistic. Only the best of LF special unit personnel will pass the stringent selection process.

fancied the idea of operating behind the lines reported to the 101 Parachute Company barracks to begin selection.

After an initial weeding out process, the selection course itself runs for three to four months and includes the usual ration of nonstop physical harassment — gut-busting pack and rifle runs, week-long cross-country forced marches, and the ever-present and continuous PT — as well as a program of mental harassment in the form of POW and interrogation training. Those who cannot resist the tough methods employed by the 101 cadre staff return to their old unit, no questions asked.

Successful completion of the selection course does not necessarily mean

acceptance. Only the best of those who complete the course are chosen.

(There was, for a short period, unofficial American involvement with the training of 101 personnel. Some U.S. Ranger and Special Forces types who had served in Lebanon as instructors to the Lebanese Army during its rebuilding phase of 1982-1984 turned up again after their discharge to help train LF forces.)

Once accepted into 101, new paratroopers are presented with a maroon beret and shoulder patch. They then continue with a program of specialized unit training designed to equip them with the skills they'll need while operating deep inside Muslim areas. They're trained on explosives, guerrilla warfare, all manner of weapons used by both friend and foe including armor,

101 para issues instructions during clearing operations. Although they haven't yet deployed by parachute, these special warfare troops carry out most other commando- or Ranger-type missions inside, and out, of Lebanon.

various anti-tank devices, scuba gear and techniques, mountain and snow operations, and waterborne operations, in addition to parachuting.

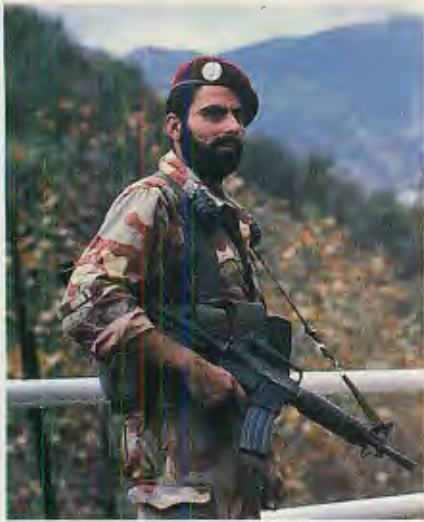
In the LF order of battle, 101 Parachute Company is a relatively new unit. While it is made up mostly of battle-seasoned veterans of other elite units of the LF, all of whom have a long list of combat experiences, the company does not have many battle honors of its own. It did fight in the south of Lebanon in 1985,



Original version of Lebanese Forces parachute wings, sewn above right breast pocket.



Current issue Lebanese Forces parachute wings are similar to the French version, but with LF Delta symbol replacing French star at base of the rigging lines.



Christian para on patrol in the mountains of Lebanon. Paras have adopted the camouflage worn by Italy's Folgore Parachute Brigade.

in the vicinity of Sidon, when the PLO attacked the Nahr Saitanik river valley and captured the little Christian village of Darb Es Sim. The task of recovering this lost ground was given to 101. It counterattacked, and within two hours of the most vicious fighting of the Sidon campaign, recaptured the village. The airborne troopers capitalized on the momentum of their initial success by pressing their attack up the nearby steep hillside and into the overlooking PLO camp at Miye Ou Miye. The PLO were completely routed by 101 and fled, leaving many of their dead behind.



Sadem shock troop patch is the only patch worn on the right shoulder in the Lebanese Forces.



Parachute landing fall training for 101 Parachute Company recruits. All ground training is now handled inside Lebanon; unconfirmed reports have actual jump training taking place in South Africa and France.

With proven success in battle, 101 now maintains a high profile presence in the current round of fighting — fighting that started in mid-January 1986 against Syrian Army regulars and the various pro-Syrian militias. Ever since the victory of Amin Gemayel (Christian chief of the Kataeb Party's militia and

Metal version of Lebanese Forces parachute wings are currently restricted to officers only.

Badge of the Israeli jump school.

current president of Lebanon) over the security service militia of pro-Syrian Christian chief Elie Hobeika, 101 has been rushed from one hot spot to the next; always into the very thickest of the fighting.

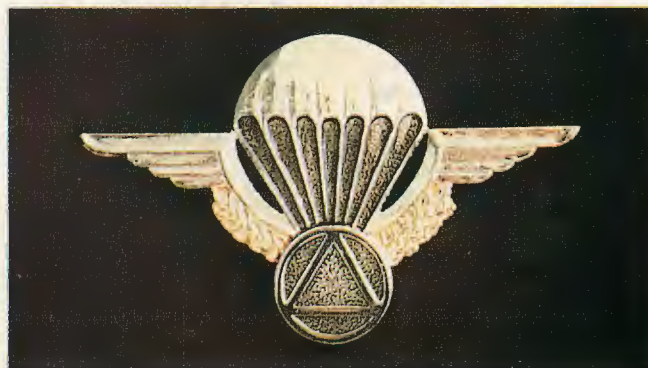
Sadem Special Force

One other group of paras exists in the Lebanese Forces. It's known as *Sadem* (Arabic for shock troop), a clandestine group under direct control of the LF's commander-in-chief.

These men are the Special Air Service-type operatives of Christian Lebanon. Little

is known about them either by the civilian community or other units of the LF. It is, in fact, forbidden even to talk about them, but it's generally believed they are of company-minus strength.

Sadem operates almost exclusively on an unconventional basis. It's often used on secret operations during tenuous periods of truce between the warring factions, or when the front is static and uneventful. In the interest of sparing the civilian community, the LF high



Beret badge of Lebanese Forces Sadem shock troops. Enamel badge depicts white parachute with black and red wings — black for death and iron; red for combat, blood and fire.



APC-mounted paras race to the rescue of a threatened mountain outpost during winter fighting.

command prefers to maintain the delicate peace whenever possible, so rather than launching attacks along the front line and stirring up trouble, Sadem troops are used on secret operations in enemy rear areas.

An example of the style of these operations can be best explained through an observation of an LF friend of mine. He suspects Sadem is used when the cause of calm on the Christian front line is tension within the Muslim camp. He thought that, under these circumstances, Sadem would infiltrate the Muslim sectors, dressed in the uniform of one Muslim faction or other, and make attacks on an opposing Muslim faction. This was certain to provoke the internecine fighting that's always so close to the surface in Muslim Lebanon.

Lebanese Forces paras under artillery fire from PLO positions.



If this is the sort of operation that Sadem in fact carries out, it's no wonder the LF command keeps it under wraps.

The first commander of the LF's Fire Support Brigade, "Chief" Gilbert Augustine, who commanded LF forces during the fighting in the southern port city of Sidon during 1985, told me that the Sadem was involved there in a conventional role. He said that the C-in-C visited the southern battle zone and brought his special company with him. It's unusual for Sadem to get involved in overt combat of the conventional type, but Sadem troops were thrown into the battle wherever the fighting was the toughest — especially opposite the Palestinian-held sectors. The results were always the same: desperate fighting, but a local Christian victory.

Sadem has seen occasional conventional fighting in the past, mostly in critical situations. It was involved in the snowbound mountain battle above the Christian city of Zalhe in

1981; in the Shouf during the "Battle of the Mountains" campaign against Syrian Special Forces, Syrian massed artillery and tanks, PLO infantry and Druze during 1983; and in the defense of the Christian enclave of Iklm El Karroub, south of Beirut, during 1984.

Among its covert/overt military responsibilities, Sadem was also tasked with anti-terrorist operations while under command of Elie Hobeika, head of the LF's security service troops. Today, it is under direct command of Dr. Samir Geagea, LF's commander-in-chief, and still functions as the Christian SAS equivalent in Lebanon.

LF Sadem troops undergo training in counterterrorist tactics.



Sadem troops are not always easy to recognize should you just happen across them one day in Lebanon, as they often wear civies or uniforms with insignia of other units. This is a security measure and is usually successful.

There are quite a few other individual parachute-qualified troops spread throughout the Lebanese Army, Navy and Air Force; mostly officers who have completed advanced training courses in Great Britain, the United States and France. For the most part they only wear their foreign jump wings on their dress uniforms.

Unfortunately, dress uniforms are seldom seen in war-torn Lebanon anymore. ✕

AUTOMATIC

SIG's New P-220

SIG-Sauer's slick new P220 .45 sails along in the mainstream of modern small arms technology.



THE beat goes on. No matter how many 9mm Parabellum pistols the U.S. military and politicians waffle, squabble and agonize over, Americans refuse to surrender their .45s. Tapping into that trend, SIGARMS, Inc. has just released a new version of their SIG-Sauer P220 .45 ACP pistol with the magazine release altered to better fit human anatomy and U.S. traditions.

Designed by the Swiss firm of Schweizerische Industrie-Gesellschaft (SIG) at Neuhausen Rhinefalls, the "side-button" P220 is manufactured by the West German J.P. Sauer und Sohn in Eckernforde, Thuringia. This Teutonic coupling permitted SIG to dodge the stringent Swiss regulations controlling military small arms exports and provided Sauer with an opportunity to re-enter the field of military armaments.

During WWII Sauer produced high-quality 98k bolt-action service rifles, the legendary Luftwaffe drilling and the unusual 38H (H for hammer-fire) pistol (caliber 7.65mm). The clever hammer-type pistol was provided with a lever on the left side of the frame for both cocking and uncocking the hammer. As a result, the pistol could be fired either double-action or single-action at any time by manipulation of a lever. SIG is noted not only for the well-known P210

pistol, but also for 125 years of robust infantry rifles and machine guns.

In 1975 the Swiss armed forces adopted the P220 as the Model 75 in 9mm Parabellum; Japan, Denmark and France subsequently followed suit. This pistol, chambered in either 9mm Parabellum, 7.65mm Parabellum (.30 Luger), .45 ACP or .38 Super, was first marketed in the U.S. by Browning under the name BDA (Browning Double-Action). Eventually it was imported for a short time by Interarms under its SIG-Sauer designation. Currently, all SIG firearms are exclusively distributed by SIGARMS, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 8330 Old Courthouse Road, Suite 885, Tysons Corner, VA 22180)

Like the other pistols in this series (P225 and P226), the P220 will annoy those who must have milled forgings and wood furniture. Fabricated from an aluminum alloy, the frame has a durable, matte black, anodized finish. The aluminum frame is largely responsible for the pistol's total weight of only 25.5 ounces, without magazine. The slide is a mill-finished, heavy-gauge steel stamping with an electron-beam-welded forward extension and the breechblock as a separate component held in place with a roll pin. Unlike the SIG P210, the slide rides on rails located on the frame's exterior. The hammer, trigger and magazine catch button are investment castings. The dis-

assembly, hammer-drop and slide-stop levers are sheet-metal stampings. The ejector has been incorporated into the slide-stop pressing. All steel components are matte black oxide or phosphate finished. The grip panels are plastic. The recoil spring is made of multi-strand wire. As it has a full-length steel guide rod, you can't look professional and "press-check" your piece — just make sure your sidearm is loaded before you walk out the door.

Although blocky-looking, the P220's overall length is only 7.9 inches (0.1 inches shorter than the Colt Commander series), with a height of 5.7 inches and a thickness of 1.4 inches. Barrel length is 4.5 inches with a six-groove bore and twist of one turn in 16 inches.

The SIG-Sauer P220/225/226 series operates by the locked breech short-recoil method developed by John M. Browning. A single locking lug milled above the barrel's chamber uses the slide's large overhead ejection port as its locking recess. After ignition the slide and barrel recoil together 0.12 inches, until a cam slot milled into the bottom barrel lug contacts a steel block in the frame which draws the barrel downward, unlocking it from the front surface of the ejection port. By this time pressure has dropped to a safe level. The front contour of the barrel lug cam slot has been cut square to

ALTERNATIVE

Text & Photos

by Peter G. Kokalis

The SIG-Sauer P220 pistol — field stripped.

The new "side-button" SIG-Sauer P220 pistol in .45 ACP.



direct counter-recoiling forces up and forward into the barrel itself to reduce stress on the lug.

These pistols have been designed for carry with the hammer down on a loaded chamber. Thus, although the hammer can be manually thumb-cocked to fire the first round single-action, it will usually be touched off with a double-action pull of the two-stage trigger. The double-action pull is about 0.6-inches, short enough for all those with normal-sized hands. There is no loading at the end of the stroke and negligible over-travel. But the double-action pull-weight on SOF's test specimen was a gritty 14.5 pounds, far too great a differential from the crisp 3.75-pound pull-weight when subsequent rounds are touched off single-action. As a consequence, double-tap group dispersion will be atrocious for all but the most experienced shooters.

When the trigger is pulled in the double-action mode, a trigger bar, engaging the double-action notch, cocks the hammer. In the final phase of movement the trigger bar pivots a safety lever upward to both rotate the sear and depress the spring-loaded firing-pin block in the breech and free the firing pin's movement. At the final instant the trigger bar disengages from the double-action notch by camming against the hammer pivot pin. This trips the hammer, which strikes the firing pin to ignite the primer. If the slide does not go fully forward into battery, contact between the firing-pin block and safety lever does not occur and firing pin movement is prevented. In this unlocked state, the slide also cams down the trigger bar and interrupts subsequent trigger function.

The hammer-drop lever is located on the left side of the frame in the center of a triad of conveniently positioned controls, which

SIG-SAUER P220 SPECIFICATIONS

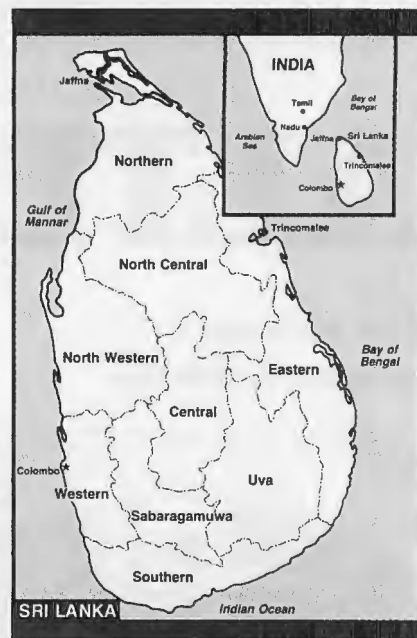
Caliber	45 ACP
Operation	Locked-breech, short-recoil, semiautomatic, double-action trigger system with hammer-drop lever; no manual safety.
Weight, empty	25.5 ounces
Overall length	7.9 inches
Height	5.7 inches
Width	1.4 inches
Barrel	Six-groove, right-hand twist with one turn in 16 inches.
Barrel length	4.5 inches
Finish	Matte; aluminum alloy frame black anodized; steel components black oxide or phosphate.
Grip panels	Black plastic
Magazine	Seven-round capacity; single-line detachable box-type; all-steel construction with detachable floorplate.
Sights	Front: fixed forward sloping ramp-type, 1/8-inch wide with white circular dot. Rear: open square-notch with square white dot, adjustable for windage zero by drifting in slide dovetail.
Price	Suggested retail: \$581 complete with two magazines.
Exclusive distributor	SIGARMS, Inc., Dept. SOF, 8330 Old Courthouse Road, Suite 885, Tysons Corner, VA 22180.

Continued on page 80

COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN SRI LANKA

Asia's Dirty Little War

Text & Photos by Tom Marks



Patrolling is standard fare for these Sri Lankan troops, but uniform weaponry is not. The soldier in the foreground is carrying an FN FNC, while the man in the rear clutches a Type 56-1.

“THIS is my area of operations. What do you want to see?”

Major Gabriel Mohan Rockwood, CO of A Company, gestured at his situation map on the wall. I could see our present position, Company HQ near the town of Muttur in eastern Sri Lanka, situated in the center of three concentric circles, like a dartboard laid out over villages and streams. With a radius of about 10 kilometers, the circle encompassed some 65 square kilometers of responsibility. The area inside the ring closest to our location, the bull's-eye, was marked 100 percent clear of insurgents. The next ring out signified 90 percent clear. Finally, in the outer ring, bandit country, was 75 percent okay. That's where I stuck my finger.

“Sure,” the major beamed. “You want to find out if our area is clear. I'll show you.” Turning to his sergeant major, he

instructed, “No escort. Otherwise, he won't believe me.”

In time I was to find the sergeant major a soldier's soldier, a professional and firm NCO. But at that moment I knew neither him nor the major. I had been at the company's location for all of half an hour and I wasn't too sure about the accuracy of the little circles on their map.

I didn't have much time to ponder the matter, however. The major was already starting up his vehicle, a beat-up minibus with the doors missing. Off we went toward the spot I had indicated with my finger. We bounced along rutted roads through terrain which looked remarkably like parts of Chad in Africa: dry, sandy soil contrasted by dark green, leafy trees under brilliant blue skies.

Small villages, each home surrounded by a fence of sticks and branches, nestled in the midst of rice fields, parched until the arrival of the northeast monsoon in December. The temperature was in the 90s and the humidity was about the same. The sun was merciless.

I fought drowsiness. It had already been a long day, prior to my unexpected appearance at Company HQ. For nearly two

As in all wars, Sri Lanka has seen its share of atrocities. These villagers were “lamppost” executed by Tamil extremists.

months I had been knocking about Sri Lanka, the Ireland-sized island some 22 miles off the southeast coast of India. For the last three years this island has been home to an often brutal and always misunderstood war pitting Marxist guerrillas drawn from the country's largest minority, the Tamils, against the government forces, most of whom are from the majority community, the Sinhalese.

The ethnic dichotomy has been irresistible for the world press: Abused minority battles oppressive government. A familiar refrain. Not surprisingly, though, there has been little effort to understand the nature of the war. Most journalists seem to spend their time with the guerrillas. I have done that myself, but the real story is with the troops, for virtually all of the writing about what the government does in the bush is based on hearsay. During the months that I



Sergeant major of Alpha Company holding captured guerrilla RPG-7 (Soviet-made). Both insurgents and security forces make widespread use of this weapon, although the latter carry the Chinese-made version, the Type 69.

patrolled with government troops or lay in ambush positions with them, these soldiers never got over the novelty of seeing a reporter. A young rifleman sitting next to me as we huddled under the stars hoping for a contact put it all in perspective. "You are very surprising us. No one has ever stayed with us here."

Company A of the Sri Lanka Light Infantry Regiment — "A, See-la Light," as the troops call it — had come to the area in January 1986. At that time the situation on the ground was getting critical. Trincomalee, seventh largest natural harbor in the world and a former linchpin in the British position east of Suez, was threatened. Guerrillas seemed everywhere, attacking Sinhalese villages and driving the populace into refugee centers. The security forces were seemingly helpless to rectify the situation, suffering daily casualties from mines and ambushes. The area around Muttur itself, on the southern side of "Trinco's" enormous expanse, was under insurgent sway.

A Company moved in by sea, overcame opposition in the area of its beachhead, then pushed inland. What followed was a textbook illustration of counterinsurgency techniques at their best. Repeated small unit patrols inflicted casualties on the guerrillas and kept them on the run. Civic action programs won back the populace. Major Mohan now claimed law and order were the norm, guerrilla activity the exception.

"The key," he told me, "is once you dominate an area, don't let it get infiltrated again. The terrorist is like a mosquito who creeps under your net at night. You have to make sure your net is tight and that there are no holes in it."

For hours that day, Major Rockwood bounced me all over the AO to show me his "net." He was determined that I should have ample opportunity to judge the veracity of his claims to control of his domain. A graduate of the Bangladeshi equivalent of the U.S. Command and General Staff course, taught by British instructors, the man was an impressive individual. A former star athlete, he led by example, often taking point in patrols so that he could instruct his troops — many of whom had less than a year's service — in the mechanics of patrolling. He would regularly go out himself several times a night to various parts of the AO to insure that his orders for deployments and activities were being followed. Under his command, the unit had blooded the enemy badly, killing 52 since January and capturing a variety of weapons, including RPG-7s, their rounds showing Soviet markings.

As we came to each new spot I selected on the map, the van stopped, and I was invited to walk around. If we were moving and I expressed an interest in something, we screeched to a halt. Without hesitation the watchful troops established security. Yet there seemed little cause for worry. The populace was at times wary, more often guarded, but friendly.

The villagers were Tamil, the troops Sinhalese. Still, many of the soldiers spoke a smattering of Tamil and could engage in small talk. Major Mohan himself is of mixed blood and uses both languages fluently, together with English.

By the end of the day, it was clear that Major Mohan was correct in his assertion that things in his AO were under control. If the area was impassable before January, it definitely belonged to his men now. Indeed, as his troops proudly noted, they had gotten out of refurbishing the company base. Instead, the unit captured the main guerrilla camp and took it over, complete with sand-bagged bunkers. Along with the camp, they captured some of the garrison's former guerrillas, who now operate as eyes and ears for the security forces.

But the basis of the world's perception that the problem in Sri Lanka is mostly racial is reinforced by the fact that the security forces remain overwhelmingly Sinhalese and the guerrillas are Tamils. And the guerrillas use this fact to keep the world largely ignorant of the true nature of the conflict. Point the finger where you will — at restrictive government media access policies or simply at the common assumption made by journalists that *anyone* can see the government side of a conflict. But the fact

SPECIALIST

Tom Marks, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hawaii, is a former U.S. military intelligence analyst who specialized in revolutionary warfare. He has travelled extensively in Sri Lanka and southern India.

Author Tom Marks shared the experiences of Sri Lanka's war with the men who fight it. Here he stands with the CO of A Company, Major Gabriel Mohan Rockwood.



remains that reading the Sri Lanka story in the papers generally won't provide more than a dim clue as to what is really going on.

Sri Lanka's problem is not a mere separatist clash. Rather, the nation is afflicted with yet another in a string of Asian "people's wars." The conflict has its roots in the ethnic violence which has plagued the country since independence. But it is of considerable importance that the insurgent leadership is Marxist: Their goals of communist power extend beyond separatism.

Certainly the guerrilla manpower is separatist rather than communist in orientation. That is, most of the rebel foot soldiers characterize themselves as such if the choice is put to them in those terms. Prisoners I interviewed about their motives in becoming insurgents, though, had more mundane reasons for having taken up arms: no jobs, abuse of their families and friends, and the simple lure of excitement in a dull world of dead ends. Still, these conditions are present in numerous Third World areas. The fact that ideology has been able to turn latent discontent into insurgent action is a function of Sri Lanka's unique circumstances.

The breathtaking beauty of Sri Lanka belies the war. A less likely setting for a bloody conflict could scarcely be imagined. Fruit and flowers grow everywhere. Elephants roam freely amid ancient ruins. It's as if a South Pacific island has been transplanted to the doorstep of India. Thousands of tourists agree that Sri Lanka is about as close as you can get to paradise. Before the fighting, they flocked to the temples and pristine beaches. It was Bangkok when there were still canals, Saigon before World War II, Manila in the 1950s without Marcos.

Too good to last? It was. Beneath the smooth surface were cracks. Growing socio-economic problems led to an escalating spiral of violence between Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese, who make up three-quarters of the population, and minority

A soldier cautiously rounds a corner as he leads his section into a contested village during the fighting in Jaffna Peninsula.



Tamils.

While small groups of self-proclaimed Marxist Tamil guerrillas attempted to exploit these differences, their calls for revolution were largely ignored by a conservative populace. Tamil candidates who ran for seats in the national Parliament on a platform which called for an independent Tamil homeland, or "Tamil Eelam," received large majorities in most Tamil areas; but the guerrilla call for a "people's war" to establish a Marxist Eelam received little support.

Yet, the water was about to become more receptive to the fish. On 23 July 1983 a

guerrilla ambush left 13 soldiers dead, the worst single incident experienced by the small Sri Lankan military in its short history. The subsequent mass funeral of the soldiers in the capital, Colombo, exploded into nationwide anti-Tamil rioting and looting. At least 400 people were killed and 100,000 left homeless, virtually all Tamils. Another 60,000 Tamils fled to India. In the absence of strong leadership, the police

Security forces move through a Tamil village. Point-man is carrying the FN Minimi SAW.





