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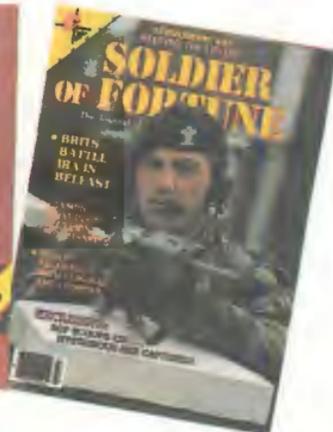
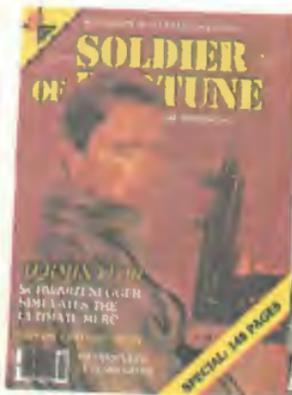
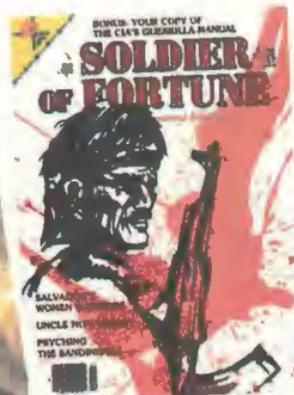
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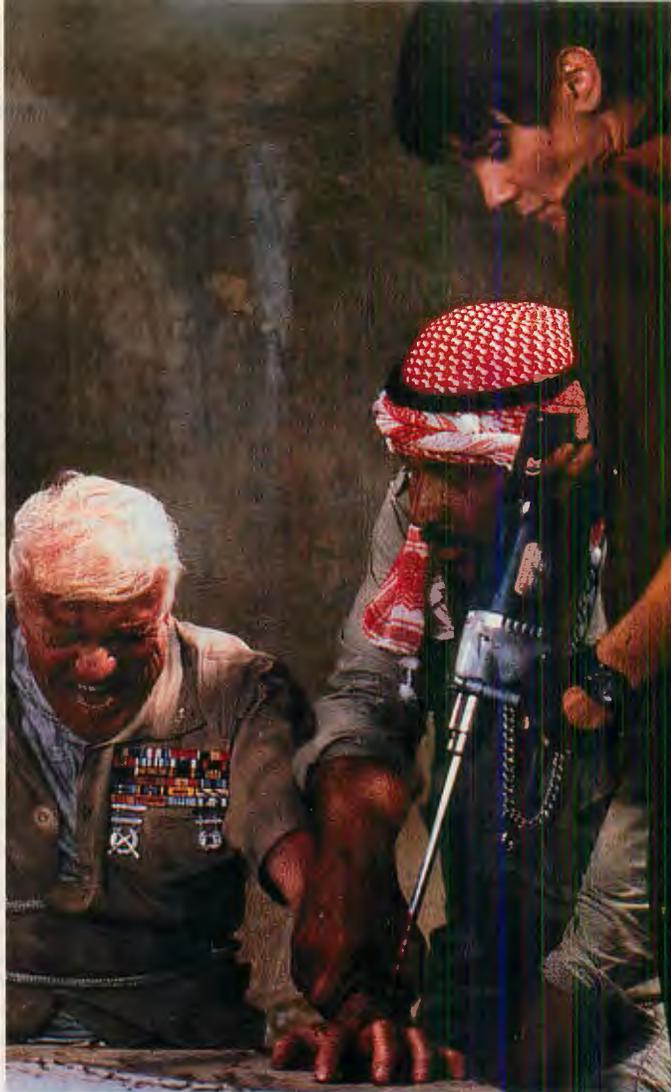
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COVER: Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Jack Burns relies on firepower to settle the score with Arab terrorists in *New World Pictures*' "Death Before Dishonor." Burns pays the terrorists back in spades in this all-out action thriller.

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

WHO has the power to conduct foreign policy as it relates to stopping Soviet power projection in low-intensity conflicts? Who has the responsibility? Who has the authority?

In a nuclear war, an intervention or a conventional war, the lines of power, responsibility and authority are clearly defined.

But when it comes to protracted, low-intensity conflicts, the rules are not so clear.

When President Ronald Reagan proposed his doctrine for dealing with Soviet expansionism — to not only stop the Evil Empire from expanding into new countries but also to roll it back through the support of anti-communist freedom fighter movements in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola and Cambodia — it was greeted with less than enthusiasm by the State Department and Democrats.

In theory the president controls foreign policy through his authority to appoint the secretary of state and his top advisers. In fact the entrenched careerists at State have the capability to prevent implementation of policies they are opposed to, provided they are aided and abetted by a Congress determined to micro-manage foreign policy to support partisan political aims.

Down in the basement of the White House, the National Security Council, all appointed by the president, took the Reagan Doctrine to mean exactly what it seemed to and set out to promote and implement it.

Therefore it was not a question of "if" the NSC's Lt. Col. Oliver North would run into a jam but "when." Col. North, whom I've had the

pleasure of meeting on a couple of occasions, knew he was putting himself in harm's way but, as contrasted with most of the self-serving bureaucrats and political buffoons in Washington, assumed the responsibility in spite of the risks, in order to protect and project the national interests of the United States.

One of the greatest tragedies of this whole "Irangate" muddle is that it is already serving as a justification for the press and wimpy politicians to terminate aid to the anti-communist Nicaraguan freedom fighters.

Both President Reagan and Col. North realize that the security



of the United States will be seriously threatened if a communist regime is consolidated in Nicaragua and allowed to spread its pernicious poison through Central America and into Mexico. Both believe that if we don't help the contras stop the communists we will see American boys dying to get the job done. And that

blood will be on the hands of the wishy-washy politicians, as is the blood of the contra boys who have died because they lacked sufficient weapons and ammunition.

Col. North's sin was that he saw a way to sucker money out of Iranians to support freedom.

When it is all said and done, history will place Col. North in the same category as Franklin D. Roosevelt, who circumvented Congress in sending the British 50 destroyers prior to our entry into WWII to assist in the fight against Fascist tyranny.

True, he exceeded his authority, but he did so in defense of freedom. ✕

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THE SOLUTIONS

by Michael Connor

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GOOD SCORE...

Sirs:

High marks for "One Shot, One Kill" [SOF, December '86], your article on XVIII Airborne Corps' Sniper School run at Fort Bragg. I fully agree with Mr. Coleman's assessment that, in peacetime, special operations units such as snipers tend to bite the bullet. I saw it happen after Vietnam, when the lessons we learned there (and I brought back a few myself, having spent 22 months in Special Forces) were perused by higher headquarters and relegated to the deeply buried "Lessons Learned" file. It appears now, however, that at least some levels of the Army are taking special unit training with the deadly seriousness it deserves.

[Name withheld by request]
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Keep in mind that military planners have to prepare for every eventuality, be it conventional war in Europe involving strategic forces or low-intensity conflicts that demand special operations-type units — and guess who gets the budget? Nevertheless, special ops has much improved since the post-Vietnam era and continues to do so.



FLAK



CHARNEY LAUDS SOF...

Sirs:

James L. Pate's articles in the July and December 1986 issues of *Soldier of Fortune* expose, in the best tradition of investigative journalism, the utter absence of scientific work at the Central Identification Lab in Hawaii and a total lack of integrity on the part of the staff, from the commanding officer down to the technicians. [See "Missing in Action: Skeletons in Uncle Sam's Closet" and "Bones of Contention: Army Stonewalls on Lab Scandal."] The September hearing by the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations exposed the chicanery of the Army lab, its staff and its work. That hearing came about through the personal efforts of your associate editor, Mr. Pate. Without him and SOF's staunch support, that dynamic hearing could not have occurred. Thank you for your confidence in me and your support in keeping the POW/MIA issue in the public spotlight.

Michael Charney, Ph.D.
Colorado State University

Michael Charney, widely recognized in the field of forensic anthropology for his success with hard-to-identify human remains, became involved in the POW/MIA issue in June 1985, when Mrs. Anne Hart asked him to examine skeletal remains identified by the Army lab as those of her husband. Since then, he has traveled many thousands of miles to render second opinions in other MIA cases, at no charge to the families. In January 1986, Charney agreed to serve as a scientific consultant to SOF in evaluating the findings of an investigation into the Army lab, its staff and their work.

COVER CONTRA-VERSY...

Sirs:

I was catching up on my reading and saw the October issue with the cover story on "Miami Vice." I had never seen one of the shows until the 3 October episode with guest star G. Gordon Liddy. I was very disappointed to see that the show was an attack on the contras and U.S. foreign policy. The contras were portrayed as priest- and baby-killers who mortared a nice peaceful village full of happy Sandinista peasants. There were also bad-guy "American troops" and all kinds of references to "another Vietnam" throughout the show. To add insult to injury, the show ended by implying that the news reports we get from Nicaragua are biased in favor of the contras and that the U.S. government was hushing up the facts.

Is this the kind of show that should be on the cover of SOF? We need all the help we can get in Central America, especially in view of the recent congressional election.

Hessel Kooistra, III
Bryan, Texas

We ran the cover story on "Miami Vice" because of the state-of-the-art weaponry employed on the show. We felt it would be of interest to many of our readers, especially those in law enforcement. And until this season, the standard "Vice" plot revolved around cool cops gunning down slimy cocaine dealers. It wasn't until after our October issue had hit the newsstands that the show decided to dabble in international affairs by airing the piece of disinformation that America watched on 3 October, and that was rebroadcast on 26 December. For our reaction to that episode, see Bulletin Board for December '86.

IN DEFENSE OF ISRAEL...

Sirs:

I am writing this letter after reading Mr. Paul J. Wright's comments about Israel's position in SOF and in the general press [FLAK, October '86]. I have some suggestions for future SOF articles.

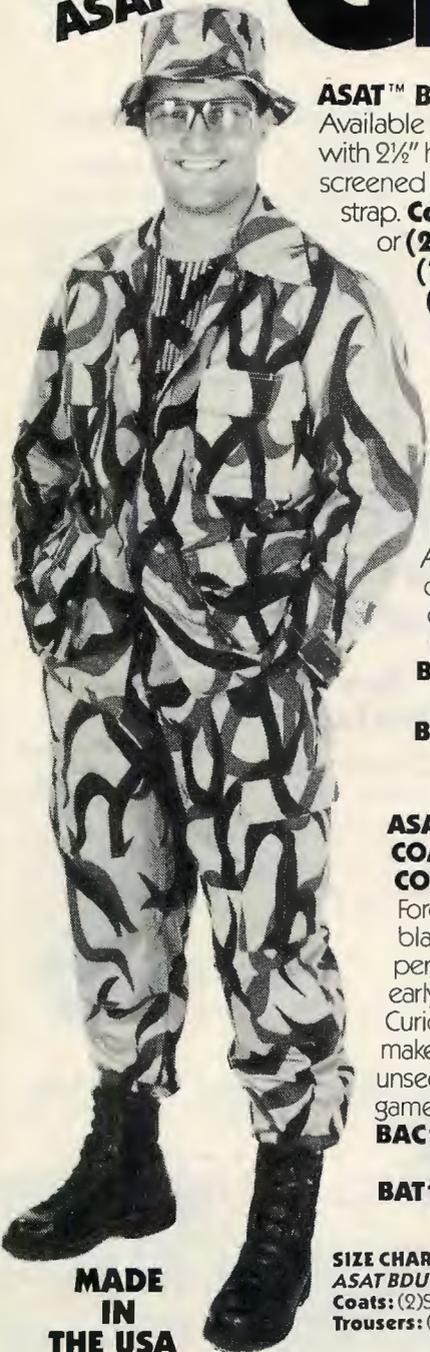
How about a story on why Israel can't live quietly and peacefully despite her wishes to do so, and why she stands alone against 22 big,



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grudge-bearing Arab countries? Or an article about Israel's contribution to maintaining the United States' interests in the Middle East?

Come on, Mr. Wright, sit in your comfortable armchair and try to see how lucky you are that your children never sat in a small shelter for days because of heavy bombardment, that nobody attacked their school and killed their friends. Be glad that your children can take their toy UZIs and play war games . . . safely.

Nir Gendler
Qiryat-Ono, Israel

I've read with great concern the recent wave of letters in which a handful of readers showed an irrational hate toward the state of Israel and SOF's coverage of Middle East affairs.

I'd like to say that the policy of the U.S. government relating to Israel has generally been a very proper one. The Arab states, aside from the ones which can be called "moderate," have throughout history shown everything but a friendly attitude toward the West (long before the state of Israel was formed). If the American government was to restrain relations with Israel, one of its best allies in

that zone, just to "improve" its position with a bunch of pro-Soviet and fundamentalist governments, the U.S. could end up with no ally at all.

My family and I, including many who served in the U.S. armed forces and in the IDF, have been SOF readers for many years and feel it would be sad to see a change in SOF's policy of fair coverage of world events just because of some extremist opinions. Keep up the good work.

Simon Brad
Caracas, Venezuela

Like other public forums, FLAK gives our readers a chance to express their views — regardless of which side of an issue they take. SOF's editorial policy, on the other hand, has always been to present complete, unbiased reporting of international events. Opinions expressed in FLAK do not reflect a shift in editorial policy.

or Lose It' in the November '86 SOF: I hate politics, but those "gentlemen" elected to office are playing with the fate of our nation. I do vote, but I hear of so many people who don't. Their logic is, "How could one vote possibly make the difference?" Well, one vote alone can't make the difference. But when you add that one vote to the 10,000 others who don't vote it makes a big difference!

I've been reading SOF since 1977 and have always regarded your publication as a highly trustworthy and unbiased source of information. Thank you for putting out what I feel to be the most reliable source of information on the market.

Clint Boomgarden
Augusta, Georgia

According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, a measly 37 percent of the eligible voters went to the polls on 4 November. What that translates to is that over 70 million people did not vote; what kind of government would we be looking at now if they had? Let's hope all those apathetic Americans realize what government of, for, and by the people means before it's too late — before 1988.