Two soldiers keep a lookout for the enemy from atop the turret of an Alvis Saladin armored car.

stood by. Some members of the armed forces were observed participating in the violence.

This spasm of communal bloodletting served to traumatize the Tamil community and to provide the insurgents with an influx of recruits. Thus, the power of the radical leadership in the struggle for Tamil Eelam became complete. There was to be no more talk as far as they were concerned.

Thereafter, violence rapidly escalated. From an estimated strength of no more than several hundred, insurgent numbers grew to anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000. While thousands of Tamil youth of both sexes did join the guerrillas, due to the trauma of 1983, the insurgent leadership came from the existing Marxist groups, the oldest of which had been in existence since at least 1974. These leaders knew exactly what they were about.

"We are Marxist thinkers," one high-ranking Politburo member told me. "That is, we analyze our objective conditions in Marxist terms. We are striving for the liberation of our people from exploitation by capitalism and American imperialism."

Though the insurgent movement quickly fragmented into myriad splinters — one list I compiled eventually listed 42 organizations — the key figures of all formations not only claimed to be Marxist but also allocated large portions of the daily training schedule to indoctrination for the troops. In both their public and private pronounce-

ments they spoke of their fight for "Tamil Eelam" as one which involved two struggles: to free the Tamils from the Sinhalese and from the oppression of capitalism.

"The leaders always spoke about Marxism," a 19-year-old guerrilla told me after his capture in August 1986. "They wanted a Marxist Eelam. That was their main idea." Said an older, higher-ranking captive, in another discussion, "We were hoping to establish a Tamil socialist state in the north and east."

Guerrilla leaders were obviously interested in a good deal more than simply fighting the Sinhalese. Neither was this leadership drawn principally from the abused masses themselves, as has been conjured up by much of this publicity. Instead, almost universally, insurgent leaders came from the ranks of the intellectuals, especially disillusioned students. It was obvious to them that Sri Lanka's ethnic turmoil sprang from socio-economic problems. And to their minds, Marxism was the solution which would make everything right.

By 1975, as captured documents demonstrate, the guerrillas had made their first contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) through the PLO representative in London, Syed Hameed, and thereafter began to send personnel to the

Middle East for training. Other Tamil guerrilla groups established similar arrangements with a variety of terrorist and liberation groups. Available evidence shows activities in Libya and Syria enroute to Lebanon, where training included combat patrols against the Israelis.

For the moment the conflict is centered principally in the dry zone areas where Tamils are a majority; specifically, the northern and eastern provinces. A Company's position nestles in the heart of the strategic center of the entire conflict, Trinco itself. For it is Trinco that the insurgents envisage as their future capital and the only resource which would make their proposed state economically viable. At one point, roughly a year ago, it appeared that the port itself might fall. Now the situation, while still fluid, has eased considerably. But A Company has not eased its vigilance.

As dusk settled in at the Company CP, preparations were made for the night's activities. Small unit patrols moved constantly within the AO. In the darkness two platoons operated in the outer "75 percent clear" zone; a third was closer in, providing route security, and a fourth conducted ambushes in the CP vicinity. By rotating units in the field, as well as staggering watches and assignments at the CP, the company kept a maximum number of personnel in the field while insuring that rest, administration and training continued. Company "overhead" is virtually nonexistent. Each man took his

Loading up in an armored vehicle, Sri Lankan security forces prepare to patrol a heavily-mined area.

LTTE-manufactured grenade.





Off-duty troops of A Company, 3 SLLI fraternize with Tamil villagers. Language is the only real difference between the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

turn in the field and spent most of his time there.

Sri Lankan infantry companies such as that commanded by Major Mohan have four platoons of three 10-men sections each. Nine troopers carry semiautomatic rifles, usually the Chinese copy of the AK, the Type 56. Some actual AK-47s can also be seen, left over from the 1971 insurrection, when Sri Lanka received tons of arms from a wide variety of sources. Also used is the Belgian FN FAL rifle with various stock configurations.

One rifleman in each squad frequently carries a rocket or grenade launcher. Though the Chinese copy of the RPG-7 rocket launcher, the Type 69, is ubiquitous (the guerrillas also use the original Soviet-made item), the troops do not like its weight and relative inaccuracy. Thus, when it is available, the West German Heckler and Koch *Granatpistole* 40mm grenade launcher is preferred. Some units have the 40mm

South African Armscor six-shot grenade launcher. But once again, the troops, while lauding this weapon's technical characteristics, do not like to hump the 15 pounds of weight.

The one squad member who does not carry a rifle is the light machine-gunner. There appear to be equal mixes of the Type 56 LMG (Chinese copy of the Soviet RPD) and the Belgian 7.62mm NATO FN GPMG (some are British-manufactured models). For added support, the Chinese Type 31 (several variants) and Type 63 (essentially an updated Type 31) 60mm mortar are assigned to squad riflemen.

Due to the small size of the country, most operations and patrols are of relatively limited duration. Combat rations have been developed, but in most cases the troops simply decide for themselves what they are willing to hump in the way of food during field stints. Fatigues come from a variety of sources, most recently Pakistan, and have the large "jungle fatigue" pockets so fa-

Keeping a friendly — yet firm — presence in Tamil villages prevents the guerrillas from exploiting a tense situation.

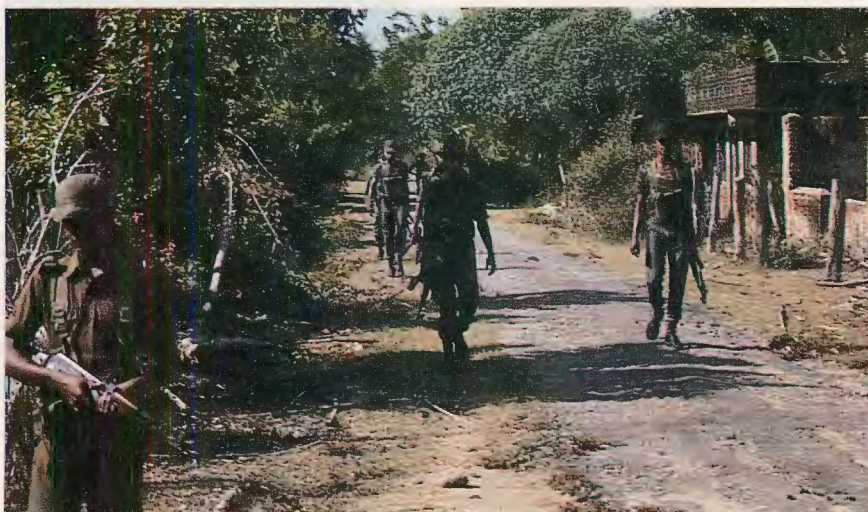
vored by U.S. troops during the Vietnam War. Web gear (LBE) is Chinese-made.

I got to see how the soldiers used their weapons and tactics firsthand that night. In fact, I got to go out with several squad-sized patrols. All were on foot, as were the other A Company operations which were being conducted. Organizational development has not yet progressed to the point that units have their own organic transportation. Even trucks remain in short supply. South African-made Buffalo armored personnel carriers have gradually been introduced, but only in limited numbers. Where they have been allocated to units, the troops prefer them to the more cramped and less mine-resistant Unicorn (an indigenously-produced carrier which is in reality a heavily armored truck) and the venerable British Alvis Saracen. A newly designed troop carrier with enhanced anti-mine features exists in prototype but has not yet entered production.

When operations call for the use of armor, resources are massed and allocated to the appropriate units. Such massing will normally precede a sweep into an area. The mobility and protection are used to achieve surprise because existing helicopter lift support is inadequate for all but special operations by elite raiding forces, and logistics/admin milk runs. Route security, a tedious but critical task in a war where mines are the leading insurgent weapon, is another common use for the armor, though the troops themselves are usually still transported in public transport buses.

A Company has neither armor nor full-size buses and uses its two minibuses as terrestrial helicopters, often carrying its forces across terrain which appears all but impassable.

During this dark night, however, we pushed off silently under our own power. Throughout the night we moved stealthily through a maze of thatched dwellings, fenced enclosures and fallow fields. Because the monsoons had not yet arrived, all



was dry, the ground hard. Dogs barked constantly throughout the AO. Tiny lights twinkled in Tamil dwellings, but no one else moved about. We set ambushes on all the main routes — none paid off, though.

The guerrillas, it should be added, don't make much use of manufactured mines. Rather, they favor burying loads of gelignite. The normal charge is 50 kilograms, though buried tins of up to 150 kilograms have been uncovered. With so much explosive power, there is little left to pick up when a vehicle or foot party is unlucky enough to trigger a direct blast. Shortly before my arrival, a blast took the lives of 20 troops riding in a bus through another area. Eyewitnesses claim that the explosion lifted

Sri Lankan soldiers pose for the camera during a slack moment. The Chinese-made arms carried by the security forces have been a big help in Sri Lanka's fight for national stability.



the bus a good 20 feet into the air as it blew it to bits.

Such instances have become the exception in this AO. A Company was largely responsible for that. By gaining the trust of the rural villagers, they cut down noticeably on the mine problem. A little goodwill goes a long way.

A previous unit had behaved badly, as evidenced by a trail of weathered destruction which could be seen throughout the AO. Civilians I interviewed confirmed that Major Mohan's troops were not those involved. My escorts declined to identify the previous outfit, but the evidence of its apparent misconduct was everywhere. In some areas of the AO, the mere presence of troops is enough to send every Tamil male, regardless of age, running for shelter. Small boys stop in their tracks and hold up their hands. Where the populace is more familiar with A Company's way of doing business, none of this happens.

I was startled to see just how good a reputation A Company had earned. When rumors swept the AO that the unit was to be rotated out, impassioned pleas went out from local notables asking that the transfer be cancelled or, at least, delayed. The roads were once again reasonably safe, they claimed. Damage to waterworks and homes was being repaired, wells had been dug, limited bus service had been restored, volunteer teachers had been found to reopen schools, and arrangements had been made to allow the population to bank its earnings.

All this had been accomplished by one company. And A Company is but one of the five companies in its parent battalion and is by common consensus squared away. It is, nonetheless, a normal line company, not an elite unit. Troops who a year ago were green

Taking five: After a scorching day of patrolling, even a small patch of shade is welcome.



CONFLICT BACKGROUND

When Sri Lanka was granted independence by Britain in February 1948, after four centuries of colonial domination (the Portuguese, from 1517 to 1638, and the Dutch, from 1638 to 1796, had also been overlords), the transfer of power was relatively peaceful. This was in stark contrast to the communal violence which marked the birth of India and Pakistan. Instead, Sri Lanka's communities seemingly had achieved an arrangement of mutual benefit based upon their participation in a secular, democratic state.

While Sinhalese-Tamil differences had been present before the end of colonial rule, it was only after independence that they became intense. The immediate cause lay in the maneuvering by the major Sinhalese political parties to wrap themselves in the mantle of Sinhalese nationalism. From a more long-range viewpoint, the reason was that independence meant different things to the

Sinhalese and the Tamils.

Pre-colonial Sri Lanka, its small Tamil pockets aside, was a Buddhist society of considerable vitality, one which had a pronounced cultural and religious influence on Southeast Asia. For their part, the Tamils were localized in an independent, though much smaller, kingdom in Jaffna. There were limited contacts between the two. Though the Portuguese and Dutch colonial predecessors of the British had succeeded in securing the coastline and a few inland areas, not until the British seizure of the last Sri Lankan capital, Kandy, in 1818, was the entire island unified under one central administration.

Hence, when the British departed, the Sinhalese and Tamil communities reacted differently. For the Sinhalese, the "land of the Buddha" was again free from foreign domination. For the Tamils, the independence which existed prior to colonialism was lost to a unified Sri Lankan state. Therein lay the roots of separatism.

The democratic political framework

meant that only Sinhalese parties could realistically hope to achieve power, and each election campaign seemed to bring more strident assertions of Sinhalese nationalism. The Tamils, who under British rule had taken full advantage of the educational opportunities afforded by colonial rule and had thus gained dominance in the professions and educational institutions, increasingly found themselves the victims of discriminatory affirmative action schemes designed to favor the long-abused minority. The culmination of this process was the designation of Buddhism and Sinhala as the official state religion and language, respectively.

This completely alienated Sri Lanka's Tamils, who began to seek means to resist. A Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) emerged in 1977 and openly called for the creation of "Tamil Eelam." While it rejected violence to achieve that end, militants had already begun to organize for insurrection.

GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS

As many as 42 Tamil insurgent organizations have been identified since July 1983. Five major groups dominate the scene, however, and have forced most other bodies to give in to their authority. They are:

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), or the "Tamil Tigers." Led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, this is the oldest of the Tamil insurgent groups. Originally founded in 1974 as the "Tamil New Tigers" (TNT), it took the LTTE designation in 1976 and now is estimated to number 2,500-3,000. It has a political and a military wing. The latter possesses automatic rifles, light machine guns, mortars and RPG-7s. LTTE is ruthless in pursuit of its goals and engages in widespread terror and assassinations. It has carried out a number of massacres, the most prominent being the 14 May 1985 attack on the holy city of Anuradhapura, when nearly 150 civilians were slaughtered. LTTE is active throughout Tamil areas.

- People's Liberation Organization of Tamileelam (PLOT). Main rival to LTTE, PLOT broke off from that group in 1980 due to differences between Prabhakaran and PLOT leader Uma Maheswaran, apparently over a woman.

PLOT has the most developed Leninist infrastructure and a united politico-military chain of command under a Politburo and Central Committee. Its strength has been put as high as 8,000-10,000. Though it is well-armed, it disagrees with LTTE's widespread use of terror, feeling that such actions only provoke retaliation against innocent Tamil civilians. This heightens the ethnic struggle at a time when class struggle should be paramount.

PLOT has well-developed relations with the radical PLO splinter group, the PFLP, and has trained a considerable number of personnel in Lebanon. In keeping with its doctrine of carefully preparing the ground before it launches full-scale guerrilla war, most of its forces remain in base camps in India. In Sri Lanka its main strength is in Vavuniya District. It has forged links with Sinhalese Marxist insurgents, training them in both Sri Lanka and India, and has infiltrated the Indian Tamil community.

- Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). Growing out of the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES), a London-based organization, EPRLF emerged under K. Pathmanabha in mid-1981. Long noted for its dogmatic Marxism, the organization's military wing is the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which first achieved prominence in July 1984 when it kidnapped an



The face of confidence: The new trend of better training and better officers is clearly seen in this Sri Lankan soldier.

American couple working for USAID.

EPRLF's estimated strength is 1,500 and it is relatively well-armed. Several members have trained in Lebanon and Syria with the PLO. Its principal area of operation has been the Eastern Province.

- Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) was founded virtually simultaneously with LTTE, as both were offshoots of the militant Tamil Youth Front (TYF) in 1974. TELO's longtime leader, Sri Sabaratnam, was killed, together with several hundred of his men, in bloody fighting with LTTE in Jaffna during May of this year. TELO, despite its Marxist ideology, has been favored by RAW due to its willingness to accept directions from New Delhi. Hence, it has become fairly well-armed.

TELO strength is put at 2,500-3,000. It has gone to some lengths in its attempts to mobilize the populace, setting up various committees at district and village levels. TELO's activities have been principally in Jaffna and the Trincomalee area. Prior to July 1983 it had established links with Sinhalese

Marxist insurgents. Now regrouped under one Selvam, it has sent fresh forces to Jaffna.

- Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS). Also known as the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students, after its original designation, EROS is run by a Revolutionary Council under General Secretary V. Balakumar and numbers 1,000-1,500. Active in the north and east, it does not have the quantity of arms possessed by the other groups but has been active in Tamil areas throughout the country. Most of its weapons have normally been concentrated in Batticaloa. Recently, it has stepped up its efforts to infiltrate the Indian Tamil population of the hill country in central Sri Lanka.

While ideological differences have kept these groups from uniting, TELO, EROS, and EPRLF announced the formation of an Eelam National Liberation Front in April 1984. LTTE joined this union as its premier partner one year later but withdrew in the aftermath of its May 1986 fighting with TELO. PLOT has remained aloof from ENLF blandishments and instead formed its own informal, alternate grouping of smaller guerrilla bands.

recruits have become veterans, while replacements continue to arrive and receive training. Conditions are primitive, with many items in short supply. Yet, morale is high and technical competence is evident in all that the men do. No one goes in much for formality, but discipline is tight in all the things that matter.

On patrol the troops are as frightened as anyone is when faced with the possibility of death. They move warily, carrying out their tasks in the manner least likely to result in

casualties due to carelessness. The key to such performance is obviously leadership. Whether patrols are led by lance corporals or officers, all behave as though Major Mohan was looking over their shoulder. Even as their military skill has allowed them to dominate the guerrillas in combat, they have discovered that their commander's emphasis on learning Tamil and helping the populace pays further dividends in bringing victory one step closer.

"You see what is important," Major

Mohan said to me one day. "We have not gone berserk; we have not set upon the villagers, killing them and demolishing their buildings. If we are to win this war, we must serve everyone with one spoon and be honest in all we do."

Dashing across open ground, a Sri Lankan soldier avoids enemy fire. The increased professionalism of the security forces has meant fewer needless casualties — on both sides.



MERCENARIES AND ISRAELIS

Shortly after the July 1983 outbreak led to the dramatic spread of the insurgency in Sri Lanka, Colombo realized that a quick upgrading of security forces capabilities was needed. Former British Special Air Service (SAS) personnel in the employ of KMS Limited, which has seen service around the world, both independently and as a quasi-official London surrogate, were retained to train a completely new police Special Task Force (STF). The most common explanation of the KMS name, "Keeny Meeny Services," is that the name is taken from the Swahili words used to describe the movement of a snake through long grass and that it came into the SAS vocabulary during the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya. SAS sources who served in Kenya and are fluent in Swahili, however, have cast doubt on the veracity of this explanation.

Be this as it may, a reported 40 KMS trainers are used at the STF facility south

of Colombo to instruct new intakes for the unit. STF took over primary responsibility for security in Batticaloa District in October 1984. Members of the training team have visited their former pupils in the field but do not perform operational missions. Sri Lankan personnel from the initial training intakes are being phased into the basic training scheme to replace the KMS men.

Relatively recently, the rapid expansion of the Sri Lankan Air Force led to the KMS being utilized to supply pilots as well. Sources give the number of pilots as 10-20. They are used for actual missions, not training, but are prohibited from engaging in combat. Sri Lankan officers speak highly of both the STF trainers and the pilots, though there is some resentment among Sri Lankan fliers at the excellent terms under which the foreigners serve.

Those KMS personnel with whom I spoke were not anxious to publicize their role or identities. Their presence has already attracted considerable attention in India and reportedly caused a rift with

London, which would prefer that the irritant be removed from its relations with New Delhi.

Israel was approached for assistance on the basis of its vaunted expertise in counterterrorist operations. Relations with Jerusalem had been suspended under a previous government; the PLO is allowed to maintain a resident diplomatic mission. Nevertheless, Colombo allowed the establishment of an Israeli Special Interests Section in May 1984, with the United States as protecting power.

Small teams from Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, began to train Sri Lankan personnel in intelligence gathering and internal security techniques. The relationship with Jerusalem has emphasized collection and running of agent nets, rather than information analysis and intelligence dissemination. Numbers of Israeli personnel actually involved in the effort have been several at any one time, arriving at periodic intervals.

If the improvement in the Muttur area is due to the practice of such a philosophy by A Company, it is but an illustration of a larger trend: the virtual rebuilding from scratch of the Sri Lankan military. The force now in being is still experiencing growing pains but bears little resemblance to that which took the field in 1983 and was widely publicized as ineffective and undisciplined. At that time the effective combat strength of the army was found in just four 730-man infantry battalions spread out across the landscape in company-sized cantonments. Total army personnel count was 14,000 — 12,000 regulars and 2,000 reserves, or “volunteers,” on active duty.

Each regular line battalion was theoretically the first of three in a regiment, with the other two battalions composed of “volunteers.” In reality only one regiment had its two “volunteer” battalions. None of the reserve component units were on active duty; all were understrength and armed with outdated weapons. Single armored, artil-

lery, signal and combat engineer regiments were likewise actually only understrength battalions. At any one time approximately a third of the “volunteer” force personnel were on active duty to make up for shortages in regular units.

Communal disturbances stretched manpower so tightly that air force and navy personnel regularly performed foot soldier duty. Arms were in short supply and inadequate. There was, for instance, no single infantry rifle. Even the venerable Lee Enfield was in use in some units. Heavier backup was an odd mix of British, Chinese, Soviet and Yugoslavian arms. Machine guns were the old British Vickers medium and general purpose models. Mortars were 82mm from the Soviet Union, as well as 2- and 3-inch versions from Britain. There were even some 4.2-inch variants from Yugoslavia. Artillery was limited to a dozen 85mm guns from the Soviet Union and four 76mm mountain guns from Yugoslavia.

A navy of some 3,500 men and 30 craft

— all small and lightly armed — added its weight to the Sri Lankan government’s attempt to grapple with the complexities of guerrilla war.

And a complex guerrilla war it certainly is. But the key to understanding — and winning — this war lies with the government’s ability to reconcile the complaints of the Tamil population from a position of strength. While they continue to make strides toward bringing the Tamil population back into the fold, the security forces must also keep up the pressure on those who would use the current situation to bring about a Marxist government — namely the guerrilla leadership. ✕

Scanning the ground from his perch behind an FN MAG machine gun, this Sri Lankan doorgunner looks for enemy movement as he flies over the countryside in an American-made UH-1.

THE CONTINUING CRISES

The Sri Lankan security forces were not always an efficient fighting unit. In July of 1983, when the insurgent movement was still limited and ineffective, the government troops could get away with slack performance. Aside from occasional contacts, the military units deployed to insurgent-affected areas in the north kept themselves occupied by running in convoy up and down the main roads. Casualties normally were light on both sides.

Nevertheless, inexperience resulted in excesses, especially as the insurgents became more active in early 1984. The government was forced to disband an entire battalion when discipline broke down in the aftermath of punishments meted out to individuals who had engaged in retaliatory actions against civilians. The remaining unit members were combined with another understrength regular battalion to form the first unit of an entirely new regiment. This left just four infantry battalions available on the eve of what was to become a war.

Those days of limited activity ended as insurgent strength increased dramatically. The army, deployed in the north in two battalions, found itself subjected to a series of bloody episodes. Land mines caused casualties four or six at a time, and ambushes added to the toll. The security forces rarely saw their assailants.

Unable to close with the guerrillas, the troops responded in predictable fashion — they all too often gunned down the civilians whom they assumed were involved. Though the government



An Alvis Saladin armored car gives the Sri Lankan security forces mobility in their quest to quell the insurgency.

was truthful when it denied that retaliation was official policy, there was a definite callousness in military attitudes toward the population whose hearts and minds it sought to win.

This was hardly surprising. Less than five percent of the soldiers and less than three percent of the officers were Tamil. Thus, government forces saw themselves as cast adrift in a sea of hostiles whose language they could not speak and whose customs they did not share — and who, they were convinced, knew where mines were buried and when ambushes were planned.

Such an attitude, of course, was wide of the mark, for the average Tamil peasant wanted only to be left alone by all concerned. As the armed forces re-

taliated to avenge their own losses, however, the Tamil masses turned sullenly to the only protection they saw, the insurgents. By the end of 1984, insurgent activity had grown to the point that it threatened government control of Tamil majority areas in the north and east. Guerrilla use of automatic weapons, mortars and RPG-7s had become commonplace.

To take charge of molding the military into an effective fighting force, Colombo brought back a distinguished retired soldier, Cyril Ranatunga, now a lieutenant general charged with the conduct of the war through a newly-established Joint Operations Command (JOC). A Sandhurst graduate, Lt. Gen. Ranatunga served during the 1971 insurrection as the Coordinating Officer for Kegalle, one of the hotbeds of the insurgency. Much later he commanded government forces in Jaffna. He had retired from the army in 1983 but was tapped to return in



September 1985 due to his demonstrated ability in the insurgent environment.

Foremost among his priorities was the restoration of a sense of discipline and esprit in a force which was as dispirited by continued savagings in the press as it was by circumstances in the field. This he was able to do. As the small pre-war force was expanded substantially (at present it is comprised of 16 battalions representing four regiments), fresh leadership was moved into crucial positions. Those who did not measure up to tightened rules of conduct were cashiered. To date more than 400 individuals have been dismissed for instances of indiscipline.

With younger, more aggressive leadership in place, performance improved considerably. The magnitude of the task they faced in molding the armed forces into a body capable of conducting operations was considerable.

Far and away the toughest nut in the insurgency was the Jaffna Peninsula in the far north, the traditional home of the Sri Lanka Tamils. Individuals from Jaffna provided the primary leadership for the insurgents and were the source initially of the strongest backing for the guerrillas. An arid peninsula of roughly 2,000 square kilometers holding some 800,000 people, Jaffna had been effectively lost by the time Lt. Gen. Ranatunga took over command. It was there that I linked up with the general, during a May 1986 push that served to highlight the many facets of the war: the enhanced capabilities of the armed forces, the entrenched nature of the opposition in some areas, and the role of India.

India has been the Jekyll and Hyde of this conflict. Faced with intense domes-

tic political pressure from the powerful Tamil electoral bloc in the Indian south, the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reacted to the July 1983 events by giving in to demands that the Sri Lanka Tamils be given a "self defense capability." Indian intelligence agencies, notably New Delhi's equivalent of the CIA, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), already had relations with several of the Tamil guerrilla groups for the purpose of intelligence gathering. Consequently, small numbers of insurgents had previously received the equivalent of commando training at various specialized Indian facilities. Presented with new marching orders, RAW dramatically expanded its training efforts, drawing upon the resources of Indian military and paramilitary units.

At first limited to training, the Indian effort eventually included provision of weapons and equipment. With such assistance, the guerrillas were soon able to become an effective presence in large areas of Sri Lanka. Their training bases and staging areas remained in the Tamil majority state of Tamil Nadu, where they were treated as virtual official guests. Guerrilla headquarters were actually located in the hostel reserved for state government legislators.

That the world's most populous democracy should thus be involved in destabilizing its smaller democratic neighbor would appear inexplicable, but India's motives were to be found in its own peculiar brand of *realpolitik*. For in addition to mastering its domestic pressures, stirring up a modicum of trouble would send a convincing message to Sri Lanka's pro-Western government of President Junius R. Jayewardene that In-

dia would not tolerate any contemplated arrangements with the United States to use the port facilities at Trincomalee as a base for U.S. Indian Ocean operations. Best evidence shows that no such arrangement was ever seriously contemplated, but Indian decisionmakers insisted that such a deal was in the works.

Regrettably for Sri Lanka, the guerrilla training program quickly mushroomed beyond New Delhi's control. Once having received instruction in various Indian military and paramilitary camps in north India, as well as at the main guerrilla bases in Tamil Nadu, hundreds of insurgent personnel were

Continued on page 82

A soldier moves through a barbed-wire fence as his patrol approaches a Tamil village.



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FAST BOATS OVER TROUBLED WATERS

The U.S. Navy's Special Boat Unit

by Robert Jordan

THE early morning sky was overcast, its grayness reflected into the swirling waters of the Rach Tho Rach Mo Cay canal as an equally gray assault support patrol boat (ASPB) slowly nosed toward a cluster of thatch-covered huts on the nearby shore.

The hum of the diesel engines reverberated off of the thick jungle growth on the shore as men in green camouflage uniforms quickly made last-minute checks of their M16 assault rifles, adjusted webbed belts hung ripe with grenades, and positioned themselves for a jolt as the ASPB's prow nosed into the muddy bank.

"Okay, guys . . . let's get in and out quick," the team leader growled as he pulled his floppy bush hat down onto his brow. He took a moment to look over his men, members of the Navy's elite sea, air, and land special operations force known to the world as SEALs.



Swift and silent movement keeps soldiers alive in combat: These SEALs should have no trouble on either account. Photo: U.S. Navy

They had come a long way together. Some of them had gone through training with him at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, California. Others were new to the team, but shared the same rigorous and exacting training regime. And because they had, everyone was confident that the "newbies" could hack it along with the more experienced team members.

The boatswain backed off the engines gently as the patrol boat closed with the shore. The SEALs leapt for the bank and spread out quickly, just the way they had practiced repeatedly in preparation for this search and destroy mission 50 miles southwest of Saigon. When they were through, they had destroyed over 40 camouflaged Viet Cong bunkers and razed a VC propaganda center and two tax collection stations.



Navy SEAL with MK23 Stoner machine gun in his element — mud.



A Navy SEAL fires away at the shore with an M60 as his patrol boat speeds away from a mission pick-up. Photo: Dept. of Defense

The operation was well executed, as is expected of elite units. It was one of only a few such operations that were publicized. SEAL team members prefer anonymity, since many of the missions that they may be assigned are covert.

Still, the SEALs are known worldwide by their reputation. Less known, however, are the men who take the SEALs in harm's way — the brave men who man the small boats that ferry the SEAL teams wherever their orders say that they must go. They're the Special Boat Unit (SBU) and they have often gone far beyond the call of duty in ferrying SEALs to dangerous places.

"They took as big a chance as any of us," says Navy Captain Theodore E. "Ted" Grabowsky, head of the Naval Special Warfare Branch, Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Surface Warfare). "They did incredible things to get us in and out. They were ordinary sailors — but they were simply *heroic*. And they took a hell of a lot of casualties to do it."



Silent insertion of SEALs near the mission area by skilled SBU sailors often meant the difference between success and failure. Photo: Dept. of Defense



Dropping out of a CH-46, a SEAL prepares to splash into the surf. Photo: U.S. Navy

Ted Grabowsky should know. Topping the rows of medals adorning his pristine dress whites is the Bronze Star Medal. In 1964, the 26-year-old Durango, Colorado native was commissioned an ensign. Following his underwater demolition training in December 1964, Grabowsky commanded Underwater Demolition Team 11 and SEAL Team 1. He made two deployments to the Republic of Vietnam with SEAL Team 1, serving in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Most of his career has been with SEALs and special boat units. He was also one of the planners for the Son Tay POW recovery raid.

Grabowsky is effusive with praise for the young men who crew the Navy's small boats.

"They were extremely loyal to the SEALs [in Vietnam]," Grabowsky recalls. He says that their loyalty is such even today that, when they are given assignments, "we routinely expect them to be exceptional.

"We ask them to do very unusual things from what people would normally do with small boats — the outer limits of what

can be done. It's not unusual for them to operate 100 miles from land in a 50-foot boat . . . and to stay out at sea for a week at a time."

SBUs in Beirut and Grenada

SBUs saw service in both Beirut and Grenada. In Beirut the duty consisted mostly of coastal patrol and interdiction. They used 65-foot patrol boats capable of traveling over 30 knots.

"It became routine to go up to max speed to intercept a fast boat," says Grabowsky. "They put themselves between the approaching boat and the combatants [larger naval vessels]."

"They were put in the water and left in the water," Grabowsky explains. "They came in once a day for food and fuel."

Grabowsky points out that the small boats responded to threats of one kind or another several times each day. "They can take some credit that there were no major incidents — success tends to go unnoticed," he says.

The SBUs drew the task of surveying the outer islands when the United States invaded Grenada.

"There was some uncertainty as to where the hostile units were," Grabowsky explains. "Somebody had to get in there and sort things out."

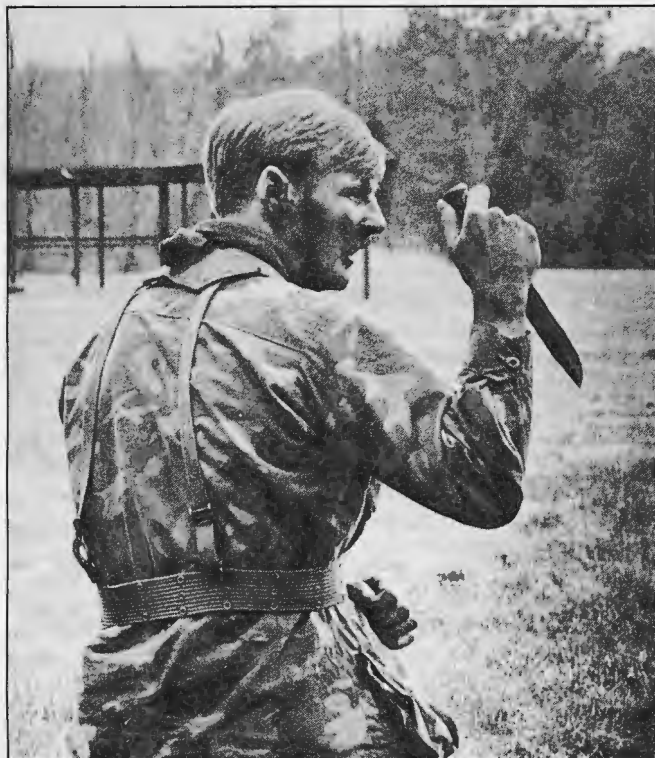
Grabowsky is concerned about the focus on negative aspects by some military analysts reviewing the Grenada operation. "A lot of things were done very well in Grenada," he says. "We need to look at the lessons learned from what works and then exploit them. We don't need preoccupation with what goes wrong."

Training

"Often there will be no officer in sight on these boats," Grabowsky points out. "You could expect to see anyone from a seaman to a chief petty officer in charge."

Obviously, such responsibility requires the crewmen assigned to the SBUs to be very well trained — and that they are. These men handle their craft — 65-foot general purpose patrol boats and the smaller *Sea Fox* patrol boats — as if they were born in them.

Maintenance of the high performance diesel engines is stressed, since they will often have to operate in remote areas.



No one can ever be too well-trained, and Navy SEALs are no exception. Knife-fighting techniques are an important part of a SEAL's repertoire of skills. Photo: U.S. Navy



SEAL/SBU trainees get up close and personal with one of the tools of their trade — the rubber IBS. Photo: U.S. Navy



Rappelling from a helicopter gets SEALs into action fast. By moving into an area quickly, a SEAL team stands a better chance of successfully completing its mission. Photo: U.S. Navy

The craft are crammed full of sophisticated electronic communications and navigation equipment, also requiring maintenance.

Weapons training is stressed as well. And everyone is cross-trained to know each other's jobs.

"Everybody has got to be able to shoot . . . to take the helm and drive the boat," Grabowsky says.

Operating as remotely as they do, small boat operators must learn everything from first aid to battle damage repair. "Even routine things such as who's going to cook take on greater importance," Grabowsky points out.

Patrolling and interdiction tactics must be learned, as well as how to search and seize suspicious vessels.

"They have to learn to make 'real time' decisions about rules of engagement . . . how to use deadly force — they've got it, and they have got to know how and when to use it. They won't have an admiral sitting there to tell them."

Grabowsky stresses the fact that special boat personnel routinely come into intimate contact with the enemy. And because of that, SBUs must undergo survival, escape and evasion training, in addition to their other seamanship courses.



Fast patrol boats, like this ARVN craft, often inserted SEALs into areas of the Mekong Delta where they could do serious damage to the enemy infrastructure. Photo: U.S. Navy

Their personnel jackets are then tabbed to show their newly acquired skills.

"They are considered to have special skills," Grabowsky points out. He says the special boat unit personnel have high retention rates. "We really do have unusual success with these guys."

Mission Orientation

The number-one mission of the SBUs is to support the SEALs. Riverine patrol and coastal interdiction are secondary. For these missions, the Navy has organized three SBUs. One concentrates on riverine activities, one is a reserve and one is an active duty unit.

The SBUs are integral parts of the two Special Warfare Groups (SWGs); one at Coronado and one at Naval Amphibious Base, Norfolk, Virginia. Also within each SWG are one or two SEAL teams and a SEAL delivery vehicle team.

The SEAL delivery vehicle teams operate from submarine dry deck shelters that house submersible vehicles on the decks of nuclear submarines. The shelters may be pressurized to permit SEAL teams to enter them while underway. Their operation is classified.

Each basic SEAL team is staffed with about 30 officers and 180 enlisted men. Specialized skills are built around physical conditioning that involves SCUBA diving, surface swimming, and running, in addition to various martial arts. They are also skilled in demolitions and parachuting, and they are well-versed in small unit tactics. About 100 officers and over 1,000 enlisted men are currently employed as SEALs, but that number will increase by about a third by 1990.

The official mission of the SEALs, as stated by Naval Warfare publications, is:

Naval Special Warfare encompasses that set of naval operations generally accepted as being unconventional in nature, in many cases covert or clandestine in character, including utilization of specially trained forces assigned to conduct unconventional warfare, psychological operations, beach and coastal reconnaissance, operational deception operations, counterinsurgency operations, coastal and river interdiction, and certain special tactical intelligence collection operations, in addition to those intelligence functions normally retained for planning and conducting special operations in a hostile environment.

Clearly, the roles of the SEALs and the SBUs are closely entwined. As a force, they have not yet matured. Their roots are anchored in the underwater demolition teams (UDT) and small boat squadrons of World War II. The UDT duties of



Two SEALs from SEAL Team 4 participate in a training exercise. The Colt Commando assault rifle is a popular weapon in SEAL ranks. Photo: U.S. Navy

people ascribe to SEALs. "They are more independent than heroic," he insists. "These guys are very military, very squared away."

"It's our job to go places that are difficult to get to and to attack the enemy. Our main advantage is that we can travel long distances . . . and we can do it relatively fast," Grabowsky explains. "Despite advances in modern warfare over the thousands of years, what we do isn't much different than how men fought in earlier times — it's very personal stuff. And much of the time we're operating right on the margin of what's possible and impossible."

"But these guys aren't much different than anyone else. They have wives and sweethearts. They are the kind of guys who pledge allegiance to the flag . . . and they *believe it!*"

hydrographic reconnaissance and obstacle demolition prior to amphibious assaults have been absorbed into the SEAL units.

SEALs were introduced to Vietnam early in 1962, long before the build-up of conventional forces that began about 1965. Along with their SBU shipmates, they prowled the coastlines and serpentine rivers of South Vietnam. At that time the craft were armed with machine guns and 60mm and 81mm mortars. Today the craft haven't changed much, but the weaponry has been replaced by 40mm MK19 machine guns and the 40mm Bofors with which to engage surface targets.

Worldwide Role

Each Naval Special Warfare Group has forward-deployed staff elements. The largest, Naval Special Warfare Unit-One (NSWU-One), is located at Subic Bay, Philippine Islands. NSWU-Two, the smallest, is stationed in Machrihanish, Scotland and NSWU-Four is based at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico.

From these forward bases SEALs and SBU personnel may be employed in a number of conventional and unconventional roles. These might vary from supporting fleet training exercises off Korea or Norway to real world situations such as participation in Beirut and Grenada. Wherever an Amphibious Ready Group deploys, you'll find SEALs and SBU personnel in residence.

Grabowsky discounts the heroic Rambo image that many

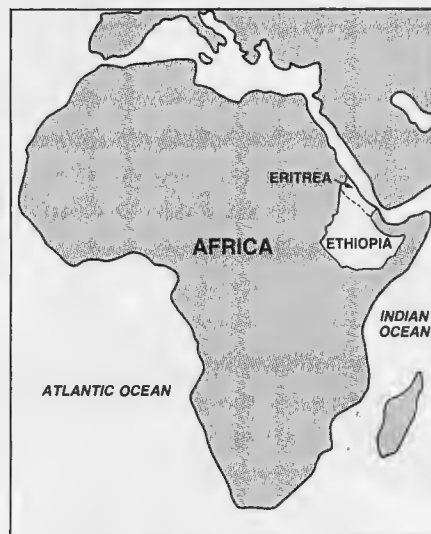


Aspiring SEALs struggle in a mud pit during "hell week." This is just one of the ways that trainees are put to severe mental, physical and emotional tests. Photo: U.S. Navy

ERITREA

Africa's Longest War Grinds On

by John Edwin Smith



Eritrea: 25 years of civil war make it Africa's longest-running — and bloodiest — battleground.



FLYING low and slow in the golden haze of dawn, a Soviet Antonov reconnaissance plane skirts lazily around the jagged 2,000-meter peaks of Denden and its sister mountain, Wanja. As the plane's propellers slice through the thin, humid African air, its engine rumbles a warning of impending doom to the bedraggled warriors below, who scurry for their weapons as they dive into their trenches and cave-like bunkers.

The Ethiopian pilot makes three passes, traversing the jagged line of trenches carved into the top and rear face of the mountains, then swings wide to the east and slowly disappears into the specter of burning sun bursting through the distant peaks guarding the rear of his army's position.

"Mr. John, Mr. John!"

The voice comes out of the shadow of the gray, dim light at the entrance to my cave. I don't have to be told to get with the program. The plane has already served as my alarm clock and now, hearing the anxiety of

Operation Red Sea, a 90,000-man thrust against EPLF-held high ground, became Africa's killing field. Ethiopian paratroops were called in as a last-ditch measure. This man marks its failure as he lies on the ground called "Keleb Amora" — the food of the vultures. Photo: Neil McGahee

the young fighter of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and seeing him slide the familiar banana clip into the battered and worn Chicom Type 56, I scramble to my feet, check for scorpions and brush the ants off my face.

I move warily toward him.



SWORD & PEN

Former two-tour Marine John Edwin Smith is a full-time journalist and adventurer whose assignments have taken him from the ocean floor in search of Spanish treasure to the combat zones of Lebanon and Eritrea. We welcome his first contribution to SOF.

Author John Edwin Smith and EPLF fighter Habtom Wedi-Berhe. Photo: Neil McGahee



ABOVE: Since 1977, the Soviet Union has supplied Ethiopian dictator Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam's 300,000-man army more than 2,500 T-54 and T-55 tanks. This T-55 was one of 15 tanks captured intact during Operation Red Sea in November 1985. Photo: Rebourts

RIGHT: Food is the biggest battle in famine-struck Eritrea, yet this unexploded 500-pound cluster bomb dropped by an MiG-23 makes even subsistence farming a life-threatening job. Photo: Rebourts

BELOW: Ethiopian POWs taken during abortive Operation Red Sea attack against EPLF positions. More than 8,000 Ethiopians have been taken prisoner during the last eight years. Photo: Tesfa A. Seyoum



From the distance, across the sprawling valley of sand dunes that separates two warring factions, that piece of real estate called Keleb Amora — a 300-meter stretch of wasteland littered with spent cluster bombs, napalm canisters, RPG-7s and the rotting corpses of hundreds of Ethiopian paratroopers — comes the ominous rumbling of Soviet-supplied T-55 tanks and BTR-60 armored personnel carriers.

For an instant, I freeze. My legs turn to rubber, my hands shake, my head aches. Deep inside me a voice screams: "You idiot! What in the hell are you doing here?"

The moment of anxiety passes.

"Come, Mr. John," the guerrilla yells, then flashes a macabre smile. He scoops a handful of flies out of the discolored dead socket of his right eye, then turns his good eye to the disappearing speck of the Russian



spotter plane.

"Soon, the artillery comes," says the fighter in fractured English. His voice is calm. "Then the MiGs. And then...."

His voice breaks; no more needs to be said.

I nod that I fully understand and nervously exhale. My legs come back to life. My hands are steady. My kidneys, however, are ready to explode.

Making sure the AK is on safety, the fighter turns to watch four young women dismantle the company's two 82mm mortars. Their work is done quickly and they, too, disappear into a cave.

Outside, everyone scrambles into position with military precision. This is no drill. Welcome to the Nacfa Front, Africa's premier killing ground.

Here, within the confines of the Naro Plains and the Anseba Valley, the Ethiopian



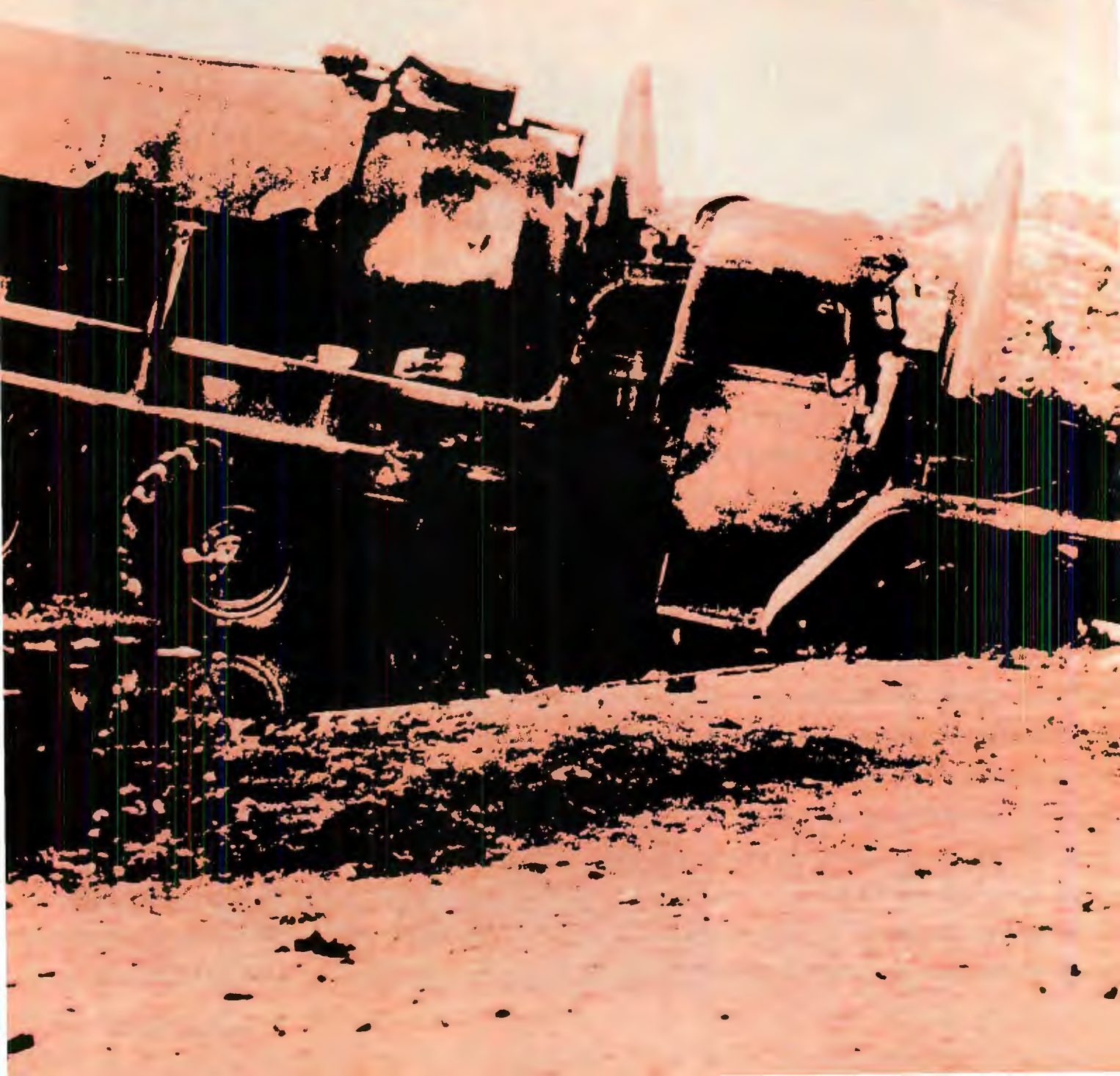
EPLF troops sight in 122mm howitzer D-30 captured from the Ethiopians. As one fighter put it: "We are very thankful that they give such splendid weapons to those soldiers we can kill so easily." Photo: Rebours

Army pounds EPLF positions with their big ordnance, the 76mm mountain guns and the mammoth 122mm howitzers supplied by the Soviet Union.