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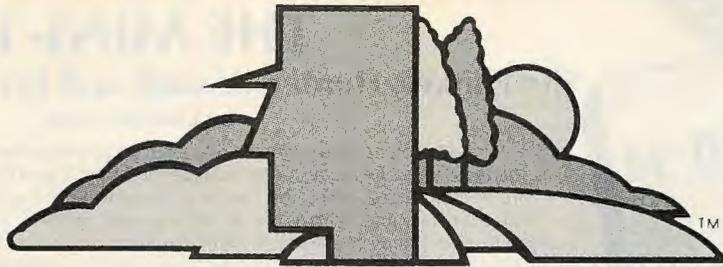


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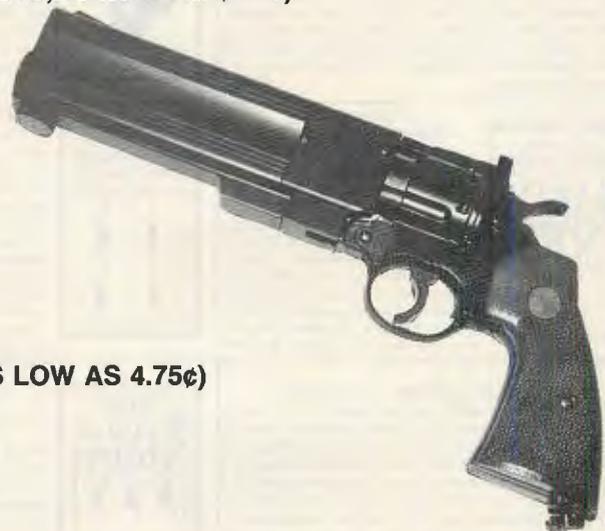
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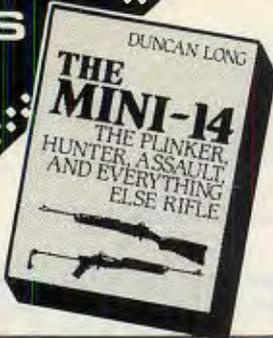
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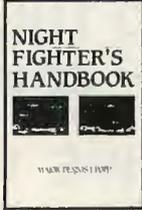
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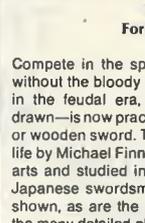


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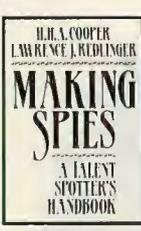
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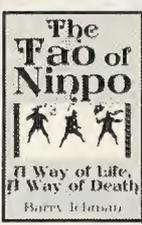


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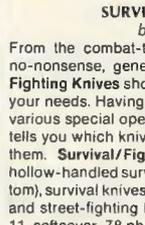


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SOF shipped three tons of non-lethal military equipment to the anti-communist Nicaraguan freedom fighters in Central America in 1986. All of this equipment, enough to outfit a small battalion, was donated by SOF readers. More is needed! Send your old uniforms, boots and web gear to: El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund, 5735 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80306.

Donors should indicate if they want to be mentioned in SOF's "Honor Roll." Defense Fund posters available for \$1.00 from SOF Exchange.

SKORPIAN STUNG BY BATF...

If you read the review of the Yugoslav M61(j) Skorpion machine pistol in the November 1986 issue of SOF and considered buying one in the United States, you're out of luck. Mitchell Arms, Inc., which had planned to import a semiautomatic version of the weapon, said the deal is off because of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF). Apparently the BATF insisted on modifications that the Yugoslav manufacturer considered a serious compromise of the gun's integrity and detrimental to its reliability. So the import project has been abandoned for the foreseeable future, a Mitchell spokesman said.



NRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION...

SOF recommends the following individuals for the National Rifle Association Board of Directors:

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SUPPORT FOR LT. COL. NORTH...

Letters of support for U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Oliver North can be mailed in care of Andy Messing, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9992, McLean, VA 22102. Contributions to Lt. Col. North's legal defense fund can be sent to the Oliver North Legal Assistance Fund, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 50096, Washington, DC 20004.

CRUTCH FOOLS SECRET SERVICE...

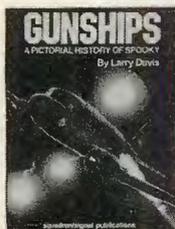
A former Navy SEAL who served three tours in Vietnam helped concoct a stunt that stumped the Secret Service detail at the White House. Ron Rossi of Port Charlotte, Florida — who's now a professional illusionist — designed a crutch that concealed a rolled-up POW/MIA flag.

This plot unfurled in the *Bamboo Connection*, an underground newspaper devoted to the release of live American POWs from Southeast

The "world's best pistol" hasn't fired a single shot since 1975.



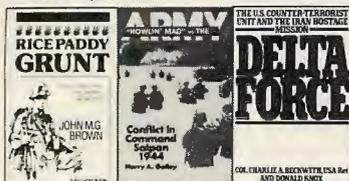
Length: 8.25 in.
Muzzle velocity: c. 1110 fps.
Barrel: 4.8 in.
Weight unloaded: 2 lb., 4 oz.
Magazine: 15-round detachable box



0034 Spec. ed.



†2642 \$12.95

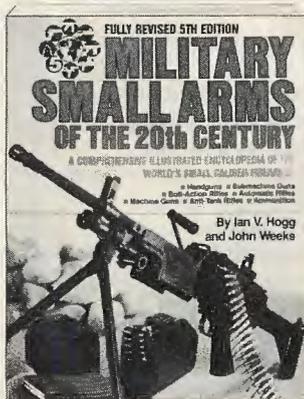


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The Czech vz/75 has been rated by authorities as perhaps the "best service pistol in existence." Its firing lock is similar to a Walther P38. And its accuracy and reliability are superior.

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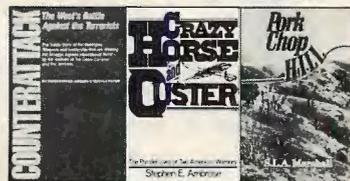
1685 \$19.95 4234 \$19.95 4689 \$17.95



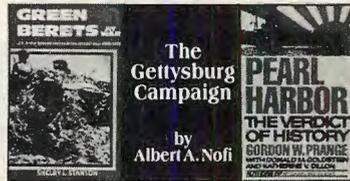
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†Soft cover



Asia. Its roughhewn and sometimes ribald editorial tone rails against the White House's inaction on the issue. This has included special scorn for Dick Childress, the POW/MIA staffer on the National Security Council, and Anne Mills Griffith, the fractious head of the National League of Families, whose leadership has proved very divisive because she more often is defending Childress and the Reagan Administration than addressing concerns raised by family members.

The *Bamboo Connection* said it would bestow the "Rambo of the Year Award" on the first person who could plant a POW/MIA flag within 30 feet of the White House. Enter the Hampton twins, Lynn and Lee, and their cohort, Karen Standerwick. The three women lined up for the public White House tour, Lee in a cast with crutches and her sister Lynn, a Vietnam veteran, assisting her. While crossing the lawn from the visitor's entrance to the White House, the trio stepped off the walk onto the grass. Lee pulled the bottom off the crutch to reveal a metal spike, planted the crutch in the ground and unfurled the flag. Two other flags concealed on their persons were also displayed.

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER...

Scores of U.S. citizens are on the Sandinista payroll, according to an *Insight* Magazine report. And the U.S. State Department says there is

very little it can do to revoke their passports.

One example is Kay Stubbs. She grew up in Middletown, Ohio and then earned degrees from the University of Tennessee and Antioch Law School. She now works full-time as an interpreter for Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega.

Another is Paul Atha. Paul's dad came to Nicaragua as a U.S. Marine in the 1920s, married a local girl and settled on a farm, where Paul was raised. Paul Atha now works as a personal assistant to Interior Minister Tomas Borgé and attends many high-level meetings with his boss. He also works for H&M Enterprises, an import firm owned by Borgé and designed to circumvent the U.S.-sponsored economic embargo against Nicaragua.

Like Atha, one of June Mulligan's parents is a U.S. citizen, the other Nicaraguan. In the aftermath of the Sandinista Revolution in 1979, Mrs. Mulligan divorced her husband, a U.S. Army officer who graduated from West Point, and joined the Sandinista army. Still a U.S. citizen, she is also a commissioned lieutenant serving in the Sandinista armed forces public affairs office. "I don't think I want any publicity," she told *Insight*.

At least one person working for the Sandinistas has lost his U.S. passport. Roberto Vargas is a Nicaraguan native who lived in the United States for 40 years, eventually obtaining citizenship after service in the U.S. Marine Corps. His wife, children and grandchildren

were all born in the United States and live in San Francisco. The State Department revoked his citizenship when it learned that Vargas had taken a job at the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington as an official in the Sandinista Department of Agitation and Propaganda.

"The way the law is written now, we can't really take citizenship from somebody unless they're dumb enough to cooperate," one State Department spokesman said. Federal law does not prohibit dual nationality, but it does call for the revocation of U.S. citizenship for anyone who swears allegiance to a foreign power, serves in a foreign army or takes a policy-making job in a foreign government.

PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA...

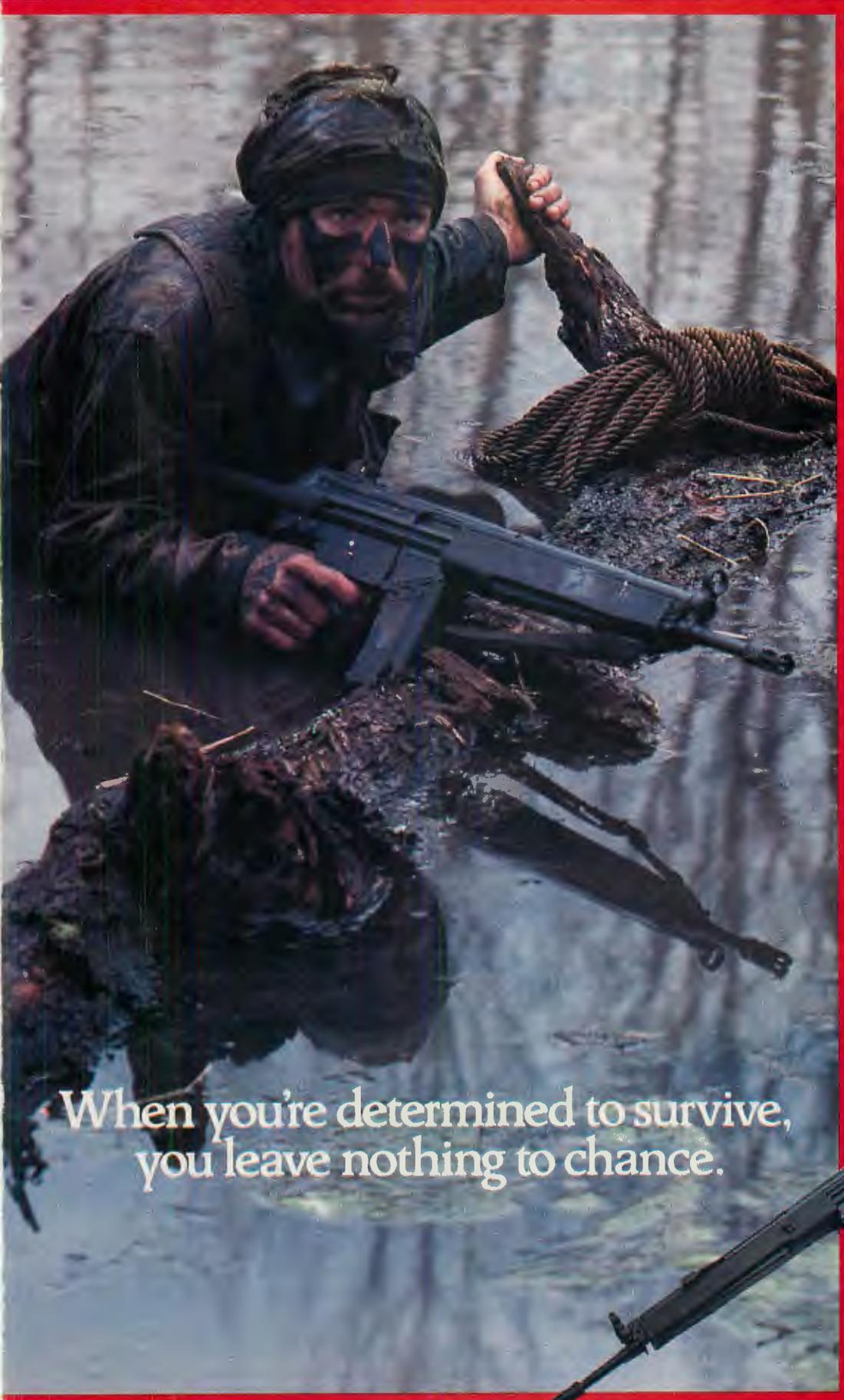
Although it has decreased with the number of boat refugees fleeing Vietnam, piracy on the high seas in that area is still a problem, according to the State Department. But with funding by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees — most of the money contributed by the United States — the Royal Thai Navy has acquired more equipment and undertaken deterrence programs aimed at stemming the incidence of piracy.

The USG went a step further, setting up a three-man anti-piracy unit in the Refugee Section of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. The unit works with the U.N. and U.S. embassies in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in collecting relevant data to identify problem areas.

Pirates seemed to be most active in the Gulf of Thailand. In the first nine months of 1986, Thai officials arrested more piracy suspects than they had in the previous three years combined.

SO OF SUPPORTS FREEDOM FIGHTER FAMILY...

Soldier of Fortune is assisting in the collection of funds for the children of Buzz Sawyer, one of the pilots flying the C-123 shot down by the communist Sandinistas on 5 October 1986. Sawyer was a 1968 U.S. Air Force Academy graduate and a Vietnam veteran. Contributions should be made out to the "Buzz Sawyer Memorial Trust Fund" and sent in care of Wallace Sawyer, Dept. SOF, 703 Peach Street, Magnolia, Arkansas 71753. ✕



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FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER. By Stephen Coonts. Naval Institute Press, Dept. SOF, Annapolis, MD. 1986. 329 pages. Hardcover. \$15.95.

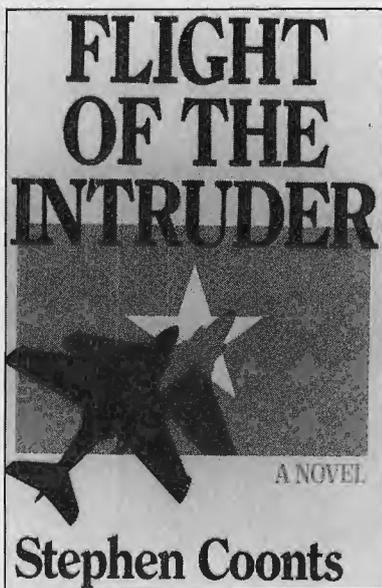
IT'S a rare novel that can vividly catapult us off the deck of a surging carrier at night and wing us through gut-wrenching combat missions over Vietnam. It's rarer still when a novel can generate and maintain this high of an excitement level and remain authentic throughout.