Nestled securely in their mountain strongholds that stretch for 450 kilometers, protected by their caves and stone bunkers reinforced with two-foot-thick tree trunks, an army of liberation awaits the inevitable.

"The attack comes any time now," says 23-year-old Michael Bokru, who has run the gauntlet from his CP to my cave to check on my safety.

Bokru leads a company of Eritreans, one of eight EPLF groups of 60 men and women atop the mountain fortress who defy the Ethiopians of the 73rd Brigade of the 15th Division across the plains. An eight-year veteran of this African nightmare, Bokru is tall and thin, with a body wasted by disease and wounds. When he speaks, his bloodshot





eyes turn to stone; the eyes of a man who has seen too much.

"Soon, the Ethiopians will come in wave after wave," says Bokru in a voice void of emotion. "They will walk on the bodies of those we killed in their last attack."

He orders my bodyguard into position, then rushes me into a trench near his bunker. With his steady hand on my back, I follow the twisting path carved into the rock up toward the highest point of the mountain.

The air is shattered by the ear-piercing screech of Russian artillery. Rocks splinter and scorched metal impacts and flies in a deadly hail through what moments before was Africa's most peaceful and serene hour.

Eritreans don't just take it — they return it in kind. Soviet 122mm howitzer, one of nine captured when the EPLF overran elements of two Ethiopian divisions, in action near Denden. Photo: Rebourts





ABOVE: EPLF fighters man Soviet light machine gun as they keep watch across no man's land of Keleb Amora. Photo: Tesfa A. Seyoum

FAR LEFT: Trench warfare — Eritrean style — plays a major role in the civil war. Artillery battles, stalemates and massive casualties conjure up the World War I image of France's Verdun. Photo: Tesfa A. Seyoum

LEFT: Eritrean nationalists are sick and frail after 25 years of war, but they fight on. This man hoists Soviet 122mm round which seconds later was sent downrange into Ethiopian lines. Photo: Rebour



Bokru winces as the cannonade pounds EPLF positions on both flanks. He instinctively tries to straighten his withered left arm, which is adorned with the jagged, twisting purple scars left by the three bullets that crippled him eight months ago.

He smiles, unholsters his Russian Makarov pistol and calmly checks the position of his troops. Satisfied, he says: "Yes, the Ethiopians will try to come up our mountain. They will become food for the vultures."

Nearby, a 14-year-old fighter clings to the side of an interlocking trench, seemingly oblivious to the shelling.



The youngster flashes a knowing smile and slowly begins inching his way up through the rocks where the EPLF has positioned its three captured Soviet 12.7mm DShK heavy machine guns. He turns and motions for me to follow. The commander nods approval. I follow.

In the distance, the familiar "crump, crump, crump" of Soviet artillery echoes across the valley. EPLF positions on adjacent mountains are also receiving heavy wake-up calls.

It's only 0700 hours. A new day on an old battlefield: Africa's longest-running conflict, a 25-year-old civil war between

Ethiopia and the former Italian colony of Eritrea. It's an uneven struggle, where the bleeding and dying are done in the shadows of worldwide indifference.

I feel a tug at my shoulder and am snapped from inaction by the persistence of the 14-year-old, who will lead us into a machine-gun bunker. He smiles at me with dead eyes.

"Come, Mr. John," he says in a metallic, dispassionate voice. "You will see for yourself. Today we kill Ethiopians."

While I waited for the inevitable Ethiopian attack, I expected my life to flash before my eyes. Instead, my thoughts were locked on what had brought me to this little corner of Africa in the first place.

I'd heard of this war in bits and pieces. First, from an Eritrean refugee living in the United States, and then from newspaper articles buried in the world news section. The newspapers did little to clarify the fight-

ing; my Eritrean friend, however, gave me more than I could comprehend.

He told me how his country of four million people was not only fighting a nation of 36 million Ethiopians, but the armed might of the Soviet Union as well. He spoke of a seven-year drought and famine that had killed hundreds of thousands of Eritreans and Ethiopians alike. He spoke of Soviet advisers, Cuban combat troops and the dictatorial Ethiopian regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mengistu, he said, was big on genocide.

A few telephone calls brought Eritrea into focus. The State Department said the war was really "one Marxist army trying to kill another Marxist army." American correspondents who had been inside Eritrea, however, told tales of "a gallant band of freedom fighters" battling an Ethiopian government controlled by the Soviet Union.

Both answers are, to some degree, correct. In the first two decades of their struggle, Eritreans received military and economic aid from Arab allies of the Soviet Union. No doubt this aid was tagged with the Soviets' ideological message of the workers' revolution. But, when Haile Selassie was overthrown by military coup in 1974, the Soviets shifted their support to the new, and more politically certain, government. Eritreans became bandits to some, freedom fighters to others.

I wanted to see for myself. But, I was warned, few journalists had actually been up on the front lines — especially since the Russians became heavily involved in 1977.

Next stop, Khartoum, Sudan. A shuttle to Port Sudan, a 12-hour excursion via Land Rover across 240 kilometers of desert into the mountains of Eritrea, a tour of the rear in the moonlight because of the everyday presence of MiG attacks and then ... well, curiosity killed the cat, so to speak.

In the rear, I heard horrifying stories about Denden — how it controlled the only road north into Eritrea, through the formidable northern highlands; how Denden had borne the brunt of seven major offensives; how it was often called "The Gateway to Hell."

Denden received the nickname from the blood that has been spent on its steep slopes. Conservative estimates from European observers have placed the Ethiopian casualties in and around Denden at close to 100,000 in the past nine years.

"The fighting is as it was in World War I," a Sudanese journalist told me. "Trenches, everywhere it is the trenches. Some only 80 meters apart. You have heard of Verdun? Yes, that is what it is there. Verdun. Everywhere, Verdun."

So I left the safety of the rear and entered "The Gateway to Hell."

"We have no planes, thus we are at the mercy of the MiGs," were the first words that 35-year-old battalion commander Shageray Ahmad greeted me with as I slipped into the shadows of his bunker at the base of Wanja.

For the past 15 years Ahmad has been



Nineteen-year-old Hana Kiros, a veteran of more than 20 major battles in the last three years, checks out captured weaponry. "I have killed many Ethiopians," she said. "They are killing our people. I hate them." Photo: Neil McGahee

fighting the Ethiopians. Now he is drained. He sits on the dirt floor of his bunker, wrapped inside a wool blanket, shaking with the chill of malaria.

Between chattering teeth, Ahmad says in broken English that he was first trained by the Americans "before Selassie fell," then by Israeli commandos. He walks with a stiff left leg, "a gift from the Soviets," he says with a smile.

The EPLF, he explains, has no free-world benefactors. Thus, this army of liberation must arm itself from the refuse of the battlefield dead. Kalashnikovs, heavy machine guns, artillery and tanks have been acquired in the past eight years.

"We are very grateful to the Soviets," he says with a sly smile. "Yes, we are very thankful that they give such splendid weapons to those soldiers we can kill so easily."

But his smile vanishes as he struggles to his feet and hobbles across the dirt floor of his bunker and painstakingly slides onto the stone slab that serves as his bed.

With much effort, he refuses a cigarette. "One should not get accustomed to something that will not be there when you leave," he says.

Outside, the sun is sinking, carrying with it the unbearable heat and sending the ever-present storm of flies to cover. Brackish water is sipped from cut-down mortar casings. The horizon seems to burst into flame, spreading as far as the eye can see, consuming all in a garish burst of red.

Overhead, a flight of three MiG-23s heads south to the airfields of occupied Eritrea.

"You are the first American to see us here on this front," says Ahmad. "It is not a very safe place. Everything eventually dies here. The Ethiopian, the Soviet, the Cuban — all try to take these mountains from us. They bomb us from the sky, they bomb us from across the valley. It is not safe for anyone."

He motions to Osman, one of his company commanders, the fighter who will guide me up the mountain toward the sound of the guns.

"Osman was chosen to lead because of his bravery," says Ahmad. "All our commanders are chosen by the way they fight."

Osman is embarrassed by such gallant talk. He smiles through a broken jaw, the scars of which run from the corner of his mouth up past the bridge of his nose. He is missing the teeth on the left side of his mouth, uppers and lowers, and when he smiles it is the smile of death itself.

"One question before you go to the fighting," says Ahmad. "In your world, if the Soviet Union is against you then the United States is for you. Yes?"

I nod in agreement, but feel the uneasiness swelling in my stomach. I know what is coming next.

"Here, in Eritrea," says Ahmad, "we fight the Soviets. We kill the Soviets. The Soviets kill Eritreans. Yet, the United States does not even recognize us. We do not ask for your guns. We do not ask for your missiles. We do not want your planes or even your soldiers to help us fight the Soviets."

Ahmad is overcome by the shakes again. He coughs and wipes the spit from his chin. He massages his injured leg, then smiles.

"All we ask is that your people recognize us," he says. "Recognize our fight. After all, what we do here today is nothing more than what Americans did many, many years ago against the British. We fight an unjust government, the Marxists of Colonel Mengistu. It is our fight for liberty."

I leave the battalion commander's bunker and walk out into the darkness. Osman grabs my arm. He is in a hurry. He says we must go. The climb will take hours.

"Have you ever killed the communist, Mr. John?" he asks with a wicked smile. I am stunned by the question and can only chuckle and shake my head in the negative. Osman smiles and says, "That is too bad, Mr. John. I have killed many."

With a show of bravado, he pats the Makarov tucked into his waistband.

I laugh, a haunting laugh that comes from deep inside me. I throw my arm around Osman's shoulder and we stumble over the loose rocks, up the narrow path that leads to the jagged edge of sanity.

"Come, Mr. John," he says to me, through the scars and broken teeth. "Let us go kill the communist."

Up and down the line the Eritreans are laying a continuous sheet of lead and flame, cutting into the Ethiopian positions a mere 200 meters away. My nightmares once

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WHEN the machine gun portion of the Volkmer-McClure Firearms Protection Act went into effect on 19 May 1986, 94,000 machine guns managed to squeeze in under the deadline. Some find consolation in this fact — I do not.

Few of the Class 2 manufacturers who registered these 94,000 machine guns have any formal background in military small arms technology or engineering. An even smaller number are professional machinists, and of these, only a handful have access to factory components. These basement butchers, armed with little more than hacksaws and welding torches, are about to foist upon us a plethora of cracked and twisted metal that will fail to feed a single magazine without numerous infuriating stoppages. Without doubt, the “tap, rack, bang” drills of combat pistol shooters will soon become familiar procedures to the owners of these dreadful mutations.

There is one very conspicuous exception. William H. Wittstein of Billistics, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 944, Wallingford, CT 06492) has twenty years of experience in firearms repair, manufacture, design and collecting. A former aircraft gagemaker and plant manager, Wittstein’s Title II conversions are first class.

Wittstein’s specialty is the Heckler & Koch series. Using nothing but original H&K factory parts — no after-market sears or converted semi-auto components — his conversions are nothing less than exact duplicates of the H&K selective-fire weapons. I own one of Bill’s MP5s and it cannot be distinguished in either appearance or performance from H&K’s production series submachine gun.

Creating an HK MP5, G3 or HK 33 to factory specifications from its semiautomatic counterparts is an exacting and painstaking process — far more difficult than fabricating these weapons at the Heckler & Koch plant. Let’s take a close look at what, in general, is involved.

First, the components are removed and the receiver is stripped to the bare metal. If another Class 2 manufacturer’s disaster is being restored, an assessment of the required damage-control and cost of the repairs is given to the customer. Re-barreling (such as an actual MP5 three-lug barrel), installation of grenade-launching sight bases on the rifle series, and shortening or modification of the receiver for fabrication of an MP5K or MP5SD take place at this time.

Next, the precise machine work begins for installing a push-pin trigger group and flapper-type magazine release. This is done by removing the magazine well side plates and block, which leaves a 3/16-inch wide open U-section in the magazine well. Using a die of the correct size, a section of sheet-metal is fabricated and then welded over the opening. The welding bead is removed and the surface mill-cut and polished to blend with the magazine well.

The receiver is then placed in a milling machine using an indicator to locate the

SOF WEAPONS

H&K CLONES

Class Act Conversions

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



SOF Weapons Team member test fires a Bill Wittstein HK MP5SD submachine gun. Wittstein, of Billistics, Inc., is the class act among Title II manufacturers.



holes that the side-release button’s axis pin rides in. With this zero reference point, two holes are drilled which accept the stepped bushing that holds the flapper-type magazine release and the trigger group’s front push-pin.

After this complicated procedure, the old receiver markings are carefully welded over (many Class 2 manufacturers use Bondo for this process), flat-filed and re-engraved with exact duplications of the factory markings for the model being fabricated.

Latest factory trigger mechanism uses bullet symbols as selector markings. White bullet indicates “safe,” one red bullet for semi-auto, three red bullets for three-shot burst and a string of red bullets for full-auto. Housing is ambidextrous, with identical markings and lever on right side.



Wearing cotton gloves to avoid marring the bare metal, the receiver and barrel are then glass-beaded and finished with manganese phosphate. Using only current factory matte-black paint, ten very light coats are applied to the receiver and baked at 450 degrees F for half an hour. After cooling, the receiver is lubricated and factory components are installed.

Original factory selective-fire bolt carriers are available as an option, but Wittstein's are so carefully fabricated that it's hardly worth the extra cost. Placing 20-40 semiautomatic bolt carriers in a cold water bath, Bill uses a 4140 rod to gradually build them up so there is absolutely no warpage. As these bolt carriers are every bit as hard as the originals, carbide cutters must be used to re-surface the trip radius and clean up excess welding. After the bolt carriers have been re-phosphated and oiled, they cannot be distinguished from factory originals.

Wittstein offers a wide variety of Heckler & Koch models and options. Submachine guns are available in either the MP5A2, MP5A3, or MP5SD configurations. For the

Another Wittstein gem — a rigid-stock HK MP5A2. Only H&K factory components, finish and lubricant are used in these Class 2 fabrications.

Standard UZI and Micro UZI submachine guns manufactured by Billistics, Inc. are nonrestricted-transfer weapons.

uninitiated, an "A1" suffix indicates the submachine gun is equipped with only a plastic end cap with sling swivel (unfortunately, this component is not available for sale to the public because, when fitted to an HK 94, the overall length is less than the legal requirement). "A2," in either the submachine gun or any of the rifle series, indicates the standard rigid stock, while "A3" means the weapon carries a retractable stock. All three stocks are, of course, interchangeable.

The MP5SD is the suppressed version of the MP5 series. The barrel is ported and surrounded by a tubular casing. Escaping gases are diverted through the barrel's ports to drop the bullet's velocity below the sonic

level before it leaves the muzzle. The muzzle blast's sound level is drastically reduced by a helix within the casing, which increases the gas volume and decreases its temperature. As easy to maintain as it is quiet, Wittstein fabricates the removable suppressor and handguard cage to duplicate the original in every specification.

Designed for clandestine operations, the MP5K features a barrel length of only 4.5 inches. Bill shortens and reinforces the back of the receiver as well as the barrel and cocking tube. A factory-issue vertical foregrip is added. Again, no other Class 2 manufacturer produces an MP5K which so closely duplicates the factory original.

MP5 options include an original three-lug barrel (which accepts a flash suppressor, BFA or grenade launcher) and three different plastic trigger groups. You can order your MP5 with the standard "SEF" group ("S" = safe; "E" = *einzeln*, or single; and "F" = full-auto) and a selector lever on the left side only; with the so-called "U.S. Navy" group, which offers the same three positions but uses bullets rather than numbers or letters for markings and is ambidextrous; or with the ambidextrous, four-position, three-shot burst group. Since these weapons fire from the closed-bolt position and the chamber area heats up considerably during burst sequences, all HK 94s and MP5s are now equipped at the Oberndorf plant with the larger "tropical"-type forearm to reduce discomfort to the support hand.

While we're at it, a brief explanation of the cryptic capital-letter markings found on Heckler and Koch firearms and magazines is also in order. Since the late 1970s Heckler & Koch has employed a simple letter code to indicate the date of manufacture. Given that "A" signifies zero, "B" means "1" and so on up to "I," which stands for "8," it is easy to date any recently manufactured Heckler and Koch weapon or magazine. For example, a receiver stamped "IF" tells us that the firearm was produced in 1985.

Wittstein converts HK 93s (caliber 5.56x45mm NATO) into four basic HK33 configurations: the standard HK 33A2 or A3 (complete with steel "SEF" trigger group and also available with an original 15.35-inch barrel with grenade-launching front sight base and ring); HK 33K (carbine version with 12.4-inch barrel); the flame-throwing HK 53A3, with its 8.3-inch barrel and shortened cocking tube, cocking support, bolt carrier and recoil spring and guide rod; and the HK 33SG1, a counter-sniping version supplied with a factory, select-fire, set trigger group, an adjustable cheekpiece buttstock, bipod and four scope options on Heckler and Koch claw mounts. Trigger group options include plastic "SEF," "0,1,25" or three-shot burst mechanisms.

Using all original H&K parts, Wittstein turns the HK 91 (caliber 7.62x51mm NATO) into either the standard G3A2 or A3 select-fire rifle, the G3K with a 13-inch

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ON THE EDGE IN WEST TEXAS

Freddie Watt's Custom Cutlery

by Kevin E. Steele



ONLY a Bedouin would find west Texas attractive. Its flat, lunar-like landscape stretches toward the horizon, broken only by squat mesquite branches reaching toward the glimmering globe of a relentless sun.

Midway between Odessa and Sweetwater is the town of Big Spring. Located smack dab in the center of the oil-rich Permian Basin, Big Spring is the last waterhole between Sweetwater and the Pecos River.

West Texans pride themselves on their individuality and resourcefulness. There's no doubt about it, you need those qualities to settle there. One Big Spring native who fits the mold is Freddie Watt III, a relatively new custom bladesmith whose quality creations and fair prices bear some looking into.

Freddie works just outside Big Spring city limits, in a workshop attached to his home. He began making custom knives part-time seven years ago. Then, in 1983, Freddie quit driving a beer truck and turned to custom knifemaking full-time; a decision he has not regretted.

"I always liked knives, and thought I'd be able to make them myself. I acquired books on knives, knifemaking and steel; talked to some knifemakers, and then just did it," says Freddie.

Through a lot of trial and error, patience and persistence, Freddie perfected his craft, and just last year was named a voting member of the prestigious Knifemakers Guild. Not only was Freddie's work hailed by his customers, but with admittance to the Guild, it was recognized by his peers as well.

Freddie gives much of the credit for his success to fellow Guild member D'Alton Holder, one of America's premier custom bladesmiths, who helped Freddie get started. Freddie recently co-designed a practical upswept skinner with D'Alton. But the most interesting thing about Freddie is he's a likeable, unopinionated, non-egotistical craftsman. There aren't many custom knifemakers about whom you can say that.

Says Freddie, "You always hear custom knifemakers say they got into making their own knives because they couldn't find a factory knife that was any good. Well, that's just a bunch of crap; there's plenty of factory blades around that are darn good. I make custom knives because I like to."

Freddie makes working knives — from skinners to boots to folders and bowies. In fact, he'll make just about anything the customer wants.

Watt knives are made from tool steel bar stock, utilizing the stock removal method. This produces a quality knife at a price people can afford. Freddie usually offers four different steel selections, depending upon what the knife is going to be used for.

"ATS-34 and 440C have high chromium contents, 14 and 17 percent, respectively. For the guy who likes the look of stainless,

Freddie puts final touches on this boot knife's blade with a bit of emery paper.



Watt knives display the tough frontier heritage of west Texas, where steel tools hewed civilization from the desolate wilderness.

and a blade that won't tarnish or rust, this is the way to go. But you've got to remember these steels are hard, so putting and keeping a razor edge on them is tough."

All of Freddie's knives are hollow ground by hand. You can order either a bright mirror or dull bead-blasted finish. Freddie's most popular knives are his hunting blades, usually made from either D2 or A2 tool steel. The D2 keeps a good skinning edge, and has a chromium content of 11.5 percent. While the A2 also keeps a good edge, it is also easier to sharpen. However, its small chromium content makes it susceptible to rust.

Watt knives are built to be tough. Featuring full-tang construction, most blades are pared from 3/16-inch stock, and retain a heavy spine when finished. Only quality materials are utilized in Watt knives, from the bar stock to the sheaths and handles.

Freddie offers a variety of handle materials, and will attempt to meet all customer requests. However, for durability, Freddie prefers Linen Micarta or — if you're looking for strength plus natural beauty — either Ironwood or west Texas homegrown mesquite.

Sheaths are included with each knife purchase. But they are not just an afterthought. At present, all Watt sheaths are hand-sewn, utilizing the increasingly hard-to-find double full-welt construction. The heavy, 9-ounce leather sheaths are finished to a medium-brown color, then stamped with an attractive sunburst tooling pattern.

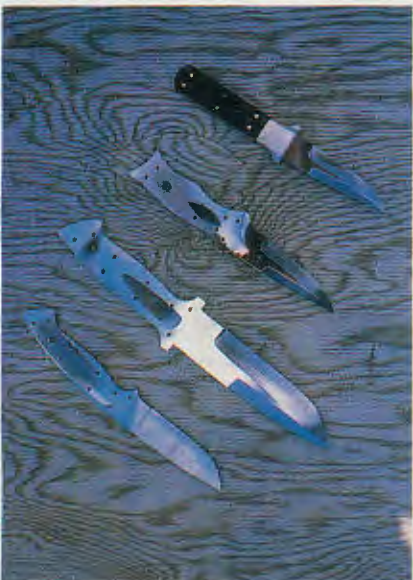
But the best has been saved until last — the price of Watt Custom Knives. Fighters, up to and including most bowie designs, will put the buyer back \$250; hunting knives, either drop-point or upswept skinner, a mere \$135; boot knives, either single- or double-edge, \$130. Folders, in hunting, utility, or fighting blade design, go for \$200. Those prices in today's custom knife market are hard to beat.

If you've had a hankering for a custom knife, but couldn't quite afford the tariff, wait no longer. Right now Freddie's running about four months from order to delivery. Go on, you owe it to yourself. Contact Watt Custom Knives today: Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1372, Big Spring, TX 79720. (915) 263-6629. ✂



Sparks fly as the belt grinder eats away an unfinished blade.