Flight of the Intruder goes to the head of the class in all areas.

Author Coonts puts the reader in the cockpit of an A-6 *Intruder* with the pilot and bombardier as they dodge flak and SAMs to get to their target — often no more than a suspected truck park. Through the character of Jake Grafton we get a gritty inside look at the lives of Navy pilots under combat conditions, be it from behind the stick of a refueler or on a hot bombing run against VC ground troops. These guys aren't cardboard stereotypes. Their black humor keeps them sane, their training and dedication to each other keep them flying — and sometimes dying — for a cause in question.

Above all, Coonts knows what he's talking about. His attention to detail and obvious familiarity with his subject will satisfy the harshest critics. He's not just another professional author out to capitalize on the current popularity of Vietnam-era books; Coonts has something to say and he says it as well as, if not better than, anyone who's written on the subject.

Strap yourself in and stand by for a good read. This one's afterburners all the way.



IN REVIEW



BITTER VICTORY

A veteran correspondent's dramatic account of his return to Vietnam and Cambodia ten years after the end of the war
Robert Shaplen

BITTER VICTORY. By Robert Shaplen. Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., Dept. SOF, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022. 1986. 309 pages. \$16.95.

WHEN the French returned to Indochina in 1946, reporter Robert Shaplen was close behind them. **Bitter Victory** recounts a recent six-week tour of Vietnam and Cambodia, his first time in the region since he escaped the fall of Saigon in April 1975. It is a multifaceted work, one of history and political analysis combined with personal reflections. Shaplen's affection for the Vietnamese people is evident in this insightful look at post-revolution society and its staggering economic problems under communism.

In a notable episode, Shaplen interviews the Politburo's senior member, Le Duc Tho, who was Vietnam's chief negotiator opposite Henry Kissinger at the Paris Peace Talks. The author asks

Ho Chi Minh's successor why the government and its society are in such a desperate state, why animosity toward the huge Soviet presence is growing and relations with China are strained; why Vietnam has ironically mired itself in its own "Vietnam" in neighboring Cambodia.

Le Duc Tho's response gets to the heart of Shaplen's outstanding work. "Kissinger used to tell me that we know how to wage war, but not peace." It is quite a bitter victory, Shaplen writes, especially for the Vietnamese who have fought at least one major war in almost every century of the last millennium. Unemployment is high, shortages are chronic and the people are saddled with support of the fourth largest army on the planet.

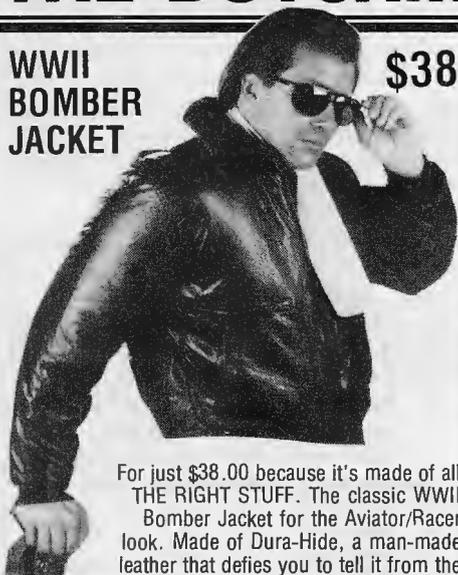
Most important to students of the last Vietnam War is material not widely known in the West about Vietnam's internal conduct of its war against the United States. Of particular interest is Shaplen's new information on the Ho Chi Minh Trail's construction and op-

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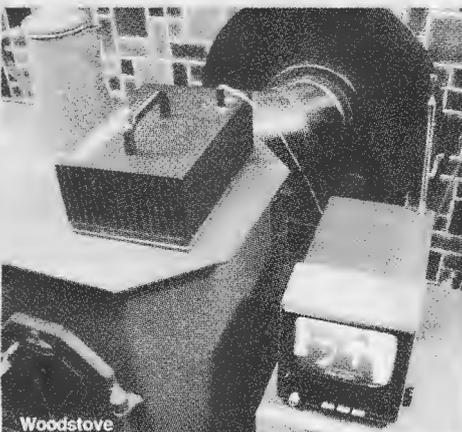
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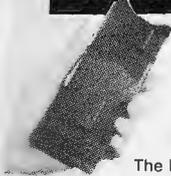


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eration. What began as a series of loosely connected muddy trails which took six months to walk with cargo ended the war as a multi-lane highway network capable of moving large truck convoys from north to south in 10 days.

But Shaplen concludes that the Vietnamese people "have always been, and still are, possessed of far more than the customary quota of national anomalies and contradictions. . . . Ambivalent and unpredictable, they can be devious, calculating, self-driven, abrasive and exasperating one moment and amenable, sympathetic, generous and gracious the next."

Bitter Victory may look plain on the dust jacket, but it's a work of major significance and certainly one of the best works out on today's Vietnam.

PRESIDENTS' SECRET WARS: CIA AND PENTAGON COVERT OPERATIONS SINCE WORLD WAR II. By John Prados. William Morrow & Company, Dept. SOF, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1986. 480 pages. Hardcover. \$22.95.

DEPENDING on how you look at it, **Secret Wars** couldn't have come at a better time. The Agency's back in Central America — and a host of other global locales — and the government's still shaking from the not-so-covert Iranian arms deal.

What influence does the intelligence community, and specifically the Central Intelligence Agency, exert in our foreign policy arena? Are they skillfully employed professionals strictly controlled by presidential mandate — or dogs of covert war unleashed from congressional oversight?

In one of the best books written on the subject, John Prados reopens the debate.

Secret Wars concentrates on paramilitary operations from which the United States has tried — sometimes successfully, sometimes not — to reshape the world's political map into its own mold. Prados, a Ph.D. and author of other intelligence-related books, examines with a critical eye Uncle Sam's adventures behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains during the post-World War II era, the successful forays which resulted in pro-U.S. governments in Iran and Guatemala, the bungled Bay of Pigs operation, Viet-

nam, and the current Reagan administration endeavors ranging from Central America to Afghanistan to Angola.

If you're an apostle of the cloak-and-dagger camp, **Secret Wars** probably won't be an easy book to digest: Prados doesn't let much mischief or malfeasance slip by. Even so, it's well worth taking a critical look at past mistakes — so we don't make them again.

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE. F. Reese Brown, Editor-in-Chief. Intel Publishing Group Inc., Dept. SOF, Box 188, Stroudsburg, PA 18360. Published quarterly.

ALTHOUGH *In Review* usually focuses on books of interest to SOF's readers, we occasionally come across periodicals worth noting. **The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence** fits the bill.

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intelligence field. Recent articles include an examination of former CIA agent Edwin Wilson's Libyan escapades, a critical view of Stansfield Turner's term as director of the CIA, an in-depth look at interrogation, and an analysis of the historical underpinnings of the U.S. intelligence community. These well-written articles dispense with the confusing technical jargon found in most professional journals, a definite plus for the layman.

Career intelligence officers give this project its aura of authenticity. **The Journal's** editorial board includes, among others, Dave Phillips, former director of Latin American operations for the CIA, David Kahn, the world's leading expert on codes and cryptography, and former CIA Deputy Director Jack Blake.

With three issues under their belt, the editors have established a reputation for accurate, in-depth and analytical articles on intelligence. An expert's-eye view of the shadow community, combined with good sound editing, result in the best intelligence publication available — at least to the public — on the market today.



MUFFLED SHOTS - A YEAR ON THE DMZ. By William Roskey. Elghund Publishing Company, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 158, Simpsonville, MD 21150. 1986. 156 pages. Hardcover. \$9.95.

WE wanted to say good things about **Muffled Shots** since it attempts to deal with a too often ignored subject that has a great deal of significance even today — defending the 151-mile demilitarized zone dividing North and South Korea. Unfortunately, we can't.

Muffled Shots is paradoxical in that Roskey stresses he's writing fiction, yet the tone throughout is that of an autobiography. He seemingly couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted to write a novel or document some of his own experiences. As an autobiography this could be great stuff, but as fiction there's not much here to hold your attention.

At times you can feel the fear of waiting in ambush for North Korean linecrossers, then absurd fiction sets in as the principal characters are interrogated by sado-masochistic American MPs with brass knuckles and led by a raving South Korean colonel. The beginning and ending chapters read like sermons on everything from America to growing up and dying — unfortunately, they're sermons we've all heard before.

Muffled Shots does deserve credit for shedding some light on the mental pressures the men manning the DMZ lived with during the mid- to late 1960s, when the North played power games and the memory of the last invasion was still clear. Had Roskey dispensed with some of the blatant fiction and made it an "I was there" account, **Muffled Shots** could have come across loud and clear. ✕

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Corvo knives are used by the Special Forces and parachutists of Chile. They serve both as a sidearm and a badge of honor for these elite units. Distinctive in configuration, the Corvo is widely distributed and accepted in rural Chile, and while hand-forged specimens found in northern Pampas, Pisagua, Dolores, and Tarapaca all have structural similarities, differences exist in the details of handle design and decoration that are unique to each region. To the Chileans, the Corvo is the weapon of their people.

Our test Corvo was purchased in a sporting goods store in Santiago and measured 11¼ inches in length. The blade itself is 7⅜ inches long, measured from the hilt, but total length of the blade when measured around its curve is 9 inches. The blade is made from straight carbon steel rather than stainless, and is 5/32 inches thick. It weighs about the same as our Ka-Bar and is slightly handle-heavy. Our Corvo took a very good edge and held it well, and the workmanship is in most respects equal to if not superior to our Ka-Bar and other issue knives.

The guard, handle, and pommel deserve some comment, as each is quite well done. The guard is made of iron and is a full ¼ inch thick; you won't bend this one. It appears to be pressed to the blade, as there is no space or gap whatsoever at the juncture of these components. Our Corvo's handle is molded plastic and oval in cross section, and well shaped to give a comfortable and secure grip. Those parts of the handle that contact the guard and pommel are thoughtfully designed so there's no skin pinching. There is a form of checkering molded into the surface of the handle to further enhance the grip. The pommel is ⅜ inch thick and designed to prevent the Corvo from being pulled from your hand. This pommel, coupled with a wrist thong, makes it unlikely that the weapon would be pulled away from you in a fight. Guard, handle and pommel are all well designed and executed, and each complements the other.

An off-the-shelf Corvo comes with the original Chilean military instruction manual — in Spanish. Norman Potts, our purchaser in Santiago, was kind enough to enclose an English translation. It's apparent that the Chileans are well aware of the peculiar advantages afforded by the Corvo's blade shape. A graphic in the manual shows how a blow to the top of the head with the curved point of the blade will penetrate to the brain cavity. Hooking capability is also stressed, and a series of blocks and counterblocks are outlined for the aspiring Corvo student. It's obvious that the author of the instruction manual was familiar with the perform-



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Chilean Combat Corvo



Chilean Corvo, issued to paratroops and other special units. Craftsmanship and quality are first-rate, but the hooked blade could cause some serious problems in a knife fight.

ance characteristics of this weapon.

Unfortunately, the Corvo has some serious shortcomings as a combat knife — its workmanship and quality assembly notwithstanding. Unusual blade curvature enforces a two-inch penalty in reach — a penalty that could have fatal consequences. Also, when striking with the curved portion facing down, the Corvo ceases to be a slashing implement and becomes an instrument of penetration. The point can stick or hang when employed in this fashion. The severity of the blade curve also limits its effectiveness on the backstroke. In addition, the knife is far too light to have any chopping power. This is a fault that is borne by issue knives of many nations, ours included.

Chileans regard the Corvo as a national symbol of sorts and think of it in much the same way that Americans think of Bowie knives. This provides some psychological value in the form of national identity for the troops who use it. However, as a knife this weapon has several serious drawbacks. The first and most obvious is that the Corvo was originally designed as an all-purpose agricultural tool. The severe curve of the blade, with its attendant double-edged grind, enables the Corvo to function as a small scythe, and the original knives were no doubt used for this. The hook formed by the blade's curvature also functions as an effective grappling implement, and this is a desirable feature on a general purpose blade that is intended for agricultural use. The obvious fact that the blade shape of the Corvo disallows any type of stabbing stroke is a strong indicator that the knife was not designed as a weapon.

I don't mean to imply that I'd want to get tagged with a Corvo, and I am not dismissing it as a weapon. A man accustomed to its use could inflict some very real damage on an oppo-

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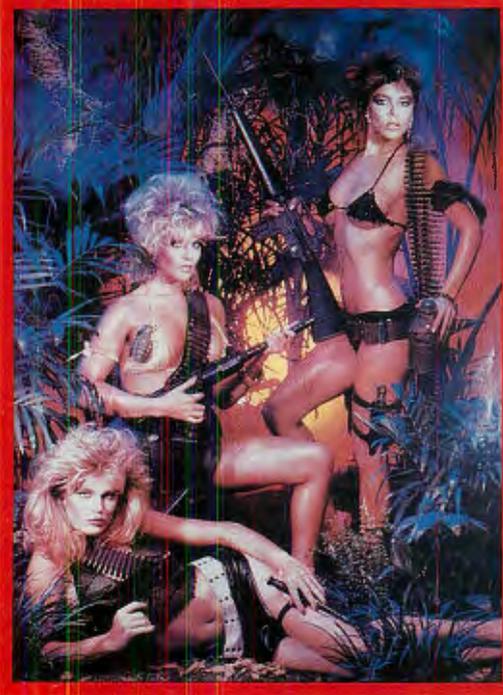
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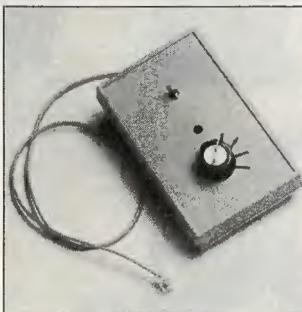
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20 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

ment. I'd rate it about equal with the Ka-Bar as a fighting knife, as each weapon has its strengths and its weaknesses.

I think the Corvo can teach two valuable lessons. One is a repeat of an old theme: Agricultural tools do not make outstanding weapons. With the Corvo the Chileans have demonstrated that they have the ability to mass-produce well-made, quality cutlery, but their desire to produce a national symbol for their elite troops has given them a weapon that is in some ways compromised.

The other lesson is more subtle, but provides us with food for thought. We tend to believe that we as Americans are technologically smarter and cleverer than other people. The Corvo should give us reason to ponder that stance.

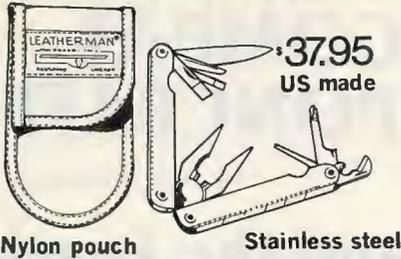
Parts such as the handle, guard and pommel of the Corvo are superior in material, workmanship and design to our issue knives. Had the Chileans elected to utilize another blade shape, they would have had a clearly superior knife for their troops. Still, they can make a very good knife, and this one sold at retail in Santiago for the equivalent of U.S. \$13.85.

When examining the leather sheath that comes with the Corvo, it's obvious — especially when compared to some of the high-tech "wonders" produced here — that technology is not always the answer. Applied common sense and ingenuity will solve a lot of problems, and this is shown by the Chilean approach to making the sheath for the Corvo.

It's not high-tech, injection-molded plastic that's heavy, noisy — and trendy. It doesn't hang halfway down the leg and doesn't come with three yards of bootlace to tie to your leg. It's a simple, well-made leather sheath with a belt loop that causes it to ride high and close to the body — exactly where it should. It incorporates an all-but-invisible feature that solves a long-standing problem with carbon steel blades, leather sheaths, and body sweat. Sweat will eventually penetrate a leather sheath and sometimes cause a carbon steel knife to rust in its sheath. The Chilean solution is straightforward. They have simply attached a thin layer of vinyl on the back of the sheath, which rests against the body. This forms an effective vapor barrier and keeps the blade from rusting. A simple yet effective solution.

All in all the Corvo is a well-made knife-and-sheath package. It's not the world's most effective fighting knife, but it is an example of a piece of equipment that offers both value and performance. You can bet that a guy armed with one of these is no push-over. ✘

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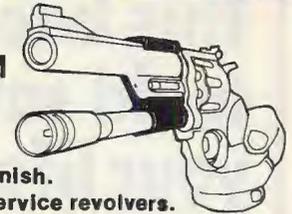


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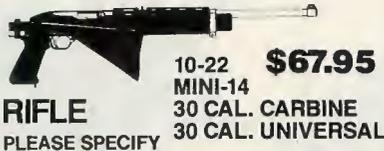
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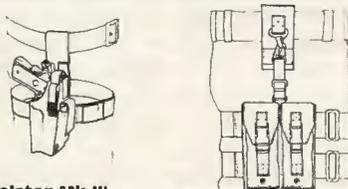
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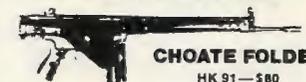
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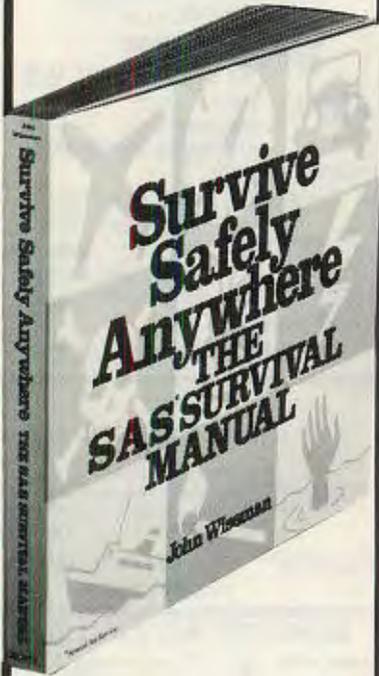
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COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

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AFRICAN sunsets are stunningly beautiful. As that hot orange ball disappears behind some low hills in the horizon, the patrol leader stops and is captured by this once-a-day drama. With the sun gone, he wipes the sweat from his eyes and continues on with his three men to the nearest water hole for a drink.

Fifty meters from water, all hell breaks loose. Concentrated fire from its right flank forces the heavily laden four-man patrol to ground.

How would you react?

When coming under effective enemy fire, you, as either a soldier, police officer or civilian, need to apply a basic concept of war: Destroy the enemy threat while preserving yourself. This usually means employing the basic technique of taking cover and shooting back.

In Rhodesia, combat encounters

AT THE SHARP END

Jack Thompson is a professional soldier, instructor and security consultant who has seen his share of service around the world. He frequently contributes to *Combat Weaponcraft*.

were usually close, violent and quick, and you'd better have this take-cover-and-shoot concept ingrained into your soul or you would surely come short. It's the instinctive reaction of taking cover, followed by good, effective battle shooting, that both preserves your life and takes that of the enemy.

Let's examine the sequence of events that took the four soldiers at the water hole from a standing, exposed position to one which allowed them to protect themselves and return effective fire.

The sequence of DASH-DOWN-CRAWL-OBSERVE-SIGHTS-FIRE was the standard drill used by the Rhodesian security forces. Quick and easy to learn, especially by recruits, this simple formula has saved countless lives:

DASH — After coming under effective enemy fire (when their rounds are impacting in your immediate area), or on the order "take cover" by the patrol commander, each patrol member dashes for the nearest point of cover. (Cover means a piece of terrain, rocky outcrop, thickly piled deadfall or other protection from effective enemy fire. Concealment, on the other hand, means just that: It will hide you, but it may not protect you.) Care should be taken not to run across the line of fire of your buddy on either side.

DOWN — Go to ground *before* reaching cover. The enemy should not see you actually moving into your new position.

Continued on page 81

NO group of firearms is subjected to greater heat and mechanical stress than machine guns. When firing at sustained rates, moving parts fly back and forth 500-2,000 times a minute. Bolts and carriers drive rearward to smash against the backplate or buffer and then race forward to crack against a barrel socket or chamber face. When barrels glow red and fall limply toward the ground, other parts are sure to follow. One can make a good guess about overall reliability by looking at which components fail under pressure and how often.

The smart machine gun owner assembles his own spare parts kit and keeps it handy. What and how much this kit should contain varies from weapon to weapon, but there are some basic guidelines to follow. For discussion purposes here, these guidelines will by necessity be broad in nature, generically restricted to sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light/medium machine guns. Obviously among types such as assault rifles these will differ from weapon to weapon.

One problem has been endemic to all types of rapid-fire weapons since their beginning: broken extractors. After the tiny claw at the extractor's head has snapped over the cartridge case's rim — or into the extractor groove of a rimless case — it must bear the full brunt of the force needed to remove the swollen case from the barrel's chamber.

Modern technology has alleviated this problem to some extent, but extractors still break. It's a much more common problem, however, with older machine guns such as those Lewis Guns chambered for .30-06 cartridges. Corrections were finally made, but unfortunately for the manufacturer, the U.S. military by then had lost interest in this weapon.

Some other examples:

- Extractors on the Johnson M1941 rifle and LMG fracture with regularity. They cost \$30-40 each today, if you can find them.

- BAR extractors, while still plentiful and inexpensive, are prone to breakage.

There are also examples of the vast improvement in extractor designs which has taken place over the years. One is the Soviet Kalashnikov. The Soviets use a very large claw on the Kalashnikov series and I have never seen one fail.

But no matter what kind of automatic weapon you own or how old it is, extractors should be at the top of your spare parts list.

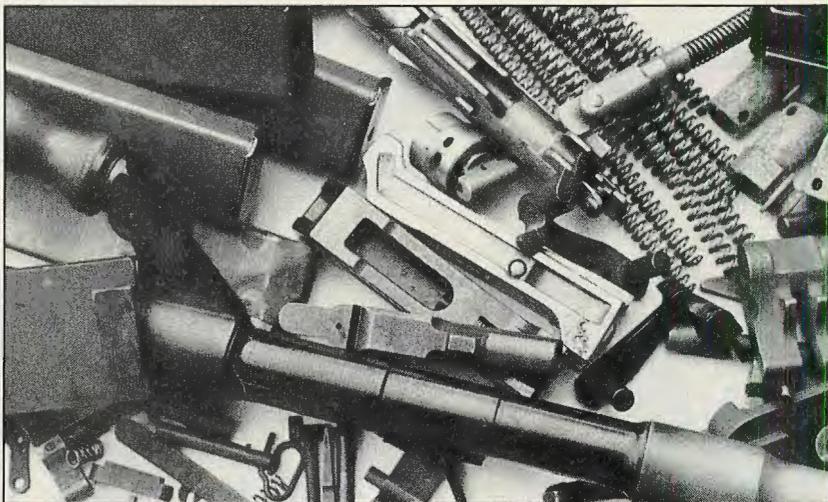
Another rule of thumb in stocking spare parts: It's usually safe to omit items like buttstocks, buttplates, sight assemblies, pistol grips, forearms, gas blocks and gas cylinders and receivers.



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Spare Parts for Auto Shooters



You could assemble an endless list of spare parts for your rattle gun — but concentrate on moving internal parts, which are usually the first to fail.

Moving internal parts usually fail long before external, non-moving parts, with the obvious exception of an over-heated barrel.

Modern submachine guns are relatively simple compared to earlier designs. Newer models have fewer moving parts, one of their biggest advantages. But when putting together a spare parts kit, you can never have enough magazine parts. Magazine feed lips spread, the bodies get dented and follower springs lose their compression strength. Magazines for the Sten Gun and M3A1 grease gun (also used in the .45 ACP MAC10) are especially susceptible to malfunction. Besides, the more magazines you have, the greater your potential firepower.

Extra magazines are a basic item, but there are several other useful parts you need to stash away. If you fire reloads or surplus ammo in your sub gun, you need a spare barrel. A squib load will send a bullet into the barrel, but not out the muzzle. Your unlocked, blowback SMG will cycle again and the next shot will bulge the barrel. I've seen this happen to Thompsons and MACs.

You should check each particular weapon before including an extra bar-

rel in your kit, though. With an UZI, you just slip in the new barrel yourself. A Thompson, whose barrel is threaded to the receiver, will require a competent gunsmith's attention. Without a press, no one but Oberndorf can change the barrel on a Heckler & Koch series weapon.

Another part to remember is the firing pin. If your submachine gun's bolt has a fixed firing pin milled into its face, look for a spare. Firing surplus ammunition will sometimes result in pierced primers. Flames and hot gases shooting rearward out of the primer will begin to etch the firing pin. The process is self-perpetuating, as ragged edges on the firing pin will start to pierce even more primers. While you can initially stone the rough spots on the firing pin, eventually it must be replaced.

Your SMG spare parts kit should also include the recoil spring, trigger mechanism springs, sear and hammer (if there is one).

In addition to extractors and magazines, the spares you need for an assault rifle will depend upon the specific design. Extra firing pins (including their springs, if any) and bolt bodies (or bolt heads, in the case of the H&K series) can be useful. Bolt carriers very rarely fail, but pistons (for gas operated systems) can be handy. Very little is ever required to keep a Kalashnikov humming.

Those with one of the M16-series rifles should stock the following: buffer, recoil spring, trigger and hammer springs, complete bolt assembly, extractor, extractor spring and plastic insert, firing pin, bolt cam pin, firing-pin and extractor retaining pins. Especially troublesome on the M16 are the extractor springs. I have found them to be weak straight from the factory. Collect only Colt or Adventure Line magazines.

Always use factory-original parts for all machine guns. They are made to military specifications. A great deal of my mail concerns readers who are experiencing problems with after-market bolts, firing pins, sears or even barrels. Stay away from these second-rate parts no matter what their slick advertisements promise.

The parts required to keep a light or medium machine gun chugging along vary dramatically from system to system. Once again, you can never have enough links or metallic and cloth belts. That goes for Bren magazines too. Some will insist that cloth belts will place less strain than disintegrating metallic links on a Browning M1917A1/A4/A6 .30-caliber machine gun. This is true in theory. But in practice, you'll have to fire hundreds of thousands of rounds before Browning links will do anything more than polish

the feed tray.

Other machine guns manufactured prior to and during World War II may require *special* attention. Now 40-80 years old, the moving parts have been strained to their limits. Many have been assembled from the components of several different guns. Parts once hand-fitted or gauged at the factory were often discarded years ago. Mating surfaces may no longer properly engage.

A good example is the MG-42. The trigger's sear and the bolt carrier's bent often no longer meet with full-face engagement. All too often, the result is a runaway machine gun that can be stopped only by twisting the belt. If you own an MG-42, try to locate several different sears and bolt carriers and experiment with them until you achieve full-face engagement.

Spare barrels are especially important for belt-fed guns. Sustained firing of large numbers of rounds at close to maximum cyclic rates will turn barrels cherry red, accelerate chamber and bore erosion and may induce drooping to the point where bullets may slice out the side, midway down the bore. LMG owners should have *plenty* of spare barrels.

Although it's comforting to have a spare bolt, those lucky few with Bren Guns need only worry about the occa-

sional replacement of a firing pin or extractor. If you have a Browning machine gun in any caliber or model, you might want to add a complete bolt assembly to your inventory even though you may never require any of its components. Vickers and Maxims need only spare lock assemblies and sometimes a fusee spring. Extractors and firing pins may sometimes fail on the FN MAG 58 GPMG. And I always have several of the MAG's gas regulator split rings on hand, as they are all too easily lost in the bush.

There are a large number of M60s in private collections. The failure rate of this weapon is legendary. If you plan to keep one of these mediocre machine guns, obtain and store as many of the following spare parts as you can find: recoil springs; recoil spring guide rods; operating rods; complete bolt assemblies (the bolt body usually fails after 20,000 rounds) with extra bolt plug pins, cam roller assemblies and firing pins; trigger housing leaf springs; sears; sear plunger springs; trigger with springs; pistons; gas port plugs; cocking lever guide screws; all feed mechanism components; safety wire pliers and several spools of stainless steel, aircraft safety wire.

There are other, more detailed con-

Continued on page 82

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In addition to success in battle, one of the things the Israeli Defense Force is known for is the quality of its equipment. From up-gunned Phantoms and what is arguably the world's best combat harness right down to their boots, the Israelis seem to get it right. But for those who wish to obtain genuine Israeli kit, the task is oftentimes lengthy and difficult.

One source of Israeli-made gear is Brigade Quartermasters, and they deliver what they promise. Among BQM's offerings is the Israeli Commando Boot. It features a 100-percent cotton canvas upper and a polyurethane outsole. The lightweight cotton upper dries quickly and allows the foot to breathe, and the polyurethane sole grips well in most any terrain. Another nice feature is the jump-style buckle top collar, which allows for easy trouser blousing and keeps out dirt and insects.

Israeli Commando Boots are durable, comfortable, quiet and priced at a reasonable \$34.95. Available from Brigade Quartermasters, Dept. SOF, 1025 Cobb International Blvd., Kennesaw, GA 30144. Phone: (404) 428-1248.