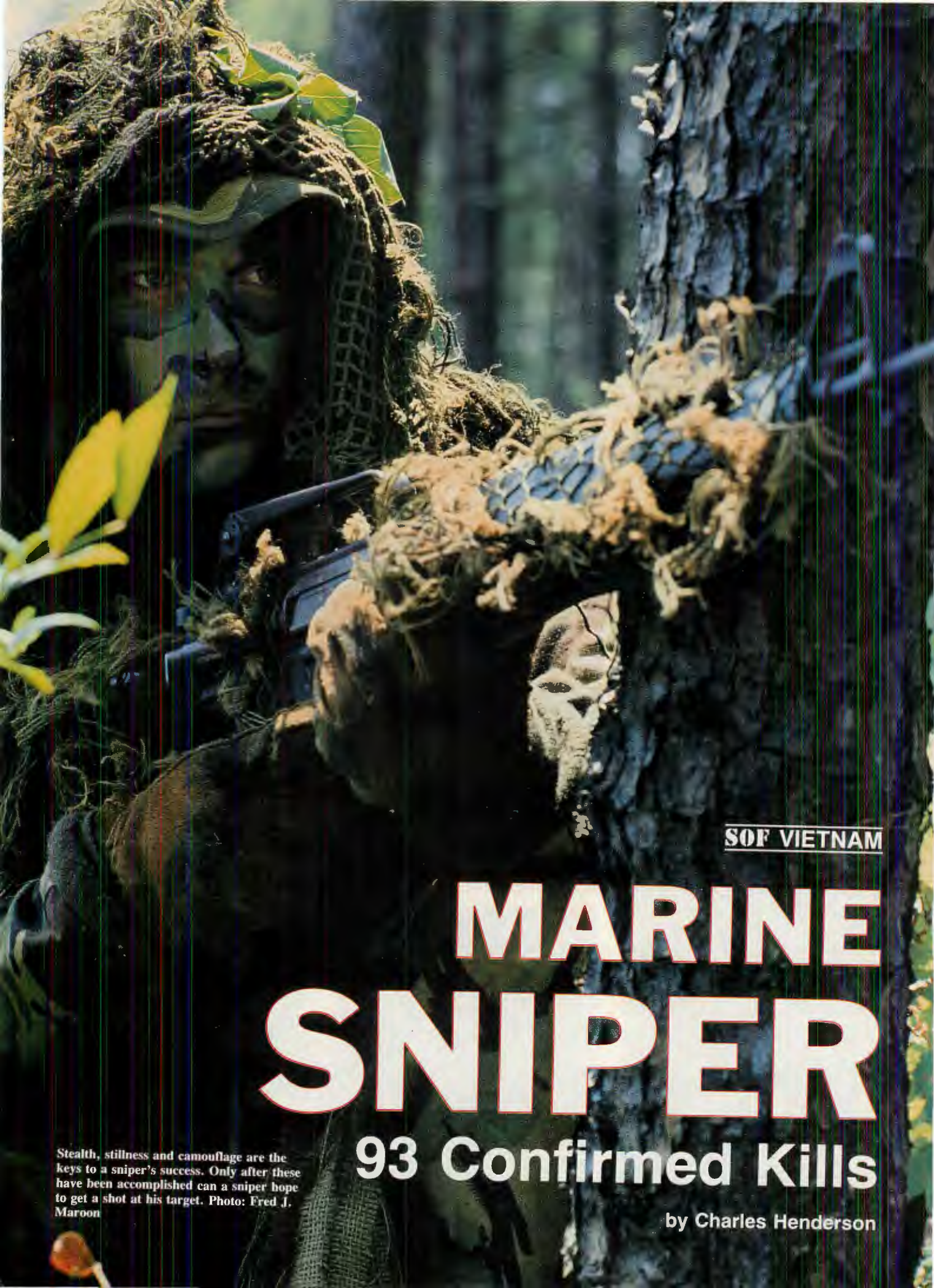
Four of Freddie's blades in various stages of completion: drop-point hunter, bowie, and two boot knives.



Freddie Watt's most popular knives are his hunters, in either D2 or ATS-34 steel. Left to right: drop-point skinner, clip-point folder, drop-point skeleton knife.

Freddie Watt turns out all knife types, as these in various stages of completion illustrate. Left to right: drop-point hunter, bowie and boot/fighter.





SOF VIETNAM

MARINE SNIPER

93 Confirmed Kills

Stealth, stillness and camouflage are the keys to a sniper's success. Only after these have been accomplished can a sniper hope to get a shot at his target. Photo: Fred J. Maroon

by Charles Henderson

On his way to Vietnam in 1965 as the new commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, Major General Hermann Nickerson stopped on Okinawa to see an ordnance officer, Captain Jim Land, and talk about snipers. Like so many arcane battlefield arts in peacetime, sniping had been virtually forgotten since World War II, except for a brief revival of interest during Korea.

But Nickerson knew that VC and NVA snipers were already providing deadly reminders of the effectiveness of sniping, especially in a guerrilla war scenario. He also knew that the best way to counter a sniper is with another sniper. Jim Land had already made a reputation for himself in military circles as an authority on the subject, having conducted four years of research into the tactical employment of snipers. Maj. Gen. Nickerson apparently liked what he heard from the young captain, and he told Land to pack his seabag. The skipper was going to Vietnam to start a training program.

Land started with little more than an old manual and his own knowledge of the art. He requisitioned weapons and began recruiting armorers and shooters. Land knew he needed a special kind of man to train as a sniper; good marksmanship was an obvious requirement. But Land recognized that other traits were equally important. He was looking for good outdoorsmen, intelligent Marines with stable personalities. Gung-ho hotshots need not apply.

One of the first men to fit the bill was Sergeant Carlos Hathcock, a Marine MP serving at Chu Lai. Earlier that year, Hathcock had won the Wimbledon Cup in the 1,000-yard, high-power rifle competition at Camp Perry, Ohio. So Hathcock, arguably the best rifle shot in America, easily met the first qualification for a good sniper. He also had the right personal temperament: quiet, unassuming, self-motivated and intensely competitive — and a man who worked well alone.

Hathcock, who is now retired and living in Virginia, left behind a deadly legacy when he departed Vietnam four years later in 1969. He had 93 confirmed kills to his credit, more than any other Marine sniper in Vietnam. And Hathcock's record for the longest confirmed kill — 2,500 yards — still stands.

The following excerpt from Charles Henderson's new book on Hathcock [Marine Sniper: 93 Confirmed Kills. Stein and Day/Publishers, Dept. SOF, Scarborough House, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510. Hardcover, \$18.95.] takes a sniper's-eye look at what it's like to stalk an NVA general — in his own hunting ground.

CARLOS looked at his watch and softly laid it inside his footlocker with all his other personal items. He would leave everything behind on this stalk.

He took his bush hat with his left hand and gently slipped the wispy white feather

from its hatband, dropping it between the pages of his Marine Corps-issue New Testament. He placed the cigarette-pack size book in one corner of his footlocker and dropped shut the locker's wooden lid. Snapping the combination lock on the big box's hasp, he tucked on his bush hat, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and walked out to meet fate head-on.

As he walked through Hill 55's complex of deeply dug and heavily sandbagged bunkers, hard-backed tents, and antennae farms, Carlos listened to the new day come alive.

"Gooood morning, Vietnam!" a voice boomed from a nearby radio turned to AFVN. "It's six-oh-five in the A-M and time to . . . Shout!" Joey Dee and the Star-Lighters' all-time rock and roll favorite, "Shout," echoed through the camp from scattered radios tuned to the Da Nang American Forces Radio station.

A black Marine with a gold-capped front tooth sat on a stack of sandbags next to his rocking and rolling radio. His steel helmet pot, half-filled with milky colored water, sat in the dirt before him. Lather covered his face, and he stretched his neck tight as he shaved under his chin, rolling his eyes downward in order to look in a mirror balanced atop the radio. Hathcock thought about how long it had been since he had stood in front of a bathroom sink and shaved with hot water.

He walked down the hill beyond the bunkers and joined a group of Marines wearing helmets and flak jackets. Each man had two fragmentation grenades and several pouches full of ammunition, balanced by two full canteens hanging on their cartridge belts. Carlos had only his rifle, one canteen hooked to his belt and a KaBar knife. He reached in his pocket and touched the tube of camouflage greasepaint resting there. He was scared.

The walk to the landing zone did not take long, neither did the flight — due west and well into the high mountains that bordered Laos.

The Marine rifle squad moved quickly, taking him to the departure point, and by noon Hathcock sat alone, his back against a tree, surrounded by heavy vegetation. He was preparing himself mentally for what he knew lay ahead. The fear that lay like a heavy animal inside his chest would need some calming.

Day One

Carlos had calculated perfectly, as always in the past, and arrived at the tree line's edge just as the sun set. He covered his exposed skin with shades of light and dark green greasepaint from the tube that he carried in his pocket. Every buttonhole and strap on his uniform held various-shaped leaves and grass.

Here, at the edge of the open country, he saw the NVA's heavily guarded buildings, with their camouflaging and their fortified gun positions. He had no idea where in Southeast Asia he was at the moment and had not wished to ask. The terrain map he



In 1985, Carlos Hathcock was presented with a memento of his days in Vietnam — a Mosin-Nagant sniper rifle captured from the enemy. In the background is E.J. Land, Hathcock's commander during his first tour as a sniper in 1966-67. Photo: U.S. Marine Corps

had studied had had no place names. From their flight path and the distance covered, he would not have been surprised if he was in Laos or even North Vietnam.

Under the cover of darkness, Carlos re-touched his camouflage paint and exchanged the forest's deep green leaves for the lighter green and straw-colored grass that now surrounded him and covered the vast open land ahead. He drew his canteen and poured a capful of water. He brought the lid to his lips and sipped, his eyes constantly shifting and looking for signs of movement, his nose testing the air for any smell of other men.

For the next hour, he continued preparing himself, drinking sips of water from his canteen lid and relaxing in the tree line's cover.

Finally, his every move fluid and slow like that of a clock's minute hand, he lay on his side and slipped into the open. His Winchester rifle was clutched tightly against his chest.

His body was in constant motion, but the motion was so slow that a man staring at him from 10 feet away would in all probability have seen no movement. He traveled inches per minute and yards per hour. From now until he reached his goal, Hathcock would not eat or sleep and he would drink rarely.

He had had no idea that he would have to move this slowly. The dry grass was about a foot above his head as he crawled slowly on. Hathcock noticed the stars in the clear night sky and prayed for rain. If it came he could move quickly, since the enemy's vision would be obscured and the shower's noise would cover his. Dampness would also soften the crackling dry grass and weeds.

The Marine sniper had crawled approx-



Tools of the trade: Both sides used custom sniping rifles during the Vietnam War. The NVA and VC used the Soviet-made Mosin-Nagant 7.62x55mm rifle with a 3.5X scope (top), while the U.S. Marines used a Winchester Model 70 in caliber .30-06 Springfield with a 10X Unertl scope (bottom). Photo: Hathcock Collection

imately thirty feet from the tree line when he heard the first enemy patrol approaching his position. His eyes strained to find them in the moonless dark. He knew they were closing in on him by each crunching footstep's increasing loudness. Hathcock held his breath. The patrol was very near. His lungs burned and his heart pounded. Sweat gushed from every pore on his body. He was worried they would smell him. Absolutely motionless, he stared back at the trail of bent and broken grass that lay behind him.

Hathcock thought, "If they see me, then that's how. They'll see my trail." His lungs could take no more pain — he must have air. He felt like a pearl diver gone too deep, seeing the water's mirrored surface over him. Too much distance lay between him and the sweet air above. He remembered, as a boy, diving deep and swimming up, and how his lungs ached just as he reached the water's surface. Hathcock relaxed his lungs slowly — silently releasing the captive breath. He longed to gulp a replenishing surge of oxygen, but instead filled his lungs silently and very slowly with tiny puffs of air.

Movement near his feet nearly made him scream. A leg flashed by him. Another and another flickered past. The NVA patrol was now between him and the safety of the trees.

He heard one soldier clear his throat. Another whispered something in Vietnamese. Hathcock thought, "These guys are goofing off. They aren't even looking. They're safely in their own backyard and don't suspect a thing."

As the patrol passed, Hathcock watched them traipsing along beside the tree line, oblivious of his presence. "That looseness just might save my life," he thought. "Boy, will they be sorry," he told himself. A smile crossed his face, and his confidence soared. As soon as the enemy was out of earshot, he

pushed on through the night.

Day Two

The hour before sunrise has a sleep-inducing effect. Nearly any soldier who has had to remain awake through the night will testify that the worst hour, when fighting sleep poses the greatest challenge, occurs when the night is darkest, coolest, and quietest — an hour or so before dawn.

Hathcock had to rest, but he could not afford risking sleep. In the past months, he had taught himself to nap, yet remain awake, his eyes wide open. He did not know what sort of self-hypnosis made it possible, but he always felt very rested following one of these ten-minute respites.

The flickering light from a small cooking fire caught his attention and brought him out of his catnap. "These dumb hamburgers!" he thought. "Another time and another place, and you would have been mine, Charlie."

An iron pot filled with boiling water and rice hung over the fire. Three NVA soldiers squatted nearby, sleepily waiting for their breakfast to finish cooking. They manned the "Quad-51" machine-gun position on the left flank of the compound. A narrow trail through the grass led from the compound, passed next to the machine-gun nest, made a sharp left turn, and then led arrow-straight to the trees. Lights shone through several windows of the main house. Carlos supposed that it had been a French plantation in years past.

Inside, the short, graying general leaned over a porcelain bowl filled with cold water. A thin white undershirt covered his hairless, sagging chest and wrinkled belly. Baggy white shorts covered his bottom. He wore no shoes but stood on the glossy teak floor in his stocking feet. The old officer's brown uniform rested neatly on hangers hooked to a peg on the door. Gold clusters and braid shone on the uniform's wide, red shoulderboards and on the broad red patches sewn on his collar.

In an adjoining room that had been made into an office, the general's aide-de-camp huddled over papers, shuffling them into order for the old man. They would inspect a

battalion today. The day before, the general and his entourage had walked the perimeter, inspecting the security of his headquarters. He had found it satisfactory.

Hathcock had seen him, but the old man was too distant from the Marine sniper's firing point. Now the sun fully lit the new day. In the distance, Hathcock watched a white car pull away from the house, drive up the trail, and disappear into the tree line.

"Old man's gone for a while, I reckon," he told himself. "Good. That means that those guys will really slack off."

By late afternoon, Hathcock had put five hundred yards between himself and the tree line. More than twenty hours had passed since he had left the jungle's cover.

Just before sunset the white sedan drove up to the house and stopped. Carlos watched the indistinguishable figures walk toward the door. "Just keep it up, Homer — you and your hot dogs. I'll get you."

The evening security patrol began its first tour of the perimeter. Ten NVA soldiers fanned into a line and began closing toward Hathcock. He stopped his oozing wormlike slither and waited. He watched as the soldiers approached him in the dimming light. "It could have been worse," Hathcock thought. "They could have come before sunset."

After lying flat in the dirt for twenty-four hours, Carlos had attracted a following of ants. His body ached from hundreds of small lumps left by their bites. He wondered if enough ant bites could eventually kill a man. Sweat poured into his eyes as the enemy patrol came on. They were spread on-line with twenty- to thirty-foot wide gaps between them.

"Here I am, gettin' hell stung out of me," Hathcock thought, "my body crawl-in' with critters, layin' here, can't move — and here comes Homer and his friends. Hell, I'll probably crawl all the way up, never be seen, kill this old muckety-muck, and then when I try to leave, I'll die from all these critter bites. The ants will cart off my bones, and I'll wind up MIA forever."

Carlos watched the approaching patrol. He could see only three of the soldiers now; the remaining seven were on his blind, right-hand side. He watched the three NVA riflemen plod closer and closer.

"If the guy on my right don't step on me, I'll get by this one too," he reassured himself. But the soldiers were looking far ahead, toward the tree line, and they were oblivious to the sniper they had just passed.

Day Three

The sun found Carlos Hathcock twelve hundred yards from the compound's headquarters, its doorways and windows now clearly visible to him. He watched as the soldiers relieved and posted the guard. "It's as though they're back at Hanoi," he thought. Over everything hung the calm air of routine.

Throughout the day, he observed couriers filing in and out of the compound, reporting to the man with the red collar. The sniper kept to his steady pace. He could feel adren-

aline surging at the thought that tonight he would halt and prepare to fire with dawn's first light.

He thought of how he had succeeded thus far. He also turned his attention to his escape. To the right of where Carlos would eventually lie, a small, almost imperceptible gully ran nearly to the tree line. Once he fired his shot, he planned to slide along the shallow and gently sloping gully and disappear through the trees.

"It's a good thing, Carlos," he told himself. "These hamburgers are so loose here, it'll take them half a day to figure out what happened."

Hathcock squirmed forward a few more inches and then, looking ahead of him, his confidence faded at the same time that his entire body stiffened.

The hunger, which had wrapped his stomach in knots for two days, vanished. The blood drained out of his face and the whole world took a violent spin. He wanted to jump up and run. He wanted to scream. He wanted to do anything rather than continue to lie there and look into the eye of a jade-green bamboo viper that lay coiled in the grass six inches from his face.

Panic ripped through every fiber of self-discipline that Carlos had ever been able to string together. He felt numb as his eyes focused on the deadly snake's emerald head, its ruby-colored eyes evilly slanted above heat-sensing pits.

The snake was motionless but the sniper felt his own body shaking. "Gotta get hold here," he breathed slowly. "Oh Jesus! What if he bites me in the face! Control yourself! He ain't bit you yet." He knew this snake was neurotoxic like the cobra. One pop, even a little one, would kill him in minutes. "You've come too far to let a bamboo snake end it all," he told himself as he lay still and watched the viper flick its black, forked tongue from its yellow-rimmed mouth, testing the air.

Almost as though the shaken Marine had never existed, the glossy snake turned its head, whisked silently between broad stems of grass, and disappeared.

After Hathcock's heart slowed to its normal rhythm and the shaking effects of the adrenaline that sent his blood coursing through his

temples had subsided, his nagging hunger returned, accompanied by a sudden thirst. "Where's the groceries!" he exclaimed to himself. "Where's the water!"

His hand found the canteen lid, and he began to carefully unscrew it from the flask. Half an hour later, he felt the wet relief of the now-warm liquid soaking into his swollen tongue like water on a dry sponge.

Hathcock moved on, wincing with every inch he went. His hip, knee, and arm were covered with blisters from the three days of constant pushing. Shards of pain shot through his side. He had less than two hundred yards left to travel, and compromise began tempting him now.

"You can do it from here," he considered. In all his years of marksmanship competition, his best scores came from the thousand-yard line. "It's been all bulls'-eyes and Vs from this distance," Carlos told himself. But in all his years of shooting, never had one shot been so critical.

A second voice told Carlos, "Stick to the plan. Don't change things now. Survival depends on it. Survive." Carlos always listened to that voice. It had kept him alive. "You thought out this plan when you were rested; now you're tired. Gotta stick to the plan — got to."

He pushed on toward where the slight depression came slicing through the grass. It was very much as he had estimated — almost precisely eight hundred yards from the target.

Darkness fell and, as he drew near to his planned firing position, Hathcock's anticipation mounted. He versed himself on everything in these surroundings that might affect his bullet's flight. He was constantly aware of humidity, wind speed, and wind direction. The faint sound of men laughing caught his ear. He could imagine the North Vietnamese general and his officers drinking and toasting each other around a dining room table. "That general had better enjoy himself while he still can," Hathcock thought.

The Marine sniper watched as the nightly patrol began another round. "They don't even consider a ground attack," he reflected. "They're more worried about air assaults. Look at the bunkers and holes they've got around here. Everything's covered."

The last guard changed as Carlos Hathcock reached the shallow gully he had spotted on aerial photographs and that he had spent the last three days crawling toward. It was not even six inches deep, but it was wide enough for a man to lie in. The depression, which stretched fifteen hundred yards to the distant tree line, actually began here in the middle of the open field, and at its head there was a slight rise, on the back side of which Hathcock positioned his rifle. He unfolded a handkerchief-size cloth and laid it down beneath the weapon's muzzle so that the gases the rifle expelled from the barrel when he fired it would not raise up dust from the ground and give away his position.



Long-range weapon: The Browning M2 .50-cal. heavy machine gun isn't usually thought of as a sniper weapon, but when fitted with a scope, it performs very well. Photo: U.S. Marine Corps

Day Four

When the sun sent its first rays across the wide clearing, the Marine sniper's eyes already blinked through the eight-power scope atop his rifle, searching for his target.

He had estimated the distance correctly — his experienced eyes verified eight hundred yards to the walkway. "I've got to get him standing still with either his face or his back toward me," Carlos told himself. "Don't compromise." He watched for signs of wind — trees rustling, smoke drifting from the cooking fires next to sand-bagged gun positions, the waving of the grass and weeds between him and his target. But more important than these, he watched the mirage, how it danced and boiled above the earth and tilted with the wind.

From that he could calculate the wind velocity by dividing the angle of the mirage by four. After determining that, he could multiply the velocity times eight, which represented this particular range in hundreds of yards, and then divide that again by four and have the number of "clicks," or half-minutes, of angle he would need for windage.

The sun climbed higher and sweat trickled down the sniper's cheeks. His eyes still fixed to the scope's lens, he felt his neck burn from the overhead sun that baked the ground powder-dry and left the grass wilting in its heat.

From somewhere behind the complex of bunkers came the sound of an automobile's engine. The white sedan wheeled around the bunkers and stopped short of the walkway upon which Carlos held the rifle scope's cross hairs. The driver waited with the motor running.

"Here we go," Hathcock told himself.

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Before the war Hathcock honed his shooting skills by competing in armed forces marksmanship matches. Photo: Hathcock Collection

SINGLAUB'S WAR

Special Ops in China

by Jim Morris

EDITOR'S NOTE: World War II had jolted America into a frenzied mobilization by the time ROTC Cadet Jack Singlaub graduated from UCLA in 1942. Just over a year later, having displayed exceptional leadership skills with small teams in commando exercises at Fort Benning, Georgia, he was offered the chance to volunteer for unspecified "hazardous duty behind enemy lines." Singlaub accepted and found himself joining the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. He was assigned to a Jedburgh team, a three-man commando unit that heavily influenced evolution of the present-day Special Forces A-Team concept.

Singlaub's Jedburgh team ultimately parachuted well behind German lines into southern France, to help the local resistance prepare for the soon-to-come D-Day invasion of Normandy. The adventures of young 1st Lieutenant Singlaub and his battalion-sized force of maquis irregulars were chronicled by Jim Morris in the October 1986 issue of Soldier of Fortune. (See "Tales from Uncle Jack; Singlaub's Saga from Soldier to Spy," page 60.)

Morris is a U.S. Special Forces veteran of the Vietnam War who later worked as a foreign correspondent and contributing editor for SOF. Now a published author and an editor for Dell Paperbacks who assisted in a CBS "60 Minutes" profile of Singlaub,

Morris deals in this article with Singlaub's OSS service in Asia at the end of WWII.

Prior to volunteering for the OSS, Singlaub met and fell in love with Mary Osborne. They announced their engagement prior to Singlaub's deployment to Europe. Following the successful completion of his mission in France, he volunteered in December 1944 for reassignment in Asia. On the way to his new duties, Singlaub was given a 30-day leave in the United States. On 6 January 1945, Jack and Mary Singlaub were married. He departed soon thereafter for training on Catalina Island, and from there deployed to the China-Burma-India Theatre.

THE little town of Bhamo sits astride the headwaters of the Irawaddy River, which runs southward out of the mountains along Burma's Chinese border to parallel the famed Burma Road through Mandalay and on to the jungled delta around Rangoon.

United States Army Captain Jack Singlaub got there the hard way, arriving with his OSS company in Calcutta after transiting the Pacific from southern California by ship. From the Indian port they moved into the upper Assam Valley, in what is now Bangladesh. After being assigned to OSS Detachment 101, a command and control unit commanded by Colonel Ray Peers, they moved on to Bhamo.

Colonel Peers, later to become commanding general of the 4th Division in Vietnam and chairman of the Peers Commission to investigate the My Lai massacre, told Singlaub that he would have to hold for a few weeks on his permanent orders to join another OSS detachment over the mountains in Kunming, China. Not one to sit on his hands until his mission priority allowed him and his assortment of commando troops to fly over the hump into China, Singlaub

heard that his CO, Col. Peers, planned to move some of his assets from a place called Dinjan, in the upper Assam Valley, to Bhamo in Burma.

"I volunteered to run a series of convoys up the Burma Road with this equipment, to occupy my guys while we were waiting to get over the hump," Singlaub recalled in the warmth of his kitchen, while a snowstorm raged outside his Colorado mountain-top home. "So we took that on, and drove the Ledo Road up to Bhamo in Burma."

But typical of the military, just when Singlaub thought his unit would have to hang around and wait, they were told to get up and go.

"Then, strangely enough, we flew back from Bhamo to Chabua and then flew on over the hump to Kunming," Singlaub said. "I had been put in charge of a compound company in California. . . . It was made up of a lot of OSS types. So I had Army, Navy and Air Corps officers. And I had Army, Navy and Marine Corps enlisted. And I had male and female civilians. Processing these people was really something, because each service had its own peculiarities.

"When we got to Kunming, I did some Chinese language training, and then went down to Poseh and trained some Chinese guerrillas for operations against the Japanese," he said.

Chinese guerrillas weren't the only troops being trained by the OSS in Indochina. This brought Singlaub into contact with Viet Minh forces under the command of an insurgent leader named Ho Chi Minh.

"By this time I had my team, and we had a weapons man, a medic and my radio operator, and an executive officer. We had about five, all Americans. We were to take a team into what later became North Vietnam. My mission," Singlaub recalled, "was to blow the railroad and a road between Hanoi and the town of Langson.

"The road and the railroad were on opposite sides of this gorge. It was a very deep gorge and the railroad was an easy one to cut because it had a lot of curved rails and a limited number of culverts.

"The road was more difficult," Singlaub said, "but again it was very steep in several places and it had culverts. I was able to spot the culverts and compute my charges. And I



Singlaub, center, and his Jedburgh team prior to secretly parachuting into occupied France to organize armed resistance against the Germans.

found out where my drop zone was going to be. We were to take in some Vietnamese with us when we went.

"When I went on flights in a C-47, to make a reconnaissance of my targets, as well as my drop zone and so on, I carried along supplies to drop to the [OSS] team that was advising Ho Chi Minh. So I would fly over Ho Chi Minh's headquarters at a place called Tuyen Quang. Mike Holland was one of the guys who was in with Ho Chi Minh, and a Major Thomas. I didn't know the others."

Twenty years later Ho's troops would be fighting and killing U.S. servicemen, but he was more of an unknown quantity at the time, and certainly still conducive to providing at least limited support to U.S. and European interests. Singlaub remembers the Ho Chi Minh of Japanese occupation days as a man who "had a lot of ability to get people to work with him. He continued to promise that they were going to attack the Japanese. They didn't do as much attacking of the Japanese as we would have liked. But at that time the Vietnamese that I worked with — and they had run intelligence nets — said that they recognized the need for continuing help from the West, and they expected the French to return.

"They wanted to be able to teach Vietnamese in their schools," Singlaub said, "and they wanted some concessions from their colonial rulers. But they did not want to give up contact with the West. They said they would prefer that the Americans would come in and take over that role, but recognized that that was not likely.

"But they did not have that absolute hatred and intransigent position that they later took. That's a long story, and a very complicated and involved story; how that

developed."

As it turned out, though, Singlaub's mission to blow the road and the rail line was never carried out. There was a temporary postponement in July because of conflicting mission priorities, and then it was permanently scrubbed by an event that surprised everyone.

"We were in this little jungle town and some people came in and said that a big bomb had been dropped on Japan, and the war was going to be over," recalled Singlaub, who at the time expressed disbelief. "We didn't know what they were talking about. Then eventually we were told that our mission was cancelled and they were sending a plane to pick me up. A day or so later a plane came in and flew us back to Kunming. And then they said that the States had dropped an atom bomb on Japan."

Everyone figured a Japanese surrender was at hand. But many problems remained, chief among them the thousands of U.S. prisoners in Japanese camps and the fear that they might not live long enough to see repatriation, especially if the Japanese decided to take out their frustrations of defeat on the POWs. And if the Japanese already had mistreated the prisoners, it would be to the advantage of the vanquished to simply execute the POWs and hide the bodies. It was decided that the OSS should undertake operations aimed at freeing the POWs as soon as possible.

"They asked if I would lead a team to go into Hainan Island, where they thought they had some prisoners," Singlaub said. "There were other teams being brought back from other parts of China, where they had been fighting against the Japanese. Teams were to be sent to Hainan Island, Taiwan, Mukden, Peking, Shantung, Shanghai and Korea.

"I elected to jump my force because we didn't have an airfield. Besides, with the team that went to Taiwan, the Japanese just put a pistol to their faces and said to get back

on the airplane," he said.

"I recruited my team — took some of my same team members and added to them. We parachuted into this area where we assumed the camp was. In the two days I was given to get ready for this, that was an important part of it — to analyze photos and try to see where the camp was. I finally was convinced of the exact buildings, from the air photos, and I selected a drop zone. We flew from Kunming one night, over the Gulf of Tonkin, right on the deck, just 50 feet off the ocean, made landfall — I recognized it from the studies — turned right, flew along the coast until I could see the camp and my selected drop zone.

"So we went in and I picked out my heading and told the pilot to let us out at 600 feet.

"We parachuted into this area, which was within sight of the buildings we thought were where the POWs were. The aircraft

Singlaub in the OSS compound in Kunming, China.





Brevet Major John Singlaub, third from right, tours Japanese prison compound with OSS rescue team on their second day on Hainan Island, just east of the Gulf of Tonkin.

was supposed to make another pass and drop our equipment, but . . . I don't know if he was trying to get lower and look and see if we were all right, but he dropped the supplies at an altitude that was too low for the parachutes to open.

"So my radio was about two meters wide by 50 meters long. The bundle just exploded and ruined a lot of the other supplies we were taking in there as well. So we were without a radio."

That wasn't the worst of it. By early August 1945, many of the Japanese had seen the writing on the wall and were talking of surrender. But unfortunately for Singlaub, the 10,000 Japanese on Hainan Island — big, strapping Hokkaido Marines who had been winning all their battles down in the Pacific — had not heard that the war was about to end.

"They weren't very kind to us for the first 36 hours," Singlaub said. "They policed us up and put us in a guardhouse. But I wouldn't talk to the captain that was commanding the camp. I said I wanted to talk to his colonel.

"We heard him on this telephone because he had to yell so loud. I had a Nisei and a Chinese with me as interpreters, as part of the nine-man force. The Japanese captain said, 'But Colonel, he won't talk to me. He insists on talking to you. The major insists on talking to you.' I was actually a captain, but for that jump, the intelligence people convinced my team and me that I should wear major's leaves. So I was a brevet major.

"And it was a good thing, because there is such a big distinction between company and field grade officers in the Japanese Army. As a major I wouldn't deign to speak to this captain.

"But Colonel, he insists that Japan is going to surrender!' 'But Colonel, they jumped in broad daylight!' We could only hear one end of the conversation, but we could tell roughly what it was.

"So I had a very, very nervous night, without any communications; in fact, locked up in the guardhouse. I had insisted that I wanted to see the commander of the Allied prisoners, and that I wanted to see the colonel who was commanding this area.

"The next day they finally took us over where I met with the Japanese commander. I told him that I absolutely insisted on seeing the Allied officers in the camp. He apparently had gotten the word by this time that the Japanese were about to surrender. So I told him that I was commandeering all the food on the island, and that, after Allied needs were met, he would have the next priority. All the transportation I was commandeering, all the communications. And I wanted a liaison officer assigned to me immediately, but that the first order of business was to talk to the prisoners.

"So they brought in an Australian colonel, the senior officer, and a Dutch lieutenant commander," Singlaub recalled. "It was quite a reunion. Very emotional, as you can imagine.

"I moved the Japanese to the side, put these guys down, after shaking their hands, and found out what their real problems were. They went back to their quarters. So then I issued some ultimatums to the Japanese, as to what was going to be done specifically.

"That operation, I suppose, was one of the most satisfying that you could have. Not only providing freedom to almost 400 prisoners of war, but we had the job of bringing them up-to-date on what had happened since they had been captured. They had been captured by the Japanese very early in the Pacific war — in February of 1942 — on a small island in what is now Indonesia, which at that time was the Netherlands East

Indies. They had been very badly treated by the Japanese. They had been physically abused. They had been put on this island of Hainan in the most inhospitable part of the island, and when the monsoons hit, the water would not only come through the roof, but through the walls.

"Several were dying each day by the time I got there. So we were able to give them not only freedom, but by feeding them about six meals a day, six small meals a day, we stopped the deaths by starvation. And we gave them vitamin B-1 injections and provided them with some essential medical care; although some still died after we got there.

"But then I had the problem of moving them from that location on the west side of the island down to the southern tip, where there was an adequate harbor and an airfield.

"I commandeered a train and was moving them down there when our train was ambushed and the engine was derailed. The rail was blown, but we were flying a homemade American flag on the train. The blue field was denim and the stripes were sheets, with the wrong number of stars and the wrong number of stripes.

"But that train was never assaulted. That's a good thing, because I only had four armed Americans on it. The rest were unarmed prisoners. We never did find out whether that ambush was the work of bandits or guerrillas.

"So we had to go through all of that to get 'em down there. But eventually we moved them, either by rail or by boat. Some of them weren't up to rail travel, so we had to move them by boat down to the other end of the island, where I proceeded to set up better hospital facilities.

"It was a better part of the island. There was fresh fruit available for them there. We took over some barracks that had belonged to the Japanese Air Force and made it into a hospital and barracks for the troops, until I



could eventually bring in some Australian ships to evacuate the Australians and the Dutch up to Hong Kong.

"I found that there were some prisoners who had escaped and were presumed to be with the guerrillas in the interior of the island. Intelligence nets that I set up initially indicated that there had been some Americans who had been captured and killed by the Japanese.

"We produced evidence of this. One of the things that was given to me on my first entry into the camp was a packet of documentation of the atrocities committed against these people, and that evidence, which I personally held on to until I got out and personally turned it over to the British authorities in Hong Kong, was used as the basic documentation to try some of the Japanese for war crimes after the war.

"I had the problem of locating where these escapees and evaders were. . . . Well, first of all I had the problem of not having any radio. It wasn't until I got down to the southern end of the island and took over a big Japanese transmitter and sent back a message to Kunming, telling what had happened and where I was, that we made contact.

"Although we had had some signals that we were able to display on the drop zone, it was agreed that 24 hours after our drop, they would send a reconnaissance flight over the drop zone and photograph it. I had a series of signals to display by spreading out the reserve parachutes, which were white, in different patterns.

"Fortunately I was able to get my people — two guys — out of that guardhouse where we were and out to the drop zone to display that signal on the second day. On the first day the recce flight went over and there was nothing, so they were quite worried in Kunming.

"Second day I was able to indicate that we were out of communication, but we were okay. We had a way of mutilating the panels slightly, if needed, to indicate we were

under duress. The parachutes were displayed correctly, so they knew we were okay.

"When we boomed in with that big signal from the Japanese transmitter, they wouldn't believe it was us, so we had to go through a lot of challenges to prove that we were, in fact, who we said we were.

"But I was able then to bring in a doctor on a plane, and I was able to then use that plane to fly over the island. I was able to throw in small bottles of Atabrine (anti-malaria) tablets. I was able to use small parachutes from our jump, the pilot chutes, to float these things down. I would throw them into large villages, with a note that said, 'Take this to your leader. The Allies have landed a small force on the southern part of the island. The Japanese are in the process of surrendering. The war is over. We want to make contact with any Allied former prisoners or evaders. Any Allied personnel, send a message to the southern part of the island, town of Sanya.'

"Two days later we got a message that came in answer to that, signed by an Australian major, indicating that he had a certain number of Australian and Dutch troops with him, plus a large number of Indians who had escaped also. These were members of the Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery. They were Sikhs.

"The Japanese had tried to use them as troops; the Japanese had tried to form a Free India movement. But these people, when given an opportunity to serve, had headed for the hills. There were also some Americans.

"Several messages came in. One of them was signed by the Australian major, and another was from an American who was an evader and who was in the interior of the island with some friendly guerrillas.

"So I had the problem of getting in there as part of my problem of getting all Allied personnel out. I also had the problem of recontacting my exec. The only way I could get to

A group of Australian officers poses after their release from a Japanese POW camp on Hainan Island. They were rescued by an OSS team headed by John Singlaub.

my rear detachment was to parachute in.

"That's when I made my first free fall. I used one of the emergency parachutes off one of the airplanes that flew in supplies. And I took the reserve that was still intact and cut the old harness that I had jumped in with, tied knots in the risers above the connectors, so that I had a harness for my reserve, and then did a free fall out of a C-47.

"I had no idea how much altitude I should allow, but I decided I would need five seconds to clear the airplane and pull the thing, so. . . ."

"Add about 500 feet."

"Yeah, I computed this on the basis of

Continued on page 79

Capt. Singlaub is decorated at the OSS compound in Kunming for the success of his commando mission in France.



T & E

TRANSALP'S CLIMBING SKINS

by William B. Guthrie



CHOOSING suitable outdoor underwear is often a laborious process, considering all the options that are available out there: wool, cotton, synthetics. Which will give the best advantage in the field?

Modern outdoor underwear divides neatly into two categories: waterproof and water-wicking. Waterproof reflectorized shirts, socks and bag liners are great for people who manage their bodies as if they were flying a light aircraft, but most of us will wear inner garments that preserve insulation by transporting moisture from the skin to the atmosphere. (Water absorbent underwear is hardly worth mentioning; people who wear cotton long johns are either tourists or live in relatively warm areas.)

Wool is the traditional material for moisture-wicking insulation, but modern synthetics are lighter, warmer, less absorbent and have greater wicking power than wool. There are several contenders for the synthetic insulation title, but polypropylene has all

Climbing Skins polypro/Lycra-weave garments are the latest in cold-weather wear.

TRANSALP'S CLIMBING SKINS

Fabric: . . . 80 percent polypropylene, 20 percent Lycra four-way stretch knit; 11.5 oz. per yard.

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Weight: From 5 oz. for vest to 14 oz. for bibs.

Price: From \$32.75 for vest to \$66.50 for bibs.

Manufacturer: Transalp, Dept. SOF, 1335 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302. (303) 449-6023.

the desirable qualities, so it's become an industry standard. The main problem with polypropylene is that in the more effective, heavier weights, it's stiff. Also, pure polypropylene isn't abrasion and snag resistant, so it makes poor outerwear.

A new knit of 80 percent polypropylene and 20 percent elastic Lycra seems to have solved the problems of plain polypropylene, and a new company, Transalp, is experimenting with clothing made from the new material. The new line is light, elastic, sturdily made and features an unusually wide temperature-comfort range.

Although Transalp's Climbing Skins were developed for mountaineering, they have wide-ranging applications. They make excellent cold-weather long underwear for either wet or dry environments, they add temperature range to a sleeping bag, they make comfortable running sweats, and they perform exceptionally for their original purpose: cross-country skiing, climbing and cycling.

Climbing Skins fit like a second skin, so they don't get hooked on gear or brush, and they don't get caught in ropes and descenders like baggier insulation. The tightness of fit allows such rapid and efficient moisture wicking that Climbing Skins remain comfortable by themselves from 20 degrees to 60 degrees F. Their wind resistance is high for a knit, and adding a wind shell takes Climbing Skins and you down to zero as long as you're working.

In addition, the Lycra and polypropylene woven knit gives the garment a slicker finish, a tighter fit and minimizes snagging. For extra wear, Climbing Skins are reinforced at the elbows, collar and chest pocket with nylon oxford cloth.

For military or industrial use, it should be remembered that polypropylene — like most synthetics — ignites easily, burns hot, and the flaming fluid sticks to everything it touches . . . like your skin.

Still, if what you need is warmth, durability and flexibility, you'll find that Climbing Skins are the best winter garments you've ever worn. ❧

HUNGARIAN AKM

by Peter G. Kokalis



Major components of the Hungarian AKM match its Russian counterpart except for auto safety sear and anti-bounce device.

EVERYONE wants a piece of the action. When the Finnish Model 1962 Valmet was imported a decade ago in semiautomatic form, it caused not so much as a ripple. It just didn't look like the Kalashnikov we faced in Vietnam. When the semiauto version of the Egyptian Maadi AKM was introduced in 1982, the waters started to get turbulent. Some were enamored and others were enraged, but its \$1,000 price tag inhibited sales and the Maadi was soon dropped. The Israeli Galil followed a year later, and although a Kalashnikov in heart and soul, it too didn't fit the Evil Empire's image. 1984 saw the beginning of a virtual tidal wave of AKMs from the People's Republic of China, in numerous and appealing configurations. Over the last four years there have been several attempts, with mixed success, to import Yugoslav versions of the world's most ubiquitous assault rifle.

And now, Kassnar Imports, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 6097, Harrisburg, PA 17112) has floated a semiautomatic version of the Hungarian AKM, called (for reasons known only to BATF) the SA 85M.

Chambered for the original 7.62X39mm ComBloc cartridge, it's by far the most attractive AKM I've ever held in my hands — bar none. It's finished in the Soviet manner: matte black enamel over phosphate on every metal surface from magazine to bolt, with the exception of the chromed bore and piston. Along with the model designation, caliber and importer, the left side of the

receiver is marked with the state arsenal's logo, "FEG" (*Femaru Fegyvar es Gepgyar* in Budapest).

The SA 85M is available with either a folding or rigid wood stock, and SOF's test sample was equipped with a folding stock which lacked the rigidity of a proper firing platform. The stock's locking catch was stiff and difficult to manipulate, but loosened with use. Both struts on the stock have reinforcing bars riveted and punch-welded in place, a feature lacking on some other AKMs of this type.

All of the wood furniture — handguards, pistol grip and buttstock — is cut from native — and attractive — blond beechwood (twice steamed, disinfected, dried to a humidity level of 10-12 percent and then oil varnished with a waxened paste). The pistol grip's shape is quite distinctive and taken from the plastic grip on the Hungarian AMD short-barreled assault rifle, which was later copied on the Galil.

While the four gas escape holes on each side of the gas cylinder have been retained from the AK-47, the pinned and riveted sheet-metal receiver, the two gas relief holes on each side of the gas block where it mates with the gas cylinder, the muzzle compensator, sheet-metal receiver cover with transverse ribs, bayonet lug under the gas block, rear sight graduated to 1,000 meters and all other features are exactly as found on the Russian AKM. The only things missing on this semiautomatic-only version are the auto safety sear and anti-bounce device.

Overall quality is excellent and the accessories included are endless. Kassnar's

What you see is what you get. Kassnar Imports, Inc.'s Hungarian AKM is an excellent weapon and comes with a full-blown accessory package.

Hungarian AKMs come complete with three steel 30-round magazines, Soviet-type wire cutter bayonet and scabbard, leather sling, ramrod, two plastic lubricant bottles in a tray and the usual buttstock cleaning kit with jag tip, nylon brush and front sight adjusting tool.

AKMs, however, are just not designed for target grade accuracy. There's too much flex in the pinned, sheet-metal receiver body to shoot minute-of-angle groups. Six-inch groups at 100 meters are the average. But, like hand grenades, the ComBloc countries feel that's close enough for combat. And, the trade-off is exceptional reliability. Using factory ball, I've never experienced a stoppage in any of the Kalashnikov 7.62X39mm series.

Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 6030 Highway 85, Suite 222, P.O. Box 1176, Riverdale, GA 30274) is importing match grade 7.62X39mm ammunition on 10-round SKS stripper clips from the People's Republic of China. Berdan primed, with a copper-washed steel case (headstamped "101 71"), the 122-grain ball of projectile is sealed at the case mouth. It left the muzzle of our Hungarian AKM with an average velocity of 2,345 fps. Even though it was manufactured in 1971, standard deviation was a spectacular 12 fps. Used by the People's Liberation Army in all

Continued on page 85

ETHIOPIA'S GUERRILLA WAR

Continued from page 59

again become reality as the thundering orchestra tunes up.

With their unmistakable clatter, the Kalashnikovs kick at the stones and tear into the sand, the DShKs clamor and turn panic into chaos across the ragged valley, the 82mm mortars lurch into action, their messages sent in 26-second intervals into the Ethiopian positions.

"Christ," a voice had screamed near me. I looked. No one was there. I was alone, trapped with the fires and the smoke and the sand ... and my panic. And then I hear his crying. His screams grab hold of me and snap me back to reality. I hear the piercing wail of a man who knows he is about to die.

I run toward the screams, then hesitate. I am afraid that what has happened to him may very well happen to me. I look, then shudder. A chunk of the 122mm has sliced him from knee to groin, opening a fist-sized gash above his left leg, then ripping upward wider and wider. From knee to hip, he lies exposed; broken bone and torn muscle, a sea of blood and pain.

He twists in the dirt, where he had been flung when the shell landed. Five fighters hold him down as another, a woman medic, cuts away his trousers, injects him with morphine, ties off an artery and applies the compress. The injured man slips into delirium, twisting and turning in the slow grasp of death.

He is the only major casualty. There have been other wounds, but all minor: cuts, abrasions, concussions.

Here, on this African battlefield void of MASH units, where major hospitals are a painful and harrowing 12-hour journey over roads carved into the cliffs with sheer drop-offs, major wounds are usually fatal or, at the very least, require amputation.

Minor wounds are probed and stitched without the benefit of anesthesia, and the EPLF fighters stumble back into position to await the next Ethiopian offensive.

"Harena," yells Ande Adhanom. "Harena! Harena!"

The artillery commander's screaming breaks through the panic, through the deadly silence that seems to grip everyone — fighter and civilian alike.

"Harena!" With that one word the EPLF jumps into a mode of retaliation. AKs crack, heavy machine guns clamor and everything seems to disappear in the smoke.

As I stumble through the searing heat of battle, tiny figures materialize in a small clearing under an angled slope facing the Ethiopians.

The two 82mm mortars are being put into action. Four women fighters reassemble the firing tubes and tripods. Another calibrates the angle. It happens in seconds.

Adhanom scrambles up the slope and, as the officer takes position behind a mammoth boulder, he calls down below in Tigrinya, one of the nine native languages of Eritrea. I do not know what he says, but it is short and to the point. And when he says it, the women down below, each of whom holds a mortar shell, nod in agreement.

Adhanom peers around the corner of the boulder. His binoculars are trained on the Ethiopian positions. He turns and shouts another command.

Below, one of the women adjusts the mortar's calibration. She takes one of the shells in her

hands, looks above to her commander, and then slides the shell down the tube. The deadly shell is on its way.

Ten seconds ... 20, 26! A thud across the valley, another scream from Adhanom, a trajectory correction from the woman below.

"Harena!" Another round slides into action. The waiting, then a scream of jubilation from Adhanom and a torrent of Tigrinya that falls on uncomprehending ears. But you know the round has impacted where it is supposed to have landed.

Their language may sound like gibberish, but there is no need for an interpreter. On target is on target in any tongue.

Scrambling up to where Adhanom crouches, I scan the Ethiopian positions as both EPLF mortars fly into action. Nonstop, round after killing round tears into the Ethiopian trenches. It is precision firing at its best.

There are no screams for my ears to hear. But I know they are there — across the valley, inside the trenches, where the Soviets command. It is butchery, but it warms my soul.

I grin at Adhanom and, for the moment, forget about the shattered EPLF fighter who was swept away earlier by the Russian artillery.

"Soldiers," says Adhanom, throwing the word my way as so much rubbish. "Today we killed soldiers with the very weapons they used to kill us."

He peers toward his enemies, smiles and begins inching his way down the slope. He pauses and looks me in the eye. "But do not call us soldiers," he says in a metallic voice. "Our liberation is our money. We are simply fighters."

The burning sun begins to drop behind Wanja and the cool mountain air brings with it relief — we have survived another day. As the sun drops and quickly dies behind us, I enter a shallow

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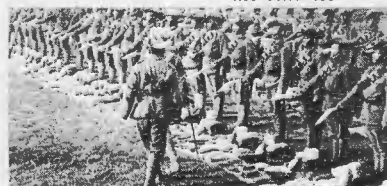
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bunker high on the mountain. Inside, crouched with their knees up to their chins, Berhe Weldelebanos and Yebio Teferi show off their weapon — an immaculate, Soviet-made 14.5mm ZPU-1 heavy machine gun.

"We carry it all up here on our backs," says 22-year-old Teferi, proudly running his hands over the massive weapon. A seven-year veteran of this war, Teferi is one of the few fighters on the mountain who shows no visible scars from the fighting.

"My wounds are all in here," he says, pointing to his heart. "Many friends die. Many friends."