COMMANDO/FIGHTER

The Ek Commando Knife Company is introducing its new Ek Survival/Fighter. Ek Knives have the reputation of being among the leading private-purchase military fighting knives in American history, having been battle-tested and combat-proven by over 100,000 servicemen since 1941.

Ek's Survival/Fighter features a solid bar of high-carbon stainless steel that runs from point to butt. The tang is a full-width, full-thickness extension of the blade, making it rugged and dependable.

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by G.B. Crouse

The blade has a reinforced point beveled to resist bending and breaking, and its wasp-waisted blade design increases the cutting and slashing power of the edge. Heat-treated to a Rockwell hardness of 57-59, the blade is shaving sharp



and easy to re-sharpen.

Survival/Fighter's brass crossguard is downswept for comfort and to prevent jamming the thumb, and the hilt provides a non-slip grip of six yards of resilient milspec parachute cord which can be removed for emergency lashing. An additional eight feet of p-cord is wrapped around the sheath.

The extended butt can be used as a pry bar and features a wrist thong to prevent loss under adverse conditions.

Ek's Survival/Fighter Knife retails for \$79 (plus \$2 shipping) and comes complete with an olive-drab nylon sheath which fits military web belts.

Orders may be placed by writing or calling the Ek Commando Knife Company, Dept. SOF, 601 N. Lombardy Street, Richmond, VA 23220. Phone: (804) 257-7272.

DIGIT PROTECTION

Law enforcement officers, especially tactical officers, have a definite need for some sort of hand protection in the field. Preventing rope burns, greater stability for shooting, warmth in cold weather and comfort while driving are some

of the benefits of having a good pair of gloves available. Accordingly, gloves manufactured with law enforcement applications have begun showing up in the marketplace.

One manufacturer of gloves designed specifically for law enforcement officers is Glove Specialties West. Its offering, the Assault/Entry/Rappel Gloves, are available in half- or full-finger length, and are made from three-ounce deerskin with neoprene pads over the knuckles and goatskin over the palm. An adjustable velcro strap around the wrist keeps the gloves securely in place. The gloves are comfortable in hot or cold weather, and go a long way toward reducing hand fatigue.

For those whose work demands the use of gloves without loss of manual dexterity, the Assault/Entry/Rappel Gloves are tough to beat. They sell for \$38.50 per pair and are available from Glove Specialties West, Dept. SOF, 6121 Glen Alder, Los Angeles, CA 90068. If you're on the graveyard shift, you can order from their 24-hour number: (213) 469-4494. Tell 'em SOF sent you.



KEEP IT QUIET

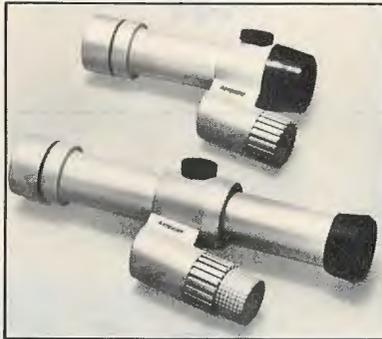
Most hearing protection devices sold for shooters are more than adequate for keeping your eardrums in working order after extended range time. With all that sound suppression, though, you can't hear normal background noises such as range commands — or the irate shooter on the next firing position

pleading with you to stop shooting at his target.

A new device for ear protection that solves that problem is offered by Electronic Specialties Inc. ESI's Soundbusters do more than just muffle loud noises. Through the use of small microphones, amplifiers and speakers in the earphones, Soundbusters reduce loud noises to a manageable 22-60 decibels and amplify low-level sounds to the same level. They're available in two models, directional and non-directional, with the difference between the two being the number of microphones and amplifiers. The directional unit has microphones in both ears and lets a shooter determine where a sound is coming from. The sound is just as clear with the non-directional unit, but the location of specific sounds can't be pinpointed. The unit is powered by a standard 9v battery, which should last eight to 10 weeks even with everyday use — as long as you remember to turn it off when you're through.

Prices for these lightweight and comfortable units are \$99.95 for the non-directional model and \$129.95 for the directional model. For

additional information contact Electronic Specialties Inc., Dept. SOF, 6951 Warner Ave., Huntington Beach, CA 92647. Phone: (714) 893-5395.



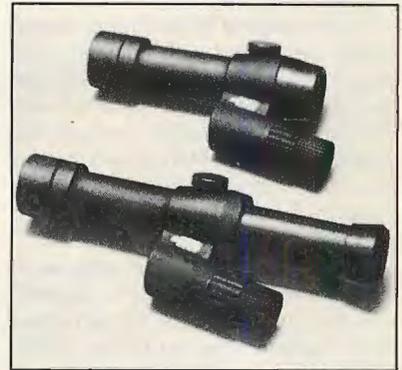
SIGHTING IN

Electronic sights have been around for some time now, and new developments and changes are few and far between. A couple of areas where electronic sights have room for improvement are size and weight.

Aimpoint, the world's largest

manufacturer of electronic sights, has introduced two new sights: the Series 2000, long and short. The 2000 Long is 7¼-inches long, yet weighs in at just over 6 ounces. The smaller version, the 2000 Short, is ideal for pistols, with a weight of only 5.35 ounces. Both sights mount with standard 1-inch rings and come complete with filters, lens covers, batteries and two battery caps.

For more information contact Aimpoint, Dept. SOF, 203 Elden St.,



Suite 302, Herndon, VA 22070. Phone: (800) 336-0185. ✕

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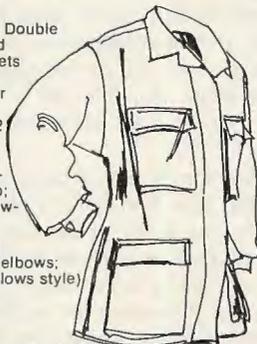
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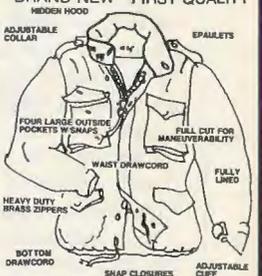


This intermediate weight, water repellant treated, nylon jacket is manufactured to USAF design for use in cold weather climates (20° F). Features front closure storm flap; knit collar, waistband and cuffs; 4 welt type slash pockets with snap fasteners (2 outside, 2 inside); and combination cigarette/pencil pocket with zipper on sleeve. All jackets reverse to high visibility orange and are fully interlined for warmth. USAF Sage Green, Black and (Camouflage-100% Cotton Shell). Also, available in L2-B version. Same as MA-1 except lightweight for use in cool weather and with epaulets. Sage Green and Navy only. Sizes: S, M, L, XL.

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SPENDING two tours as an embarked Marine with the Navy's Sixth Fleet provided me the opportunity to witness occasional bouts of deranged behavior. Such lunacy was usually the result of the Corps' finest falling prey to locally distilled beverages when we made port. There were times, though, when higher headquarters generated its own unique brand of "situation normal: all fucked up." One such officially sanctioned event took place while I was on board the USS Guadalcanal in the Mediterranean Sea.

I was assigned to an honor guard which was tasked with firing the rifle salute for a Marine who was to be buried at sea. Since the upper echelon did not see fit to trouble me with the details of how the Marine had met his fate, I can only guess at what had happened before his ashes came into our possession.

Apparently he had died while serving with the Sixth Fleet during a previous deployment. His remains had been dutifully returned to the United States, where it was discovered that his last request had been to be buried at sea. Almost always eager to grant a serviceman's last request, the Navy promptly shipped the remains back to the Mediterranean. However, shipping coffins back and forth across the Atlantic can get to be expensive, so no doubt in the interest of fiscal responsibility, the Department of Defense decided to save a few bucks on freight by having the body cremated.

Services for Private John Doe took place on a particularly hot and humid day in July, a hundred or so miles off the coast of Egypt. The whole affair was rather hastily organized. At the last minute my platoon was given the task of providing troops for the rifle salute. Shit doesn't really flow downhill in the Corps — it sort of falls off a cliff. I happened to be standing under the cliff that morning and soon found myself in dress uniform practicing present arms.

Our platoon sergeant, not known for his mathematical aptitude, counted out eight Marines for the detail. Now, I don't know whether a lowly Marine Corps private even rated a 21-gun salute during his final send-off, much less 24, but I guess the platoon sergeant felt that three volleys of eight would be much more, say, *noisy* than the traditional three volleys of seven shots. However, not wishing to interfere with command decisions, and assuming someone would catch the mistake, I kept my mouth shut. Lance Corporals are not encouraged to offer advice to their superiors, so I didn't.

Our slightly unorthodox 24-gun salute was really the first indication of what was to come, but the full magnitude of the goatfuck unfolding around



I WAS THERE

by S.D. Butler

Ashes Aweigh



Marine Corps burial at sea is a serious and poignant occasion — unless Murphy's Law becomes part of the service.

me wasn't clear until a little later. We enlisted ranks had made our contribution to seeing that things were messed up, but to really screw up in the first degree was going to require the participation of an officer. It was then I learned that the Weapons Company commander would be the presiding officer. Captain Rat (not his real name, but close) was generally considered by officers and enlisted men alike to be no smarter than a barrel of hair. He quickly took charge and it was all downhill from there.

After some frenzied rehearsal below decks, the honor guard, myself included, reported to the flight deck. On the surface, things generally looked pretty good. There were chairs for the brass, a podium sort of thing for the chaplain, and the rest of the deck was roped off for the spectators. The crew and embarked troops had turned out in force on the premise that anything that broke up the monotony of day-to-day life at sea was a good thing. We would have sold tickets had we known what a circus the whole affair would shortly become.

The humidity was fairly intense, the heat overwhelming. Our only relief came from a slight breeze blowing over the stern. It wasn't long before everybody was covered with sweat. My main concern at this point was not dropping my rifle. Between the LSA and the sweat on my hand, it was a real possibility. Dropping one's rifle is frowned upon in the Corps, and doing it while conducting funeral services for the dear departed is considered espe-

cially bad form.

We stood at attention during the chaplain's well-intentioned but long-winded eulogy. It wasn't often that a chaplain got the chance to send someone off to meet up with Davy Jones, so he made the best of it. I was getting pretty uncomfortable and I wasn't the only one. The battalion commander kept glancing at his watch, and the Marine to my right, Cool Breeze Ortiz, looked to be near heat stroke and kept mumbling something about Schlitz Malt Liquor. Finally we fired our 24 — count 'em — 24-gun salute. It didn't take the battalion staff more than a by-the-book blink to realize what had happened, and I was beginning to get embarrassed about my involvement in the whole affair. But the best — or worst — of it was just getting underway.

It was time for the actual burial and Captain Rat, who had only to chuck the urn into the wake of the ship to send Private Doe onward to eternity, decided he knew a better way to get the job done. Removing the lid from the urn, he solemnly walked the few feet to the stern, ceremoniously held the urn over the edge and gently shook it. I guess the idea was that the ashes would fall out into the breeze and drift toward the sea. It didn't happen. The humidity had gotten to the ashes before our captain did. When he turned the urn over, nothing came out. With a nervous glance toward the chaplain, he looked into the urn. It seems the ashes were stuck to the sides and bottom. The skipper then leaned back over the edge and — with a little more authority — shook the urn. Still no earthly remains. Quick thinker that he

Continued on page 82

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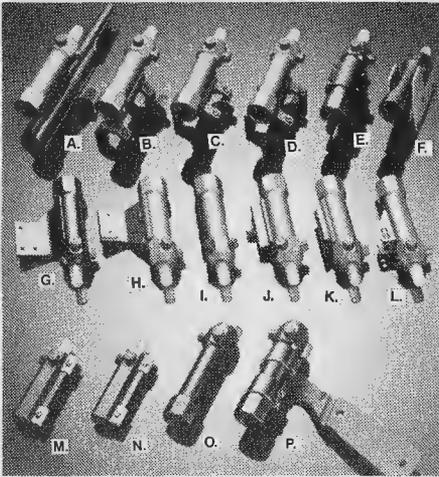
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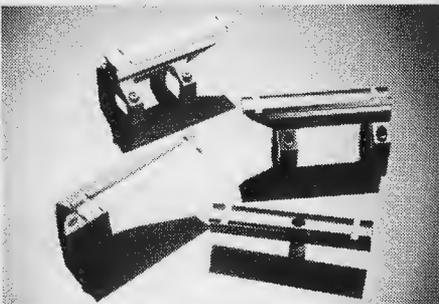
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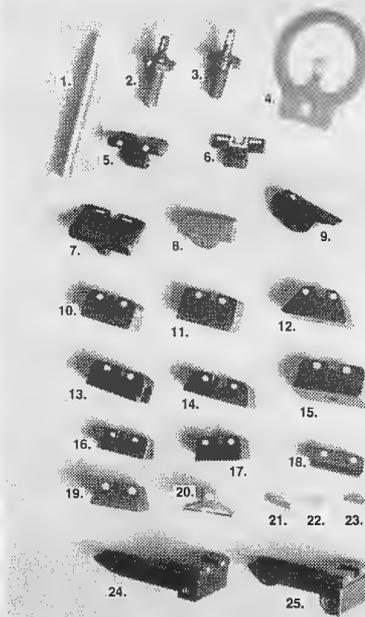


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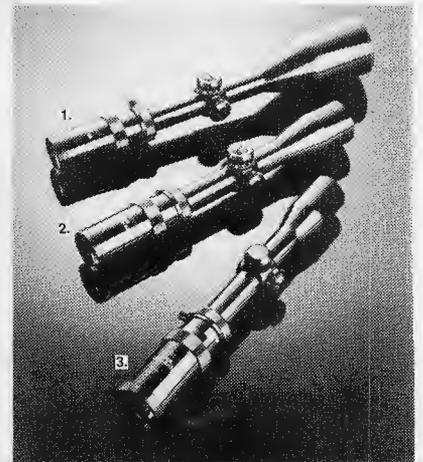
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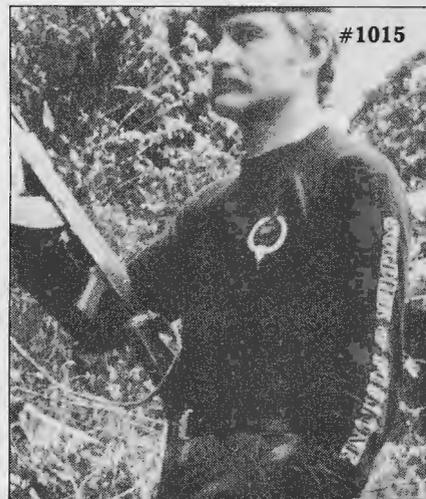
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After applying tear gas, one member of a San Francisco SWAT team scans a room with a mirror while another team member covers him. Photo: Capt. Charles Beene Collection

SOF POLICE

SAN FRANCISCO SWAT

Walking the Beat
with the First in Special Tactics

by Richard Bocklet

TWILIGHT descended on the two-story frame houses of Manchester Street, located in one of San Francisco's hilly old neighborhoods, as the first patrol officers on that beat arrived. Nervous residents had called the police after a small, swarthy émigré with a history of mental illness shot his dog. Highly agitated, the man was holed up in his house, taking pot shots into the street.