They got their new machine gun in late November 1985, when the Ethiopians launched Operation Red Sea (the eighth Soviet-coordinated offensive in the past seven years against these positions). It was a series of five frontal assaults, in which the Ethiopian soldiers charged shoulder-to-shoulder across the valley and up the slopes of Denden and Wanja.

During the attack, Berhe and Yebio were picked for the most hazardous of tasks. Their mission was to crawl out onto the expanse of no man's land and, under the cover of darkness, strip the enemy of their weapons.

They shake their heads mournfully and hold their noses as they recall the horrors of what they saw. Stretched out before them, twisted and rotting quickly under the sun, as vultures hovered, swooped and came to rest on the corpses for their evening meal, lay the shattered remnants of an Ethiopian regiment of paratroopers.

"It is our way of continuing the fight," explains Weldelebanos. "When our weapons fail, we simply kill the Amharics. They give us good weapons. You tell the Soviets we thank them for their generosity, no?"

Teferi explains how, on the night they crawled among the food of the vultures, he and Weldelebanos came across their 14.5mm machine gun — with a very much alive gun crew.

Pantomiming what happened next (cocked fingers pointing to their heads, fingers cutting across their throats), the two EPLF fighters added to their company's ever-growing arsenal.

"Now," says Weldelebanos, 23, a short and emaciated man who looks more like a badly-used 40-year-old, "we let them taste their own bullets. So many times we kill with this." The two fighters laugh and throw their arms around each other.

The gunner puts a damper on the good-natured conversation. Peering through the telescopic sight, he excitedly says "Amhara" over and over. I look through the scope and clearly see the green-clad uniforms of the Ethiopian soldiers, their steel helmets glistening in the dying sun.

"You want me to kill them for you?" asks Weldelebanos matter-of-factly.

It's my turn to laugh — nervously. I tell them that it would be better to wait until the Ethiopians attack. "Let your enemies die like soldiers," I say.

"You are right, Mr. John," says Teferi. "We will wait until tomorrow. And when they come at us, as they have before, we will kill them all."

Weldelebanos has not been listening to our conversation. His mind is consumed by the sight of his enemies. He fires a burst, the thunder of which cascades upon my ears inside the stone hovel. He turns and smiles mischievously.

"Come, Mr. John," he says, pushing me toward the entrance of the bunker. "Let us eat."

We join other members of the company in their bunker. "You eat first, Mr. John," says Terhas Habte, a stocky woman who is the company's second in command. I reach into the common pot

with my right hand, using a half-dollar-sized piece of bread, and scoop up one sardine. That's dinner. One clump of bread, one sardine, several cups of hot, sweetened tea drunk from a cut-down mortar shell. The sardines are something special for the troops — a bonus for taking care of a curious American.

Under the stars that night, in the teeth-chattering cold that is somewhat lessened by the generosity of a nameless fighter who shares his blanket, I peer into blackened faces and listen to their stories of hand-to-hand battle, of wounds inflicted and received, of death and misery and dreams of victory that only combatants can dream.

From the shadows comes a voice that chills me.

"From our houses of stone, from our houses of struggle," says one of the fighters, "we will fight the Ethiopians, the Soviets, until we can no longer breathe. They can wound us, as they have wounded me. But we will fight until there is nothing left for us to give. I fight to the death, until they kill all of me. My brothers and sisters, for us this is a fight for liberty, for our freedom. As American, you can understand that."

The morning comes but there is no Soviet reconnaissance plane, no artillery barrage or gun-fire, no mortars or rockets. An eerie silence pervades the battlefield.

Hudrom, my guide to the rear, gets to his feet and bids his fellow fighters goodbye. Our journey to the rear will take 12 hours in a Land Rover. He will then walk back to Denden.

I depart with Hudrom as my guide, walking wearily down a goat path littered by spent cluster bombs and RPG-7s, an occasional corpse where an Ethiopian ventured too far, past the caves where the Kalashnikovs are stacked next to the towering boxes of grenades.

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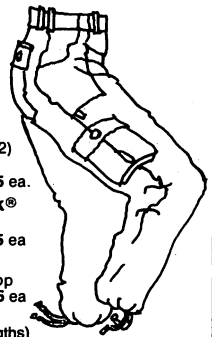
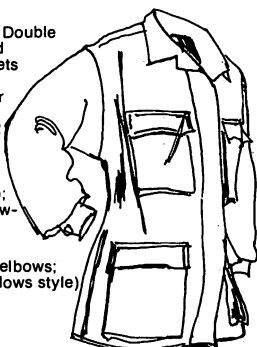
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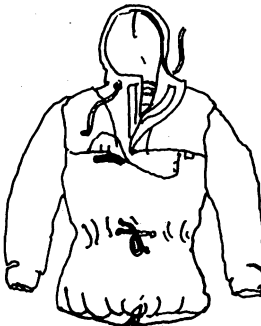
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"Do you like our land of rocks?" Hudrom asks as we pause for a cigarette and a mouthful of polluted water.

I nod and force a smile. "It's a weird land," I tell him. "Not quite what I had expected."

Grinning, he runs a bony finger over the palm of his hand and asks: "You will write of our plight?"

I tell him I will.

"Will your people believe it, though?" he says with a mischievous smile. "Our war has always been fought in the darkness. There are no eyes to see our battle, no ears to hear our fight. We call it a conspiracy of silence."

I am gripped by the inevitable fever. I am sickened from days with little food and less water. My kidneys are on fire and I feel the first pangs of explosion deep inside. I stagger and Hudrom puts his arm around my shoulder. With his help, we slowly descend the mountain, away from the battlefield, back to civilization; toward the rear where the MiGs fly every day, where death is less personal.

Step after painstaking step we travel. An American departs with an African as his crutch — back to the sane world. His words, uttered in broken English, ring in my ears.

"Don't worry, Mr. John. The sickness will soon leave you," Hudrom Russom says. "But our war will continue. I will get you back so you can write our story, no?"

WAR ON THE POLITICAL FRONT

Ethiopia, formerly the domain of a long list of "King of Kings" whose last emperor was

Haile Selassie, is currently ruled by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. In a nation of 36 million, Col. Mengistu's voice is the only one that carries any weight. He is judge and jury and — most importantly — executioner in all matters of state.

His face is well publicized. In fact, he is the most photographed of all Ethiopians. Only the posters of Marx, Engels and Lenin are more visible around the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.

Mengistu is an avowed Marxist-Leninist and the one-man rule of his country. The government-run newspaper *The Ethiopian Herald* refers to him as "Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers Party of Ethiopia, Chairman of Provisional Military Administrative Committee (PMAC), and Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces."

Mengistu, in a display of modesty, however, prefers to be simply called "The Chairman."

And when "The Chairman" speaks — most notably in anti-imperialistic rhetoric, despite \$1 billion in famine relief from the West — everyone had best listen up.

Mengistu, a captain in Selassie's army, was one of 120 junior military officers calling themselves "The Dergue" who gained absolute power in 1974, when they inspired a bloody coup in the wake of a nationwide famine that Selassie's government had attempted to cover up.

After the necessary liquidation of Selassie's officials, Mengistu's first official act was to break ties with the United States and appeal to the Soviet Union for military help in

Ethiopia's drawn-out war against the people of Eritrea — a war which had been waged since 1961.

Eritrea, formerly an Italian colony (from 1898 to 1941), was placed under Ethiopian sovereignty in 1952 by the United Nations, in a federal arrangement that allowed the country to maintain its own government, administration and flag. Selassie never allowed the Eritreans self-rule, however, and formally annexed the region in 1962 — discarding its flag and forcing the adoption of the Ethiopian language, Amharic.

Eritrea, which had been harassing Ethiopia the year before with typical guerrilla hit-and-run tactics, stepped up the fight with outside military aid, mainly from Arab allies of the Soviet Union. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) came into being and Ethiopia soon found itself embroiled in an all-out war that has dragged on for the past 25 years.

However, it's not so much the character of the war itself that confuses Western politicians. Instead, it is the stigma of the Soviet-aligned nations that aided Eritrea for the first 16 years of its struggle.

"The Arab bandits to the north" is how Mengistu's government refers to the EPLF. American policymakers add little to the rhetoric. When the subject of Eritrea's war of liberation is broached in diplomatic circles, the passive stand-by, "It's one Marxist army killing another Marxist army," is constantly used. It does not matter that the Arabs, at the urging of the Soviet Union, ceased all shipment of arms into Eritrea when Mengistu became a political puppet for the Soviet Union in 1977.

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Meanwhile Eritrea, with a population of less than three million people and an army of only 40,000, faces Mengistu's military arm of 300,000 — Africa's second-largest army next to Egypt.

According to a United Nations spokesman, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc nations have poured more than \$4 billion into Ethiopia's war machine. In 1985 alone, the United Nations says the Soviet Union provided \$173 million in emergency military assistance. This Russian gift came at a time when the world first heard of nationwide famine in Ethiopia — famine that conservative estimates say has killed more than 300,000 people since 1983. The United Nations does, however, note that \$3 million in Soviet food aid was given in 1984.

But it's the Soviets' military aid that has kept Mengistu in power. With Soviet firepower — most notably MiG-21s and 17,000 Cuban combat troops — Ethiopia was able to defeat Somalia, which had invaded the Ogaden region of southeast Ethiopia in 1977. Russian military aid continues to keep Ethiopia afloat in its war against Eritrea.

For this Russian generosity, Mengistu has allowed the Soviets to take over the former American-manned military bases within Eritrea and also to build new facilities such as that on the Dahlak archipelago, a group of strategic islands in the Red Sea. It is there that the Soviets have constructed a major electronic eavesdropping facility that allows them to monitor traffic through the world's key oil-shipping lanes.

Although U.S. officials claim that no one is counting, the Soviet Union to date has bolstered Mengistu's regime with 8,500 Soviet

and East German advisers; upwards of 17,000 Cuban combat troops; 2,500 T-54 and T-55 tanks; 90 MiG-23s; and 12 Mi-24 Hind helicopters. There are no accurate figures, however, on the number of BTR-60 armored personnel carriers, MiG-21s or Mi-4 Hound and Mi-8 Hip helicopters being used within the Ethiopian armed services.

Official U.S. policy toward Eritrea is much as it has been since 1950 when, during the Ethiopia-Eritrea United Nations debate that gave control of Eritrea to Emperor Selassie's Ethiopia, John Foster Dulles said:

"From the point of view of justice, the opinion of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interest of the United States in the Red Sea basin and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that the country (Eritrea) has to be linked with our ally, Ethiopia."

Though a State Department spokesman acknowledges that current U.S. relations with Ethiopia's Marxist-Leninist regime are "rather poor" and are maintained at the *chargé d'affaires* level rather than through an exchange of ambassadors, the United States "respects the territorial integrity of Ethiopia" and does not support the Eritrean rebels, whose leadership is characterized as being as Marxist as the Ethiopian government. He had visited Addis Ababa and said how, today, "there is a new atmosphere of hope" within that Soviet satellite. He said that the U.S. outpouring of famine relief "has kindled a welcome new pro-American sentiment among the Ethiopian people and many officials as well."

As he spoke, however, Soviet artillery and

MiG-23s were once again pounding away at the EPLF — dropping cluster bombs and napalm up and down the Nacfa Front.

NACFA: DEVASTATION ... AND HOPE

It was once a city of 6,000. Prosperous, by African standards, Nacfa was the marketplace for nomads and settled Eritreans living in the province of Sahel. Granted, the sandstone and tin dwellings weren't meant for society's elite. Instead, this was home for the working man and his wife and children.

Today, Nacfa is nothing more than ruins.

As with all of the other 587 cities in Eritrea, Nacfa has been leveled. Bomb craters are everywhere, as are the twisted, gutted reminders of the past. Today, the crushed buildings and rubble are ruled by rats. Where children once played, goats and camels tread.

Yet despite the devastation, Nacfa is periodically bombed and strafed by the MiG-21s and MiG-23s of the Ethiopian Air Force. There is no enemy to kill in the ruins, but the weekly onslaught from above is carried out like clockwork.

"Nacfa is the one symbol of our steadfastness," says Sebbat Ephrem, one of 13 Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) heads of state who govern war-torn Eritrea. "It is difficult for us to think of Nacfa in the hands of our enemies. To get it, the Soviets would have to pay dearly.

"They (the Soviets) know that Nacfa is the key to our struggle. And that is why, each year when they send the Ethiopians on the

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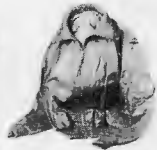


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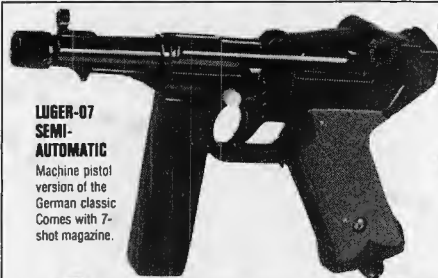
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offensive, they strike at the throat of our struggle. They hit us at Nacfa."

What makes Nacfa unique is its strategic location. The once-prosperous community has the distinction of being the first Eritrean city astride the only road leading north out of Ethiopia through the northern highlands — an impenetrable maze of mountains that looms some 2,000 meters high and covers the width and breadth of Eritrea. Before the Eritreans went to war with Ethiopia in 1961, Nacfa was oftentimes called "The Gateway to the Highlands." Today it is known as "The Gateway to Hell."

If the Ethiopians are to occupy northern Eritrea, there is but one route available to them — and it is on the road through Nacfa. Standing ominously, like two gigantic guarding sentinels in the path of the stalled Ethiopian advance, are the foreboding twin peaks of Denden and Wanja, 20 kilometers to the south.

"Every war has its symbolic battlefield," says Ephrem. "For our war of independence, we have Nacfa. And we will always have Nacfa."

Strong words spoken softly by the voice of Eritrea. Yet, the words have steel in them. They are words that have been tempered and forged on the Naro Plains and in the Anseba Valley, which cradles Nacfa and its twin guardians, Denden and Wanja.

Nacfa came under control of the EPLF on 22 March 1977, after a six-month siege in which the entire Ethiopian garrison of 4,000 was either killed or captured.

The Ethiopians retaliated with massive air strikes followed by artillery attacks. When repeated counterattacks failed, the bombardments were intensified and Nacfa was systematically wiped off the face of the earth. Only Nacfa's rubble and the undaunted armed courage of the EPLF stood in the way of the Ethiopians.

With the full military backing of the Soviet Union, Ethiopian dictator Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam unleashed "Operation Red Sea" on 10 October 1985, against the EPLF's mountain strongholds that stretch for 450 kilometers, from the Red Sea to the Eritrean border with Sudan.

So confident was Mengistu that the offensive would succeed (deploying an estimated 90,000 troops, an elite paratrooper regiment and 12 Mi-24 Hind A helicopters flown by South Yemen pilots), that he personally scheduled the announcement of the final solution to the Eritrean problem for 16 October. He would have to postpone it.

Mengistu's battle plans were centered around the quick fall of Nacfa. While six divisions hit other EPLF strongholds, Mengistu sent two divisions up the face of Wanja and Denden. When the smoke had cleared after two months of deadly fighting — most of it at close quarters — Ethiopia admitted casualties in excess of 43,000. On the Nacfa Front, European sources reported that 15,000 Ethiopians were killed or captured.

More important, however, were the serviceable Soviet weapons gleaned from the Nacfa battlefield: 15 T-54 and T-55 tanks; nine 122mm howitzers; 12 76mm mountain guns; five 14.5mm ZPU-1 heavy machine guns; and an estimated 4,000 Kalashnikovs.

The valleys and sand plains in and around Denden and Wanja attest to the ferocity of the fighting of Operation Red Sea. It's impossible to look anywhere without seeing the blackened hulks of Soviet trucks and tanks,

the broken Kalashnikovs, or the thousands upon thousands of sunbaked corpses of Ethiopian soldiers.

The price that the EPLF paid for this victory is staggering, especially in light of their limited manpower. Casualties ranging upwards of 4,000 may not sound excessive until one realizes that the entire EPLF army does not exceed 40,000.

"The killing is excessive," says Sebat Ephrem, speaking from the EPLF government standpoint. "The Ethiopians are so mechanized. They have the airplanes and helicopters. The Soviets have a great influence on the war. Only their presence is complicating the situation. Without the Soviets, the war is over and our freedom is won.

"What we fear is the Soviet strategy. Here, it is the same as they used during World War II in Eastern Europe against the Nazis. There, the Soviets killed the Nazis, liberated the countries, then stayed forever. The liberated countries became the country of the Soviet Union.

"If the Soviets win in Eritrea, then Eritrea becomes what Ethiopia is — a tool of the Soviet Union. That is why we fight, my friend. That is what we die for. That is what keeps our fighters at the front.

"Liberty. You Americans know what the word really means." ✕

SINGLAUB & THE OSS

Continued from page 71

the velocity of a free-falling body, and jumped from less than a thousand feet. When I got into free falling later on, I realized how silly that was. But anyway it was successful, and I got back in.

"Eventually we had to go back into the interior. That was an exciting thing because the Japanese controlled the perimeter of the island, in most cases. But in the interior there were three separate groups; you had pro-communist guerrillas and pro-nationalist guerrillas, and then you had just plain bandits. I still don't know who it was that ambushed our train. It may have been just bandits, but in any case we had to go through several territories.

"The Japanese would only take us so far, and then they said, 'Well, down that road there' — they called them all bandits — 'there are some bandits,' and we'd go down and cautiously display an American flag. They then would take us to the end of the area they controlled, and eventually we got in. We made arrangements to come out a few days later.

"So we brought out several truckloads of escapers and evaders.

"I must say, the Chinese Nationalist commander on the island gave us one of the finest Chinese meals I've ever had, in celebration of this great occasion. It was a 26-course dinner, as I recall.

"We evacuated the majority of the prisoners via destroyers. Later, when I reached Hong Kong, I was able to arrange for a hospital ship to come in and pick up the ones who were really in bad shape.

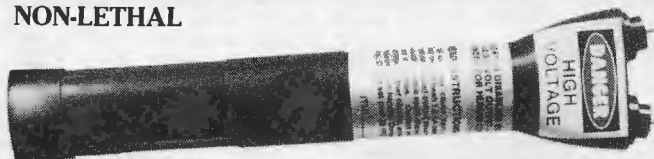
"I had great pressure from the Japanese. They wanted to surrender to me. They did not want to wait and surrender to the Chinese. But it was very clear in my instructions that I would not accept their surrender, and the Japanese just could not understand.

"They wanted to come and present their swords to me, rather than face surrender to the

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Chinese, whom they had not treated particularly well.

"By that time a group of logisticians from the China headquarters came in and relieved me. They were from the Services of Supply. They had the responsibility of staying there until the Chinese Army came.

"I then embarked the team on an Australian destroyer and sailed to Hong Kong. We happened to be there the night of the official surrender signing. By this time the majority of the ships of the British Navy had assembled in Hong Kong and they put on quite a fireworks display that night.

"That was about the second of September, I think, in '45.

"A few days later we flew back to Kunming and I released the team." ✕

SIG .45

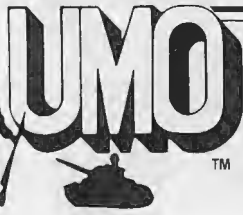
Continued from page 37

also include the slide stop lever and the magazine catch-release button (relocated from the heel of the frame). Thumbing downward on the hammer-drop lever takes the sear out of register with the full-cock hammer notch. As the hammer-drop lever is released, hammer spring pressure drops the hammer, which is then caught by the sear engaging in the safety intercept notch (the hammer's rest position when the hammer's coil spring is not compressed). While it's somewhat disconcerting to watch the hammer fall on a loaded chamber, they've been safely dropping in this manner since the Walther PP was introduced in 1929. During and after operation of the hammer-drop lever, the firing pin remains constantly blocked. No other manually operated safety is provided, or required, as the P220 can be discharged only if the trigger is pulled. There is no magazine safety, a dubious feature to say the least.

Grip-to-frame angle, at best a qualitative assessment, is perfect and superior to that of the M1911A1. Two-piece, black plastic grip panels, now in P226 configuration, wrap around and meet at the rear of the frame. They are sharply checkered on the sides and rear and swelled at the bottom rear to fill the natural contour of the average-sized palm. The grip panel screws, accompanied by lock washers, turn into threads tapped directly into the aluminum alloy frame. I prefer M1911A1-type bushings, as they can be replaced if the threads strip — and they will.

The frame's front strap is smooth. Deep vertical serrations would be a useful touch here — far more so than the squared off and hooked trigger guard, which serves no purpose for those who fire from the correct Weaver stance.

In general, the P220 sights are quite adequate. About 1/8-inch thick, the fixed ramped front sight blade slopes to the muzzle and appears to have been electron-beam-welded to the slide. It's not about to fly away like they frequently do on the Colt Officer's Model. It also has a circular white dot painted on its face. You're supposed to rest this on top of the square white dot painted on the face of the square-notched rear sight. Replace these with self-luminous dots like the Armonson Trijicon inserts and you've got something useful in subdued light or darkness. White dots, squares and lines are useless for stress firing in daylight. The rear sight is dovetailed into the slide and can be adjusted for windage zero. To prevent snagging, the sharp corners of the P220 rear sight need to be rounded. This should have been done at the factory.



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The sight radius is 6.4 inches. Eventually, the front sight on the P220 will be reconfigured to match that of the P226, which is dovetailed to the slide. When that occurs, tritium inserts will be available as an option.

P220 magazines are good and bad. They have a removable floorplate. That's good. The floorplate is held in place by the bottom end of the follower spring, which is bent outward (copied directly from the Czech Vz 52 pistol, a 9mm version of which was entered in the 1947-48v Swiss pistol trials). When you disassemble the magazine, which you should do as often as you disassemble and clean the pistol, the floorplate and follower spring will invariably shoot 20 feet across the room. That's irritating. Capacity is seven rounds in .45 ACP. All the magazine's components, including the follower, are steel and there are six indicator holes on each side of the body. They are slightly more difficult to load than M1911A1 magazines.

Unfortunately, the magazines submitted for test and evaluation with our early production series pistol were defective. Fabricated by a Swiss subcontractor, the magazine-catch cuts were improperly located on the magazine's body. With infuriating regularity the magazine would slip out of its latch in the frame during the slide's recoil stroke and thus the slide would return in counter-recoil to close on an empty chamber. In addition, the follower's front tongue was too narrow and it frequently overrode the hold-open protrusion on the slide-stop. Result? The slide went forward into battery and the empty magazine could not be removed until the slide was racked to the rear and the magazine follower depressed below the hold-open. Merely irritating on the range, but potentially fatal in serious encounters.

By the time you read this, SIGARMS will have equipped all "side-button" P220 pistols with new magazines.

Fortunately, the P220 is much easier to disassemble than its magazines. Just retract the slide and lock it rearward with the slide-stop lever. Remove the magazine and make certain the chamber is empty. Rotate the disassembly lever, located on the left side of the frame, downward 90 degrees. While holding the slide assembly, push down on the slide-stop lever and draw the slide assembly forward until it separates from the frame rails. Remove the recoil spring and guide rod. Drop the barrel out of the slide. No further disassembly is required, except to remove the grip panels. Re-assemble in the reverse order.

Four different types of ammunition were fired through the SIG-Sauer P220: Winchester 185 gr. Silvertip hollowpoints, Remington 185 gr. Targetmaster wadcutters, G.I. ball (headstamped "WCC 71") and reloads with medium-hard cast round nose bullets in front of 6.3 grains of Hercules Unique — a total of 500 rounds altogether.