Officers climbed the outside stairs and knocked on the door. The suspect answered, spoke briefly and then pulled a .357 magnum pistol and opened fire. The unharmed patrolmen returned fire, wounding the suspect, who retreated back into the house. A request immediately went out to the San Francisco Police Department's Tactical Division for a SWAT team.

After securing the area and evacuating nearby residents, SWAT team members began assessing the situation and evaluating their own risks. Neighbors who knew him told police the suspect kept a rifle, a pistol and a lot of ammunition. Upset over the death of a close relative 18 months earlier, the man had slipped from the depths of depression into paranoid delusions that the police and FBI were conspiring to kill him. He shot his dog, believing that lawmen had planted an electronic surveillance device inside the German shepherd.

His sister came to the police line and pleaded with the man through a bullhorn to give up. He opened fire on her. SWAT sharpshooters waited out the night, hoping the deranged man would offer them a profile in front of a window. He did not. An assault plan was devised during the night.

A tense stand-off prevailed until just after dawn. Finally the word came. Clear the house.

Firing smoke grenades to cover their advance, assault team members hustled to the outside stairway and began to climb. Apparently aware that policemen were approaching his second-level front door, the suspect began shooting holes through the wall along the stairway. Team members crouched in safety and continued their ascent.

The shooting stopped and they entered the front door. Now came the nitty-gritty. Advancing cautiously inside the quiet house, adrenaline heightened every sense in anticipation of a possible ambush. They be-

gan the delicate and dangerous task of moving from room to room. The dead dog was found slumped in a pool of blood in one corner. Finally, all the rooms were secure except one. Four team members positioned themselves, two on each side of the door. They waited and listened.

Splinters flew as several rounds came blasting through the door to impact harmlessly in the opposite wall. As gunfire stopped, they kicked open the door and tossed in a tear gas canister on a protective plate designed to prevent a fire. The door banged shut. Again, they listened and waited; no sound except the hissing canister and the heavy breathing of officers, who by now had bullets of sweat popping out inside their gas masks.

The gas seemed useless. Unknown to the assault force, the suspect had climbed up on rafters in the room and was breathing through a hole in the roof. A heavy-volume smoke canister designed to disorient a suspect was tossed inside.

Communicating with hand signals, the

assault team cautiously prepared to enter the room. Suddenly they froze.

"Stop!" the man shouted. "I'm coming out. Don't shoot."

Tension eased just a bit as the SWAT members awaited his surrender. They heard a thump as the man jumped to the floor. Again the door was pushed open. Two shots rang out from inside. The man was lying in a prone position firing into the open doorway. All four officers reached around the door frame and pumped shots into the suspect. He was dead. It was over.

This may seem to some an unfortunate ending to this incident, which took place in 1981. But most importantly, there had been no injuries to police or local residents. And it's the only time in over 200 commando-style assaults spanning 23 years that a suspect has been fatally wounded by a member of San Francisco's tactical assault team. In that time, no team members have ever been injured during an actual assault and no hostages have been lost.

SWAT's Originators

This no doubt is a source of pride to the San Francisco Police Department. But they have other reasons to be proud. For instance, their Tactical Division is one of the first efforts of its kind among police departments in the country. Contrary to media

BELOW: Officers George Stasko, left, and Ken Sugrue run an assault course with shoot/no-shoot targets. Photo: Capt. Charles Beene Collection

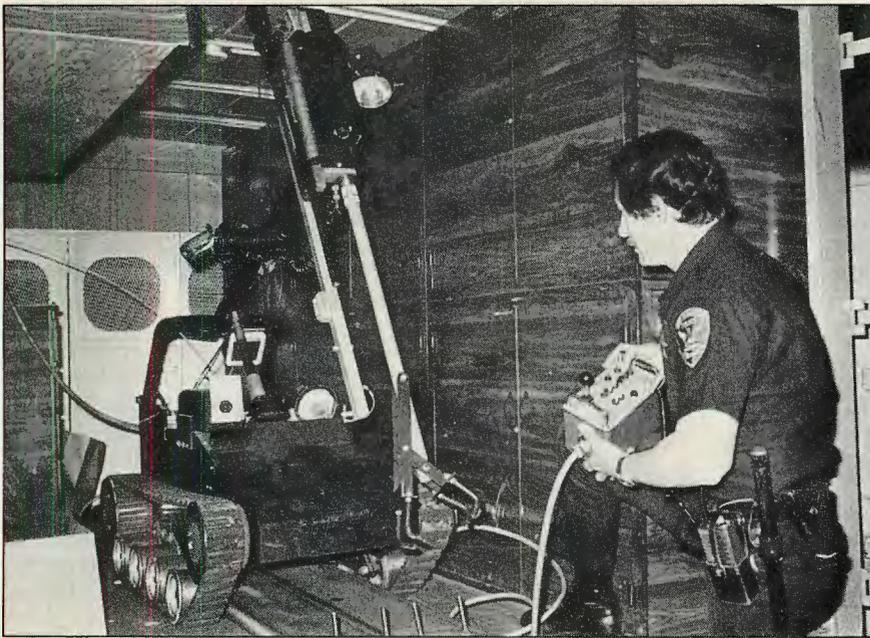


RIGHT: Capt. Charles Beene, left, CO of San Francisco's Tactical Division, and Lt. Jack Gleeson, seated, at the command post for a critical-incident situation in 1986. Photo: Capt. Charles Beene Collection



ON THE BEAT

Richard Bocklet has 25 years under his belt as a journalist covering foreign affairs and the military. He currently freelances out of New York, and we welcome his first contribution to SOF.



LEFT: Member of the bomb squad demonstrates the department's robot. Photo: Richard Bocklet



BELOW: The point element of an assault team cautiously approaches a building during one of many exercises. Photo: Capt. Charles Beene Collection

hype and Hollywood, the Los Angeles Police Department *did not* organize the first tactical response team. The LAPD SWAT team *did* garner much publicity when several people were fatally shot or burned to death in the siege of Symbianese Liberation Army headquarters in a residential neighborhood.

In 1963, long before the term "SWAT" gained widespread circulation through the FBI, the San Francisco Police Department organized a special assault program. And the idea came none too soon. The drug-addled heyday of demonstrations and street violence, when Haight-Ashbury was freak capital of the hippie world, was just around the corner.

San Francisco Police Sergeant Ed Epping developed the tactics and weaponry that were later adopted by the FBI and disseminated to lawmen nationwide. Epping and his colleagues had reduced the principles of successful police tactics and weaponry to a science, still emulated by police departments everywhere.

Sergeant Jim Hall, an SFPD SWAT member, expressed his motivation for join-

ABOVE: Two SWAT officers check to see if a murder suspect is home. If the situation turns hostile, they will fall back and plan an assault with other team members. Photo: Capt. Charles Beene Collection

ing the select unit. "SWAT was always interesting for me. I served 15 years on the force and was an anti-sniper specialist before assignment to the Tactical Division. It was the variety of operations which attracted me here, and eventually I became a SWAT team leader.

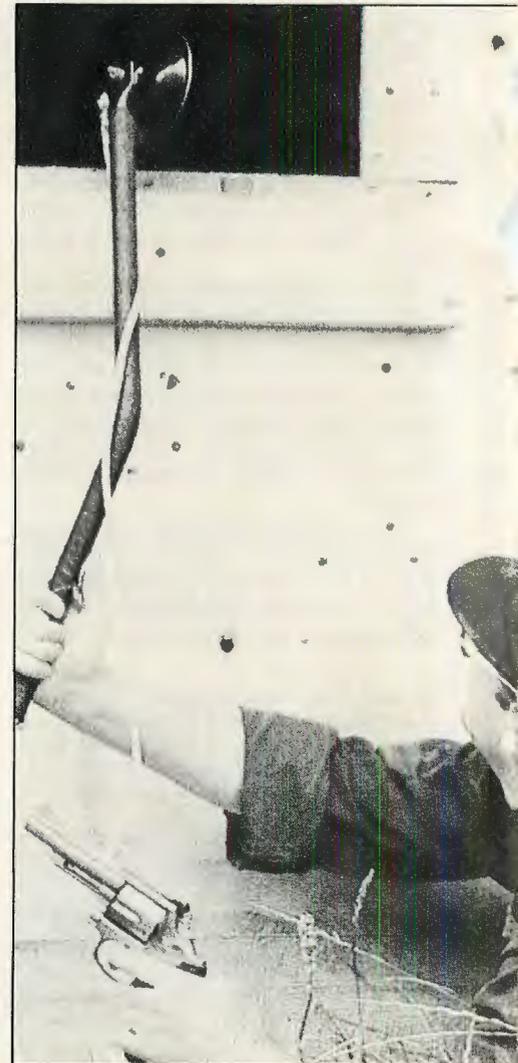
"We practice all over the city," Hall explained, "recreating different scenarios appearing in the newspapers. They had a hostage situation back East in a hospital, which involved an oxygen-sensitive area, prohibiting the use of firearms. We did a practice drill recreating that situation. Commercial buildings and banks are our usual locales, but the games we play may someday save people's lives."

In the San Francisco Police Department, SWAT members come under the Tactical Division, commanded by Captain Charles Breene. Breene, who was a member of the

response team that answered the call on Manchester Street, has spent all but four of his 27 years on the force in the Tactical Division. Breene has two lieutenants, four sergeants and 25 other police personnel in his division, which is divided into five units: canine, bomb, horse-mounted, off-road motorcycle and the SWAT, or tactical assault unit. All are known generically as critical incident teams.

When not on trouble calls, team members perform regular police patrols in high-crime areas and crowd-control functions in the demonstration-intense city. Breene and his staff also spend time training members of other divisions in situation containment and marksmanship.

Like other large police departments, San Francisco starts out its rookies in the patrol division — walking or driving a beat. However, many soon choose a specialty



based on their individual interests. In San Francisco, this includes divisions in investigations, vice, narcotics, community affairs, computer technology, training, forensic sciences, legal work, photography, aviation, marine, mounted and motorcycle patrol, youth work and public information. And, of course, the Tactical Division.

To join the Tactical Division, officers complete an application, then undergo an interview with the unit's commanding officer. Some officers with exceptional skills and steel nerves join the SWAT team or enter the bomb squad. Others with human relations and psychological backgrounds become members of the Hostage Negotiation Team. Most pay levels are equal to those in other divisions. A few draw extra money for hazardous duty.

The Bomb Squad

One hazardous-duty job is EOD, or explosive ordnance disposal, better known as the bomb squad. When not responding to emergency calls, San Francisco Police Department Bomb Squad members augment SWAT operations when needed and join regular police patrols. They maintain over \$200,000 worth of equipment — vehicles, battered instruments, listening devices, other high-tech equipment and a \$20,000

bomb-scooping robot called Snoopy. Officers are on 24-hour alert, usually one week on and one off, living with their telephone beeper close by. On San Francisco's average, they are called 12 times a month.

Members receive standard patrolman's pay, augmented with hazardous-duty bonuses when called, and they must undergo strict physical and psychiatric evaluations prior to assignment. Patrolman Jeremiah Morgan, nine years on the Bomb Squad, chose the job for the challenge and its electronic gear. "There's excitement coming to work every day," Morgan said, "not knowing what's going to happen. I like that. It keeps me young. Then, too, there's a lot of sophisticated equipment allowing remote operations that intrigues me."

His partner, Patrolman Reno Rapagnani, five years with the unit, went from patrol duties to Tactical Division to decoy operations to the Bomb Squad, feeling that the well-rounded experience increased his promotion chances.

Initial Bomb Squad training is four weeks at the FBI's Hazardous Devices School, with a one-week refresher course every 18 months. Locally, there are two training days a month and the men attend the International

Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators conference as well as the Army's ordnance unit sessions at the San Francisco Presidio.

How do they feel about the danger involved? Said Morgan: "Enroute to the scene my adrenaline is running. Will we arrive on time? Is it a real device? Will it go off in our hands? But deep down, I guess I'm a fatalist and a survivalist. You could get injured just stepping off the sidewalk."

Rapagnani's reaction: "You're busy focusing on the job at the moment. There are so many things to do and they must be done right to minimize risk. Usually I don't feel fear until after the event. Upon reflecting how close to danger I came, I may spend a few sleepless nights."

But sleepless nights are part of the job. So are long hours, grinding routine, stress disorders — and the nerve-cracking seconds when EOD disarms a bomb. Or when the tactical assault team comes face-to-face with a PCP-hyped gunman lost in his own mental firefight of paranoia.

Why do they do it? For every man on the force there's a different answer, but San Francisco's front line stays on the streets. And San Francisco's citizens can sleep a little bit better knowing that's a fact. ☒





SOF MOVIES

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

Marine Corps Evens the Score

by James L. Pate

“ACTION!”

Director Terry Leonard means exactly that when he shouts Hollywood's trademark exclamation and the cameras roll in "Death Before Dishonor," the latest release by New World Pictures. Fred Dryer, an L.A. Rams linebacker-turned-actor, stars as Marine Corps Gunny Jack Burns, who brushes aside State Department interference to sack Arab terrorists deep in their own territory.



Discussing his directing debut, Leonard insists that "Death Before Dishonor" is not simply another flag-waving, action exploitation film like "Rambo."

"The thing about this picture is that there is no gratuitous action in it," says Leonard. "Everything we do means something. There is a definite story point to the film, and so there's a cause-and-effect relationship to every piece of action."

"Death Before Dishonor" does some pretty heavy-handed flag-waving, though, figuratively and literally. Nothing wrong with that. Action for its own sake is fine as long as it isn't taken to grotesque extremes. Leonard comes close in a couple of incidents. Most notable is a stunt in which Dryer pops a carload of escaping terrorists with an LAW, plows his jeep into the flaming wreckage on a bridge and jumps out just ahead of a fiery explosion quite reminiscent of the napalm drop survived by Rambo.

Leonard's directing emphasis on action should come as no surprise, however. "Death Before Dishonor" probably won't get any Academy Award nominations, but Leonard's worked in films that have. His credits include second unit director and/or stunt coordinator in such action films as "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Romancing the Stone," "Apocalypse Now," "Red Dawn," "The Wind and the Lion" and other notable titles.

Further rooting "Death Before Dishonor" in the action-adventure film genre is the background of producer Lawrence Kubik. Kubik is a long-time theatrical manager who lined up the acting deals in "Rocky" and "Conan the Barbarian," the pictures that became the first major box office successes for Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Although he's cast in a supporting role, the big-name actor in this film is Brian Keith. He gives a credible portrayal of Marine

Corps Colonel Halloran, military attaché to the mythical Middle East country of Jamal. But this role is not Keith at his acting best. For instance, he was much more convincing in his performance as President Teddy Roosevelt in "The Wind and the Lion." Still, Keith's acting carries "Death Before Dishonor" through a few weak spots where the dialogue gets a little too predictable.

Although he has a minor role, veteran actor Paul Winfield does a good job of playing the politically hamstrung American ambassador. Winfield's character typically refuses to recognize the depth of local feeling against his government until an Arab zealot drives a truck bomb [shades of the U.S. diplomatic debacle in Beirut] through the gates and blows up the embassy.

Certainly recognizable for her beauty and acting ability is Joanna Pacula, who adeptly played the lead female role in "Gorky Park" with Lee Marvin and William Hurt. Pacula is cast



opposite Dryer as a news photographer with unmistakable ties to Arab terrorists. She has a suspicious habit of always being at the right place at the right time to get pictures. Gunny Burns knows that the Pacula character, "Ellie," is not what she seems, but he is only partially correct.

ABOVE: Fred Dryer in front of Old Glory at the SOF Convention. His latest film, "Death Before Dishonor," is a well-done, unabashed flag-waver. Photo: Duane Hall





Dryer completed his debut as a lead character in this feature-length film one week before beginning production on the third season of his NBC-TV detective series, "Hunter." His performance as a Marine Corps gunny is certainly equal to or better than that turned in by Clint Eastwood in Eastwood's December release, "Heartbreak Ridge." As with the Eastwood character, the Pentagon's pantywaist brass may want to wash out Dryer's mouth with soap on occasion. [Wonder what Chesty Puller or John Wayne would have to say about that?] But as Gunny Burns, Dryer turns in a very lifelike performance as a Marine NCOIC, especially in small details of dialogue and in dealing with his men.

Part of the credit for this should go to the film's technical adviser, Lew

Richard, a former Marine and Vietnam combat veteran. Richard carefully checked details in the script for accuracy.

A couple of small details were missed. When Burns meets his men for the first time at the U.S. Embassy in Jamal, for instance, one Marine's belt buckle would be cited during an inspection as "unsat." This is only remarkable because Marines on embassy duty usually are more meticulous than the norm. And scenes in which Dryer fires his .45 would be more realistic if we could see the slide retracting and brass arcing out of the chamber. Finally, the Pentagon *must* find out where Hollywood buys its grenades. The film variety go off more like a 155mm artillery round than a small handful of C-4.

Dryer, who attended the most recent *Soldier of Fortune* Convention and participated in the firepower demonstration, is effusive in

his praise for Richard. He also gives very high marks to Marine Major Fred Peck, who was instrumental in setting up long sessions for Dryer to spend with colonels and NCOs, to study their on-the-job behavior. Thanks to Peck and Richard, Dryer gets Marine Corps NCO behavior down pat.

A sultry, demented female terrorist known as Maude Wynter, played by Kasey Walker, is the weakest role in the film. Unfortunately, Maude is a stereotypic character who easily could have been cut out of a Rand Corporation terrorist profile study. Maude's partner in crime, Karl Gavril, played by Palestinian actor Muhamed Bakri, is only a

little more convincing. Jamal's homicidal rebel leader, Abu Jihar, seems the most sinister of the bad guys. He is played with skill by Rockne Tarkington.

But what's "Death Before Dishonor" without a little fornication? Even tough guy, squint-eyed Clint gets a little squeeze now and then. The writers miss a good chance for romance with Gunny Burns and the alluring young photographer. This would add considerably to the dramatic tension between the two characters, who both display a subtle inclination for some sparks



to fly. Or at least there could be some kinky scenes between the terrorist couple, Maude and Karl, to breathe realism and depth into their characters.

The plot unfolds as long-time friends Colonel Halloran and Gunny Burns are given a special embassy assignment in the shaky Arab republic. Halloran and his driver are kidnapped. They are tortured in some graphic footage that drills the viewer's attention with the horror of what is considered business-as-usual in places like Baalbek and Beirut. Dryer is warned by the ambassador to leave the fate of the two Marines up to proper diplomatic channels. When the embassy is destroyed, the ambassador orders everyone, including Halloran's men, to leave the country.

Gunny Burns instructs his men to help with the evacuation and get on the plane while he makes plans of his own. Burns connects

with local Mossad agents, enlisting Israel's help in freeing his old friend. The gunny's men show up at the last minute, preferring to risk court-martial than face dishonor by abandoning someone who isn't just a commanding officer, but a friend and fellow Marine. Indeed, they prefer "death before dishonor." Oooh-rah!

Arabs may be the least happy with the film. The final scene, in which a few UZI-equipped Mossad agents help Burns and his Marines kill over 40 Arab terrorists in five minutes of shoot-'em-up, is a militant Zionist's dream.

But if you like action and lots of pyrotechnics, "Death Before Dishonor" is not to be missed. No C-4 was spared here. It's a splendid vehicle in which frustrated Americans can vicariously live out a revenge fantasy for the recent diplomatic and military defeats America has suffered in the Middle East. ✕



RIGHT: Dryer's performance as a Marine gunny, seen here in dress blues, is as good as or better than Eastwood's. Photo: New World Pictures

BELOW: The proverbial bad guys of the Middle East, these Arab terrorists train in a remote compound before the Marine Corps comes knocking on their door. Photo: New World Pictures



DZ INDOCHINA

French Paras Invade Giap's Jungle

by Leroy Thompson

KEEPING a limited war limited. French efforts to do just that in Indochina against General Vo Nguyen Giap's Viet Minh guerrilla forces proved futile. As with the United States military some years later, it was not lack of individual courage, stamina or modern armaments which led to their defeat. It was that the French fought *in spite of* the jungle, while the enemy made use of it.

As historian Marshall Andrews points out, the French military strategy was based on "the mobility of armies," in contrast to the Viet Minh strategy built on "the mobility of the individual soldier." Satisfying the enormous appetites of armored vehicles and automatic weaponry as they strained and plodded through the nearly roadless, marshy and dense terrain of Vietnam gave

the initiative to an enemy who carried little more than a four-day ration of rice, an ammo pouch and a rifle.

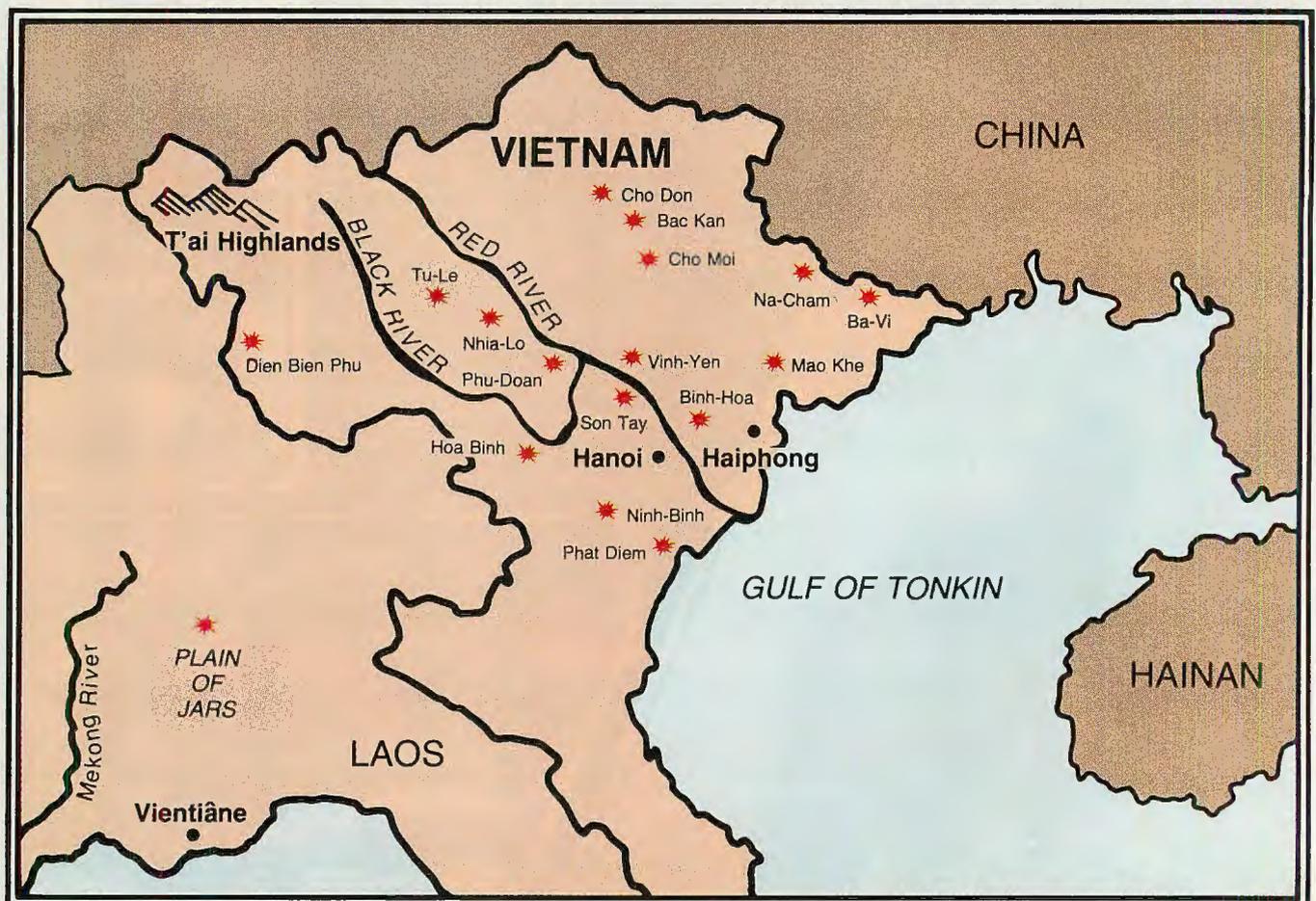
French commanders were not blind to the deadly handicaps of their conventional mechanized infantry. To overcome this liability and to win back the initiative, the French employed airborne troops of the Foreign Legion and the Colonial Paratroops. Between 1946 and 1954 French forces made over 100 combat jumps in an attempt at vertical envelopment to keep the Viet Minh from fading away into the countryside. Of these jumps, the Colonial Paras made well over half.

By comparison, this 100-plus number exceeds the total jumps made by all combatants in World War II. The U.S. military

made only five such jumps in Vietnam, mainly because the helicopter had replaced the parachute as a means of rapid insertion of troops. While quick deployment of troops is essential to winning a guerrilla war, French Colonial Paras were too often limited to the role of defensive reinforcements, rather than being used as offensive shock troops. As such, the potentially destabilizing effects of French airborne assaults in Indochina were never fully realized.

The first combat jumps during the Indochina War were made by the French Special Air Service in 1946 and early 1947, in a series of daring drops as part of Operation

Major areas of engagement between French Colonial Paras and Viet Minh, 1946-1954.





Lea. An ambitious plan, Operation Lea combined 1,137 paratroops with an armored thrust in an attempt to end the revolution in one stroke by seizing the Viet Minh leadership.

The paras carried out their mission perfectly, landing directly on the communist headquarters area at Bac Kan, Cho Moi and Cho Don. So swift was their assault, in fact, that they found Ho Chi Minh's mail on his desk waiting for his signature, and they captured one of his ministers, along with Japanese and Nazi German instructors. Important depots were also captured, but the two main targets — Ho Chi Minh and

General Giap — escaped. Other airborne troops were used in this operation to seize and hold bridges along the armored route of advance. However, most of the Viet Minh units in this operational area managed to slip through the cordon along with their leaders.

During the remainder of 1947 paras were used during sweeps, in attempts to cut off Viet Minh units and force them to fight. But at this early stage of the conflict, Giap refused to be drawn into battles he couldn't win. So the communist units kept slipping away into the jungle rather than holding their ground. By late December 1947, Viet Minh pressure on the French had reached the point that, except for some forts along the Chinese border, the French, unable to quell the communist insurgents, had pulled out of northern Vietnam. During 1948 and 1949, French control of the country continued to erode as more and more of the countryside fell under Viet Minh control. The French tried to use company-sized units of paras which were dropped in to seize the initiative from the communists, but the Viet Minh proved too slippery a prey.

Colonial Paratroops were busy in 1948 and 1949 as one or two Commando Groups (companies) were dropped to carry out raids, rescue POWs, reinforce positions under attack, or attack Viet Minh camps and depots. In 1948 alone, the Colonial Paras averaged one combat jump per month spread between the 1st, 2nd, and 5th BCCPs (*Bataillon Colonial de Commandos Parachutistes*). The same types of jumps were made in 1949, too, such as the 30 April 1949 raid carried out by 196 members of the 5th BCCP to capture some Viet Minh leaders. However, it became clear that the initiative was shifting to the Viet Minh, as more and more jumps were made to reinforce beleaguered outposts rather than for coun-

Reminiscent of the fast-moving French armies that helped hold Napoleon's empire together, French Colonial Paratroops made well over half of the 100 combat jumps in Indochina between 1946 and 1954. Unfortunately, most jumps were for reinforcement rather than preemptive strikes.

Colonial Para with the brimmed camo hat often associated with his ranks carries folding stock M1A1 carbine. Rarely fighting with air support, Colonial Paras went it alone against Viet Minh.