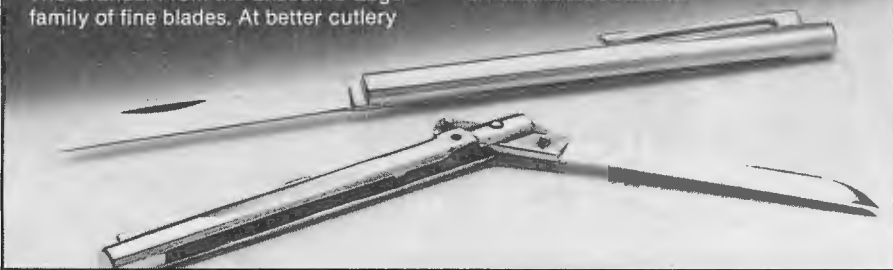
The P220 has been subjected to some unjustified criticism to the effect that it will not reliably function with reloaded ammunition. Pure baloney. Yes, the chambers on all P220 caliber .45 ACP barrels are tighter than most Colt barrels. But if SAAMI (Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturer's Institute) specifications are adhered to, this pistol will pop all the practice caps you'll ever need. Two hundred rounds of our test sequence consisted of reloaded ammunition pumped out of the Dillon RL1000 progressive reloader. This is my Tommy Gun garbage and there were more than 20 different case headstamps in this lot, including several made at the Frankford Arsenal in 1925. There was only one feed ramp failure and one failure to go into battery. You don't need better reliability than that for blasting targets. G.I. ball, Winchester Silvertips and even the Remington wadcutters

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will churn through the P220 without skipping a beat.

Felt recoil is sharper than that perceived with Colt's 39-ounce Government Model. But the P220's excellent ergonomics effectively moderate this and target re-acquisition is satisfactory providing a firm Weaver stance is employed.

Out-of-the-box accuracy is above average. At eight yards, the P220 will dump all seven rounds from its magazine into a 1.5-inch circle when fired single-action. Empty cases eject with vigor 12 feet to the right.

Fitted with some proper magazines, I wouldn't hesitate to pack this pistol anywhere. Suggested retail price is \$581 with two magazines. But do shop around for the best deal.

Anyone looking for a lightweight concealment pistol in 9mm Parabellum is well-advised to examine the P220 closely. 

SRI LANKA

Continued from page 47

available to take over instructional duties themselves, in India as well as in Sri Lanka itself. They continued to liaison with their RAW contacts but increasingly operated independently, in pursuit of their own goals. Those ends, which called for a Marxist revolution, had remained consistent throughout the process, though Indian diplomatic personnel even now deny that communism plays an important role in Sri Lanka's insurgency.

Colombo responded to the Indian-trained onslaught by turning to all possible sources of assistance and expertise. Continuing to attract large influxes of foreign capital for development schemes, it was able to maintain government expenditures at twice its level of internally-generated revenue and thereby dramatically raise its defense spending.

Pakistan assumed a major instructional role, as Sri Lankan security personnel were sent there for courses. China provided arms and equipment, as did arms dealers in Belgium and Singapore. Eastern European countries offered to sell the same. While these approaches were refused, South African armored personnel carriers and weapons were purchased due to the similarity between the geographic conditions of southern Africa and the Sri Lankan areas of conflict.

The major Western powers concerned — Britain and the United States — attempted to retain a semblance of maneuvering room but eventually were also drawn in, particularly in the diplomatic arena.

Thus, even at an early stage in the conflict, all that the Indians had feared had come to pass. The heightened fighting produced far more refugees from all communities — Sinhalese and Muslims, as well as Tamils — than would have been the case had the struggle remained an internal affair. Most of the displaced Tamils ended up in southern India. There, as the conflict dragged on, passions rose, at times paralyzing Tamil Nadu.

In geostrategic terms, too, developments were unsatisfactory. The foreign intrusion New Delhi most feared followed naturally from Colombo's need to gear itself up for war — Indian training of Tamil guerrillas prompted assistance by New Delhi's arch-rival, Pakistan, to the Sri Lankan security forces.

That their original assumptions and intentions had proven seriously flawed seemed to

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elude Indian policymakers. Instead, they pressed on with more of the same. Simultaneously with its training of the guerrillas, however, New Delhi pressured Colombo to come to terms with Tamil grievances, for the continued flow of refugees to the Indian south was an unsettling influence. Indian Tamils had themselves once demanded an independent state, and the trouble across the waters served to fan the dormant embers of Tamil nationalism. The Sri Lankans agreed to an Indian sponsored round of peace negotiations with the guerrillas in mid-1984 — and subsequently came to regret their decision to give in to the pressure.

The guerrillas took advantage of the "cessation of hostilities" to reposition their forces, resupply them from India, and to surround numerous security force positions with carpets of landmines. Terror was used to gain complete control over a helpless population. Hence, when the truce finally broke down for good in December 1984, the insurgents effectively controlled Jaffna, and were a menacing presence in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa areas. Any effort to dislodge them from Jaffna would involve major civilian casualties. Hence, for all practical purposes, the peninsula was left under guerrilla rule while major efforts were focused elsewhere.

The security force push finally came in May 1986 and was intended to relieve the pressure being exerted by the insurgents on the Jaffna garrisons. As he was wont to do, Lt. Gen. Ranatunga flew in to be with his men and constantly visited units in contact. As I myself went about, I saw what amounted to limited efforts to push the guerrillas out of point blank range around the eight company-size outposts which straddle the northern and southern coasts of the Jaffna Peninsula.

Throughout the fighting, the Indian press was filled with some of the most misinformed nonsense I have seen come out of this war. The editors must have had a direct link to guerrilla headquarters, because every military move was trumpeted as an effort to exterminate the Tamils. Small armored columns of a dozen vehicles became in the Indian media Patton's legions; every firefight allegedly resulted in scores of civilian casualties; and when fragments hit the Jaffna Hospital — about which the guerrillas had constructed bunkers and mortar positions used to fire upon the security forces — the stories claimed the hospital had been destroyed by government bombing.

When I visited another peninsular site, where there was nothing going on that I could discern, the Indian press claimed that the town was being shelled by Sri Lankan "warships." Looking at the clippings today, you would think that I had been in the midst of the Israeli assault on Beirut. But that wasn't what I had seen.

Instead, there was the normal business of clearing positions and dodging fire. At times contact was more intense than at others, but by and large things quieted down after the first several days. Much foreign press commentary would claim that the offensive was stopped dead in its tracks by guerrilla action. From my vantage point it appeared rather to have simply petered out, because there never was a clear goal in the first place. The guerrillas were, in fact, driven back from the close-in siegeworks they had attempted to establish, and an uneasy stalemate returned to the area.

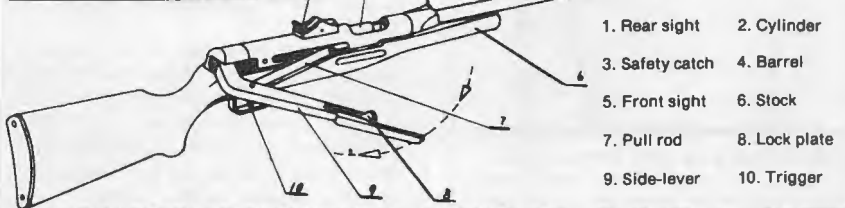
The Sri Lankan security forces still don't

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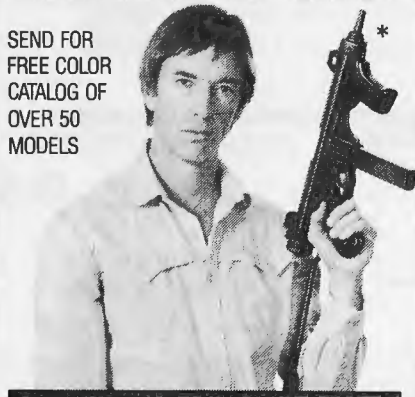
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have a clear strategy, or a set of military and political goals. It is clear that someone in Sri Lanka has got to take the bull by the horns. This lack of strategy continues to plague the Sri Lankan effort and to nullify advances on the ground. Since the May offensive, new commanders have taken charge in both Jaffna and Trincomalee. The results have been gratifying, especially in Jaffna, where the only thing which seems to stop the forces from reclaiming the peninsula is the certain howl which India would set up. Engaged in yet another round of talks sponsored by New Delhi, Colombo is not anxious at this time to complicate further its already troubled relations with its giant neighbor. Nevertheless, an Indian reaction, like other factors, is but another situational element which should be factored into a comprehensive strategy for victory.

When I left Sri Lanka the war was continuing along the same lines as it had throughout 1986. Talks were being conducted with moderate Tamil elements, who, while they control no troops, do have considerable influence with the Tamil masses. By offering these relatively flexible Tamils a degree of local autonomy, Colombo hopes that the Tamil majority — generally quite conservative — will turn away from the grandiose, Marxist schemes of the guerrillas. Already, in areas under insurgent sway, such as Jaffna, there is considerable disillusionment with the guerrillas — "the boys," as they were once termed when they still had a Robin Hood image. Government statisticians, who asked not to be identified, note that there are actually more Tamils in overwhelmingly Sinhalese Colombo now than before the July 1983 riots, because increasing numbers have fled the combat areas to seek safety and get on with their lives.

Victory is still a long way off, but I could sense that a corner of sorts had been turned. But let's not talk about a light at the end of the tunnel. The underlying socio-economic and political problems remain as intense as ever and must be addressed if there is to be peace. Rather, what struck me was the degree to which the security forces had improved as they learned the ropes. This allowed the stabilization of the situation so that Colombo could begin to consider the non-military steps necessary for reform.

Regardless, the guerrillas are in no frame of mind to give up and will have to be dealt with. Internecine fighting has periodically split insurgent ranks. In early May, the strongest group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), decimated its chief rival, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), in bloody fighting in Jaffna. But the guerrillas, their differences aside, remain committed to Marxist liberation and have always managed to put aside their differences when faced with an external threat such as that posed by the present negotiations. They are well-armed and supplied, with ample funding coming from a variety of sources.

The guerrillas aren't winning any points with the general population either. Their heavy-handed methods, combined with the hardships of life in affected areas, have caused growing hostility in many quarters. All areas report an enhanced flow of information coming from informants and common citizens. This is a risky business for civilians, however, as the guerrillas make liberal use of "lamppost killings" to terrorize the population. Alleged informants, government sym-

pathizers and other malefactors are tied to posts or fences and then executed, their bodies left with placards affixed stating their alleged crimes.

As effective as these killings have been in cowering the people, they have begun to reach the limits of their effectiveness. Insurgent efforts to build up a popular infrastructure have progressed but slowly, and in the main the guerrillas remain armed bands sheltered by sympathetic elements of the population. They have failed to truly mobilize the people in a revolutionary effort against the security forces or the existing political framework. This leaves them vulnerable to government operations.

And the military does have ideas on how they want to handle the problem. Most of the military officers I interviewed proposed a clampdown on the veritable shuttle service operating between insurgent camps in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, together with an end to active RAW and Indian military involvement with the guerrillas. A number of high-ranking Sri Lankan government officials whom I questioned take this hope a step further and predict Indian military moves against the guerrilla camps themselves. My talks with senior Indian diplomatic personnel convinced me that this latter step is not about to happen — particularly since Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi recently emphatically denied, at the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) conference in Africa, that any such camps existed. The former course of action, though, remains a possibility.

Still, optimism over the peace process is sure to be premature. Guerrilla leaders have repeatedly denounced the present negotiations. They have done so publicly and privately. Their instructions to their forces in Sri Lanka — copies of which have been captured — explicitly call for stepping up activities in an effort to wreck the talks.

It seems that the guerrillas mean to do precisely that. There is little doubt that they will step up the violence in an attempt to block a resolution which would jeopardize their goal — a communist takeover. ✕

H&K CLONES

Continued from page 61

barrel or the G3SG1 sniper with set trigger, adjustable cheekpiece stock, bipod and either fixed 4X Hensoldt or Schmidt & Bender scopes or variable-power, 1.5-6X Zeiss Diavari or Schmidt & Bender optics.

A limited inventory of nonrestricted-transfer UZI and Micro UZI submachine guns that are absolutely identical to the Israeli Military Industries versions are also available from Wittstein. As with Bill's Heckler and Koch clones, all of his closed-bolt firing Micro Uzis are fabricated with factory parts, including the leather-padded, side-folding stock and compensated barrel. Standard UZI submachine guns are assembled with ratcheted top-cover and non-slotted factory submachine gun bolts. Carbine barrels are cut, crowned and phosphated. Standard UZI finish is phosphate, but paint-over-phosphate is available at no extra charge.

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receivers to closer tolerances than adhered to by Colt.)

None of Billistics, Inc.'s weapons are potential Japanese replicas. These machine guns were well built to conform to factory standards of appearance. But how do they handle the pounding associated with pumping lead at rock 'n' roll rates? Certainly reliability in the field is more important than cosmetics.

Bruce Nelson, a member of SOF's Weapons Team and a combat holster maker, owns one of Wittstein's MP5A2s, through which he has fired more than 2,500 rounds. He has used four different types of ammunition for his tests: Winchester-Western 115 gr. FMJ, Winchester Silvertips, Samson's hot 115 gr. black-tipped submachine gun round (1,335 fps average with a standard deviation of only 22 fps) and Samson's subsonic 158 gr. FMJ blue tip that leaves the muzzle at only 950 fps (intended for sound suppressed pistols and submachine guns). After all this, Bruce reported no stoppages of any kind from his MP5A2. This is remarkable performance by any standards.

Bill Wittstein's conversions are clearly without peer in both appearance and performance. Bill's restorations of registered Heckler and Koch conversions and other automatic weapons that have been botched by inexperienced Class 2 manufacturers are also unrivaled.

Be advised that craftsmanship of this quality is expensive. But with Bill Wittstein, you're guaranteed your money's worth. I recommend his machine guns — all of which are nonrestricted-transfer weapons — without reservation. Discriminating buyers and advanced collectors should contact him before his limited inventory has disappeared forever. ✕

MARINE SNIPER

Continued from page 67

"Get a firm grip. Watch the cross hairs." The general stepped through the doorway, and Hathcock centered the man's profile in his scope. He waited for him to turn face-on. He did, but as the commander turned and walked toward the sniper's sight, the general's aide-de-camp stepped ahead of him. "Dummy! Don't you know that aides always walk to the left of their generals? Get out of the way!"

At every moment since the sun rose Hathcock had refined his attunement to the environment with computer-like detail and speed, judging the light, the humidity, the slight breeze that intermittently blew across his line of fire. He factored in the now-increasing heat and how the rise in temperature would elevate the mark of his bullet by causing the powder to burn more quickly when he fired. The air density and humidity would affect the velocity of his bullet, and the light would change the way his target appeared.

Based on his estimations, he decided to place his scope's reticle on the general's left breast, in case the breeze carried the round eight inches right. The bright sunlight warned the sniper to keep his aim high on the man's chest, but not too high, in case the heat raised the bullet's flight a few inches.

The group of officers walking out with the general departed toward the side of the house. It left only the old man and his youthful aide. Carlos waited. The young officer took his place at the left side of his superior. Hathcock said, "Now stop." Both men did. The sniper's cross hairs lay directly on the general's heart.

Hathcock's mind raced through all his marksmanship principles — "Good firm grip, watch

the cross hairs, squeeze the trigger, wait for the recoil. Don't hold your breath too long, breathe and relax, let it come to the natural pause, watch the cross hairs, squeezeeeeeeee."

Recoil sent a jolt down his shoulder. He blinked and the general lay flat on his back. Blood gushed from the old officer's chest and his lifeless eyes stared into the sun's whiteness.

The general's aide-de-camp dove to the ground and began crawling toward a sandbagged gun position. The other officers, who had only seconds earlier left their commander's side, ran for cover.

The Marine sniper slid into the slight gully and, flat on his belly, began pulling himself stealthily along the ground with both arms. His rate of retreat seemed light-speed compared to his inbound time. Still smooth and deliberate, he traveled many feet of ground per minute. He now covered a distance, approximately equivalent to that which he had crawled across in three days, in four or five hours. The fact that no patrol approached him during his retreat told him that no one had seen his muzzle flash. In daylight, at eight hundred yards, that didn't surprise him. The patrols would be out, but they would be searching hundreds of acres. Once he thought he heard one far to his left.

It was almost nightfall when he reached the jungle's edge. Squirring past the outer layer of greenery, Hathcock lifted himself off his knees for the first time in three days. The pain was an excruciating counterpoint to his inner exhilaration. He hurried through the heavy forest. He was wary of mines and booby traps, but going as quickly as he dared, he covered the three kilometers to his preplanned pickup coordinate in a matter of a few hours.

There Carlos sat in a bush and waited, well aware that patrols might be scouring the jungle for his trail. His heart settled to a resting pulse. The songs of birds and other jungle creatures replaced the sound of heaving breath that had pounded in his ears. And as the hubbub settled to tranquility, he thought of Arkansas and how similar this moment seemed to many childhood days behind his grandmother's house, when he sat in the bushes there — the old Mauser across his lap and his Shetland collie dog panting at his side. He closed his eyes for the first time in four days.

"Sergeant Hathcock," a voice whispered. "I thought you knew better than to doze off like that." The Marine who led the squad that had left Hathcock four days earlier now knelt by the bush where the Marine sniper waited.

Hathcock smiled slowly, not even opening his eyes at first. "I knew you were there," he said. "I heard your squad tromping up the ridge five minutes ago."

"Let's get going. Charlie's crawling over these hills, and we've got a lot of ground to cover between here and the LZ," the squad leader told him. "When we left the Hill, Charlie's lines were burning up. I guess you got that general?"

"Well, he hit the ground mighty hard," Hathcock said, pulling out his canteen and swallowing its last few drops. "Spare any water?"

"Sure," the Marine said, handing Hathcock a canteen and sloshing its contents out the open top. "We better book. Charlie's mad as hell now. They'd love to get you after today."

Hathcock felt uneasy when the squad leader told him, "Charlie's mad as hell." During the flight back to Hill 55, he wondered if the assassination of the general would only arouse the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong to fight with greater fury.

He would always have mixed feelings about this day's work. As American casualties rose sharply in the weeks that followed, he began to

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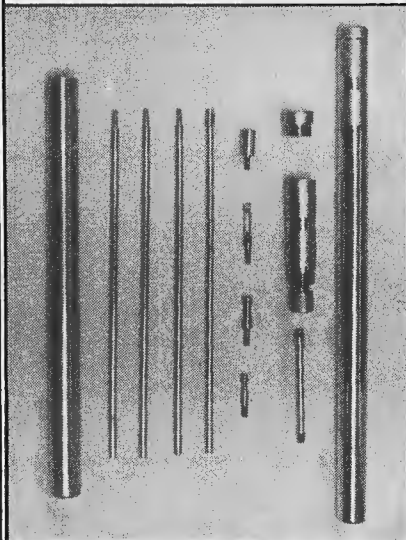
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feel that this was one sniper killing that might have been a mistake.

When Hathcock stepped off the helicopter, home at Hill 55's landing site, a group of smiling and whooping Marines met him. Burke stood among them and said, "White Feather made it." Hathcock smiled.

The giant of a captain who'd recruited Hathcock for the mission slapped him across the back so hard that Carlos wondered if he had dislocated any bones. The hulking Marine put a pot roast-size hand on Hathcock's shoulder and said, "Son, I'm sure as hell glad to see you back in one piece. Lot of us kept you in our prayers. You did one hell of a job."

Walking up the hill toward his hooch, Hathcock felt the great fatigue from the mission finally take hold. He longed to lie down and sleep for days. But his standards were demanding. And despite the fact that this was his last mission — that he would leave Hill 55 in a few days to return to the MP company and on to the World by way of Okinawa — he remained true to them. He cleaned his rifle and gear before he rested. ✕

HUNGARIAN AKM

Continued from page 73

competition matches, it's as consistent as, and more so, than most anything out of Lake City arsenal in recent years.

Better yet, it brought the group size down from an average of 6 inches (using PRC ball with an enameled steel case headstamped "71 83") to 4.5 inches — even with the usual creepy Kalashnikov trigger and a startling pull weight of only 2.75 pounds with minimum overtravel. The price is only \$119.95 for a case of 920 rounds, F.O.B. Riverdale. From now on, I will snap no other caps through my Kalashnikovs. While match grade ammo in an AKM may smack of casting pearls among the swine, the Kalashnikov needs all the help it can get in enhancing accuracy potential. Match grade ammo for 13 cents a round is rare for any caliber.

A word of caution. These rifles have no firing pin springs. Watch your primers. While the temper of the metal is usually the same, primers on most military small arms ammunition are, by means of thicker cups and sometimes a difference in the primer mixture, intentionally less sensitive than their commercial equivalents. Fire only MilSpec ammunition in a Kalashnikov. Only the Galil and Finnish Model 1962 Valmet series in caliber 5.56X45mm NATO have firing pin springs. If you attempt to fire either commercial U.S. ammunition or reloads through an AKM-type rifle without a firing pin spring, the possibility of the rifle firing out of battery is more than remote. The result? At the least a pile of junk and very possibly serious personal injury. All of the PRC, Yugoslav, Austrian Hirtenberger, PMC military ball and original Lake City 7.62X39mm ammunition is safe. In my opinion, reloads assembled in this caliber with commercial primers, Midway and PMC soft-point ammo are not.

Hungary is on the State Department's restricted munitions list. Kassnar obtained a waiver to import only 7,000 AKM rifles. The waiver has not been extended, and by the time you read this many of these rifles may already have been sold. If you want an AKM, this is far and away the best in every way. While the suggested retail price is \$499, complete with all the accessories (and the most comprehensive instruction book ever published in English on the AKM), you should be able to pick one up for \$350 to \$400 if you act immediately. ✕

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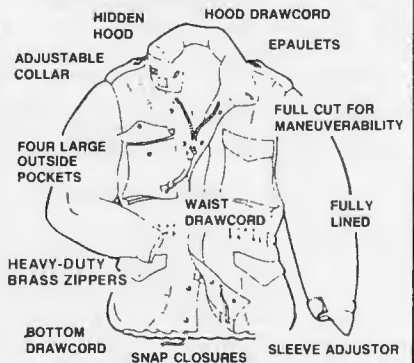
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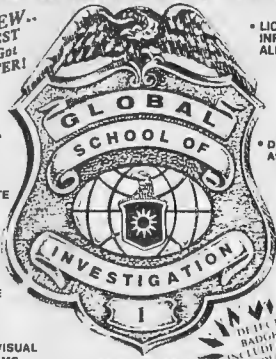
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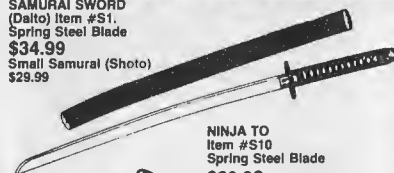
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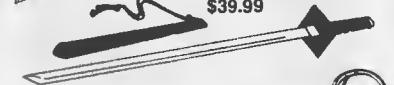
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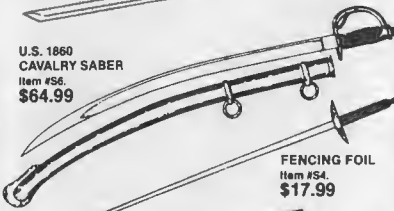
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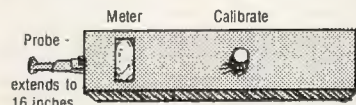
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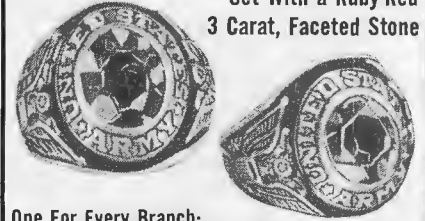
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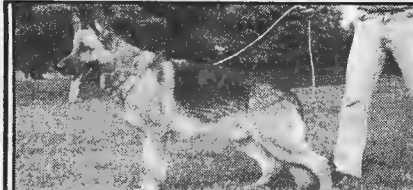
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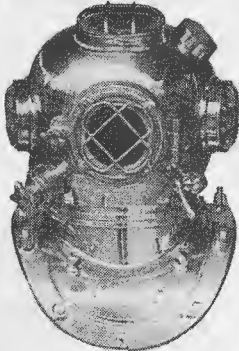
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