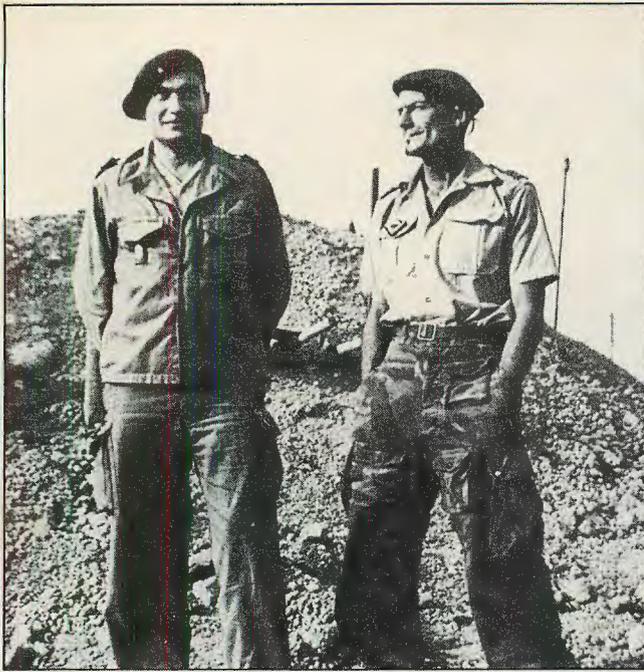
SOLDIER-HISTORIAN

Leroy Thompson served in Vietnam and Thailand with the U.S. Air Force Combat Security Police — a Ranger-trained special mission unit. He has also trained with special operations and anti-terrorist units in over a dozen countries. He is currently an adviser to VIP protection units around the world.

Thompson is a contributing editor for *Combat Handguns*, for which he writes a column on VIP protection and anti-terrorism. He has written over 200 articles on weapons, special operations and security. Many of his articles have appeared in *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine.

Some of the more noteworthy books Thompson has written are: "Commando and Dagger," "Uniforms of the Elite Forces," "Dead Clients Don't Pay," "U.S. Elite Forces: Vietnam," "U.S. Special Forces of World War II," and "U.S. Special Forces: Since World War II."





Colonel Pierre Langlais (right), one of the most famous airborne combat team commanders in Indochina, distinguished himself at Dien Bien Phu by commanding French airborne forces inside the fortress.



terinsurgency. Of the 16 combat jumps made by the Colonial Paras in 1949, in fact, almost half of them were for reinforcement.

This shift in initiative away from the French in 1949 was also manifested when the Viet Minh began threatening Laos. Again, it was the Colonial Paras who were called on to repel Giap's forces in that country. Early in the year the 3rd BCCP made a jump with Laotian Muong partisans, and then in June the entire 2nd BCCP was dropped on the Plain of Jars. Colonial Paras made further reinforcement jumps throughout 1949 on Son Tay, Haiphong, Binh Hoa and Hoa Binh — place names that would haunt many future American veterans in their battle against the North Vietnamese.

By October 1950, with added support from the Chinese communists, Giap finally took the offensive, as he launched attacks on the French forts along the Chinese border. Three of the Colonial Paratroop units — the 3rd BCCP, the 3rd and the 7th GCCP (*Groupement de Commandos Coloniaux Parachutistes*) — were employed in attempts to reinforce the forts and to open the roads for resupply or retreat. However, all of these forts fell to the Viet Minh, allowing them to capture enough materiel to equip an entire division. As a result, by 1 January 1951, control of the entire area north of the Red River had passed to the Viet Minh. By that time a total of 5,700 paras from the Colonial Legion and Metro para units were fighting heroically in Indochina, but they were far too few to stem the Viet Minh offensive of tens of thousands.

In January 1951, Giap tried to continue his successes by attacking Vinh Yen, which if taken would allow the Viet Minh to march

into Hanoi. During the offensive against Vinh Yen, the Viet Minh tried the "human wave" attacks used by the Chinese in Korea. These were stopped when French General de Lattre ordered massive airstrikes which dropped napalm between the attacking communists and the exhausted French defenders. As this critical battle hung in the balance, de Lattre threw in Mobile Group 2 (Mobile Groups were composite units resembling the U.S. regimental combat team), which included one paratroop battalion, to help turn the tide of battle. It did. After days of merciless hand-to-hand combat amid the roaring inferno from numerous napalm strikes, the French defeated the Viet Minh, killing over 6,000 enemy troops.

This bloody struggle at Vinh Yen was the first time since the beginning of the Indochina war that the French had had the opportunity to fight a set-piece battle. They proved themselves masters of the battlefield, and showed Giap that his communist troops were still unprepared for the general counteroffensive which would sweep the French into the sea.

Undeterred by his devastating losses at Vinh Yen, Giap continued to pressure the French by attacking their defenses along the Red River Delta. This was a particularly sensitive area for the French because it guarded the approaches to the important coal mines of northern Vietnam, and was only 20 kilometers from the vital French port at Haiphong.

The brunt of Giap's attacks in the Delta region were directed at the French outpost at Mao Khe. It was hit hard on 23 March 1951 by a barrage of 75mm and 57mm shells. Afterward, a violent wave of Viet Minh "Volunteers of Death" (the communist version of Japanese kamikaze) breached the outer wall of Mao Khe, through which poured the Viet Minh infantry.

By the afternoon of 27 March, the 6th Colonial Parachute Battalion (renamed by

General de Lattre from GCCP to BCP in March 1951) had been called in to reinforce Mao Khe. Commanded by Marcel Bigeard, perhaps the most famous of the French paratroop officers in Indochina, the BCP was ordered to break through enemy defenses. Though repelled by fierce enemy artillery and machine-gun fire, the paras slowly advanced, successfully reinforcing the garrison and helping it hold. By the morning of 28 March, the 6th Colonial Paras, Tho partisans, Senegalese and Moracan armored cavalry had tenaciously held their positions — 400 dead communists littered the ground in front of them. Once more Giap had failed to breach the French defensive front around the Delta.

Despite the success of the 6th Colonial Paras in reinforcing Mao Khe, the Viet Minh kept testing French resolve in the Red River Delta region along the Day River



First combat jumps in Indochina War were made by French Special Air Service in 1946 and early 1947 during Operation Lea — a valiant attempt to end Ho Chi Minh's revolution by capturing Viet Minh leadership. Members of Demi-Brigade of French SAS (forerunner of Colonial Paras) march through Hanoi in 1948.



MAT-49 in action, Colonial Para hammers it out with the Viet Minh.

Line. The worst attack occurred at Ninh Binh on 29 May 1951. Taken completely by surprise, French positions were overrun and the remaining French forces were pinned down in a church. Reacting swiftly to the news, the French High Command called forth four artillery groups, one armored group and 600 members of the 7th Colonial Paras to reinforce the battered French troops

at Ninh Binh. On 30 May the 7th Paras jumped into the region and Mobile Groups came overland to reinforce the defenders, while *Dinassauts* (similar to U.S. River Assault Squadrons in the Vietnam War) lent additional support. By 18 June the French had forced the Viet Minh back to the Red River Line.

While the French were tied down in the Red River Delta, the Viet Minh launched another offensive against strategic Nhia Lo in the T'ai Highlands. To help hold Nhia Lo more paratroops had to be committed. But this mission was carried out by Legion and Metro paras rather than Colonials. By 5 October 1951, this Viet Minh offensive had also been stymied, but only temporarily. The French command realized that holding the T'ai Highlands would eventually become an impossible task.

Taking the offensive in November 1951, the French decided not to aim for the enemy's centers of resistance in the northeast, but to strike a blow at their supply and communications network at Hoa Binh. This was also the capital of the Muong tribesmen, who were fiercely loyal to the French, making it an important symbolic objective as well. Despite such inauspicious goals, the battle for Hoa Binh, which lasted from 14 November 1951 until 24 February 1952, would later be named "Operation Meat Grinder" because of the tremendous carnage inflicted on both sides. For the French, this battle was nearly as devastating as their future loss at Dien Bien Phu.

On 14 November 1951, three Colonial Para battalions — the 1st, 2nd and 7th

BPCs, about 2,000 paras in all — jumped into Hoa Binh and seized the city. Large armored, infantry, and *Dinassaut* forces followed up this attack. Giap's troops melted away into the jungle, opting for a temporary retreat until his forces could regroup and guarantee victory. In the words of one observer, "the French stabbed with all their might — and encountered empty space."

The city was important enough to Giap, however, that a large Viet Minh effort was launched at retaking it. Before long, Hoa Binh was under siege, forcing the French to fight their way through with necessary supplies. A fruitless war of attrition at Hoa Binh soon evolved into a battle for the control of the entire Black River Line.

To shore up their defenses in the region, the French committed an entire airborne group (three battalions) to the defense of the Black River Line, but once again the Viet Minh refused battle except on their own terms. Still being bled dry by a battle of attrition, the French finally pulled back east of the Black River. Meanwhile, the battles along Road 6, which supplied Hoa Binh, dragged on. An airborne task force under Colonel Gilles attempted to fight through 25 miles of Viet Minh territory to help keep Road 6 clear, but even these battle-hardened paras were defeated by constant ambushes and sniping, which eroded their manpower and morale. Finally, in January 1952, the French decided to evacuate Hoa Binh. Known as Operation Amaranth, the pull-back was completed by late February 1952.

Continued on page 78

MANY FACES OF COLONIAL PARAS

French Colonial Paratroops and Infantry, unlike most countries' colonial troops, were recruited primarily in France. They were called "Colonial" because they were intended to serve overseas in French colonies.

Some confusion arises when reading a military history of the French in Indochina because the Colonial Paras were known under three different titles. First they were called BCCP (*Bataillon Colonial de Commandos Parachutistes*, with common strength for a battalion being 540-550 men divided into four 130-man commando groups or companies), then GCCP (*Groupeement de Commandos Coloniaux Parachutistes*), and finally BPC (*Bataillon de Parachutistes Coloniaux*).

Confusion often continues today with the successors to the French Colonial Paratroops — the Marine Paratroops — because troops intended to serve overseas are now referred to as "marine" troops. For example, accounts of French peace-keeping troops in Lebanon mistakenly referred to "French Marine Corps Paras" when in actuality the

troops serving there were from RPIMA units — the descendants of the old Colonial Paratroops.

Life was certainly no picnic for Colonial Paras. If the training didn't kill you, the mandatory service in Indochina usually did.

Normal enlistment was for three years. Two months of basic infantry training were followed by a one-month jump school. Failure to jump was greeted with far less compassion than at Fort Benning, however. Anyone refusing to jump was usually beaten by the NCOs when the plane landed and then forced to run through the base area wearing a sign saying "I Am a Coward." After completion of the first jump the fledgling para was awarded the red beret of the Colonial Paras, which he wore with great pride.

Like the French Foreign Legion, many of the Colonial Paras were German veterans from World War II. Others were just very tough individuals who joined the paras to escape the long arm of the law. Whatever their motivations for joining, their valiant service against the Viet Minh in Indochina is a legacy as yet unrivaled in modern warfare.



Following operational jump, Colonial Para prepares to advance on French outpost at Mao Khe in Red River Delta.

MARXISM UNDER SIEGE

RENAMO Tightens the Vise in Mozambique

Text by Michael Hughes

Photos by Albatross Press Agency



OH-SEVEN-HUNDRED hours. The African sun had been up for nearly an hour and we were just beginning to feel its warmth. My companion, Italian cameraman Almerigo Grilz, and I sat precariously in a small dugout canoe being paddled across a river into war-torn Mozambique.

The river was wide and the crossing arduous for our crew of two Africans. Sometimes we nosed through great banks of reeds 10 feet tall, with hippos snuffling and snorting close by yet invisible. Other times we were swept diagonally across a rushing current, the crew straining to keep us on course. From time to time we passed other dugouts, some engaged in fishing, others ferrying passengers to the other side. At no point could we tell that we were entering a country where a bitter civil war was being fought. Over an hour later our craft grounded ashore. We were joined moments later by our guide, Commander Jemo of the Mozambique National Resistance — RENAMO. We jumped out into a foot of water and waded to dry land.

We had arrived and were beginning our journey to bring the story of Mozambique's struggle to the attention of the world. Were Renamo guerrillas armed bandits who murdered, raped and looted, as the government claimed, or were they freedom fighters on a legitimate crusade to free their people from the cruelties of a repressive Marxist regime? We were going to march a thousand miles through bush and swamp and witness fighting firsthand to find our answer.

After landing, we began the march to the Renamo base camp. Led by Commander Jemo, we passed through land cultivated intensively by the locals: Maize, millet, casava and many other crops were in evidence. There was no indication that Mozambique was a country at war.

An hour later we arrived at another river — the outside defensive perimeter of the camp. We were greeted in a friendly fashion by a sentry and escorted to a leaky dugout which would carry us across to the base. The trooper carried an old but well-maintained AK-47; his feet were bare and his uniform no more than colorful rags.

Soon we were across and in the base, 200 yards on the far side. A tall, young man came forward to meet us. He was Comandante Fernando, the base commander. His camp consisted of a dozen grass huts arranged around a central open-sided mess-

INTO THE BUSH

Michael Hughes is a former British Army training officer who served four years with the Grenadier Guards in Berlin and Africa. Hughes now devotes his time to war reporting for television. This is his first published work, and we welcome him to the ranks of SOF correspondents.

Renamo soldier removes the last remnant of communism from a captured town.

ing and meeting hut. We discussed our plans and put together a "shopping list" of sorts. This included a request to see Renamo troops in battle and an interview with Renamo leader and supreme commander Afonso Dhlakama. Fernando noted all this and gave instructions to his radio operator, who encoded the message and dispatched it to Renamo GHQ in Gorongosa, 250 kilometers away.

All we could do now was sit back and wait. There were perhaps 20 men in the camp, and despite their bare feet and rags they had a disciplined and soldierly manner. They stood to attention when addressed by their officers and seemed confident. They certainly weren't the bandits we expected to meet.

A day later we got our reply. Dhlakama planned for us to go into battle. His troops were going to attack the town of Inhaminga with us in tow. From there we would travel to his personal base deep in the bush and spend five days with him. It was an invitation we couldn't refuse, and an hour later we were ready for the road.

A tough seven-day march followed. We traveled single file along narrow paths, pushing through grass seven feet tall, and hemmed in by tall trees and thick scrub on each side. Our column was about 20 strong, with every man carrying not only his weapons but all the equipment needed for a long march: cooking pots, mealie meal and other local food items, and the odd sheet or blanket.

We spent our nights in bases strategically scattered throughout Renamo-held territory. Occasionally we would pass by villages to be met by friendly greetings from the locals. We never saw any sign of fear or dislike, and this was enough evidence to disprove government allegations that Renamo troops spend their time terrorizing the civilian population.

Occasionally we saw Soviet-supplied *Antonov* transport planes passing overhead, probably on supply missions. Apart from the planes we saw no government FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) forces.

The Renamo men were confident of their domination of the countryside and the support of the people. On the march we often passed armed men from local Renamo units whose task it is to maintain control over their areas and to recruit and report on enemy activity. After seven weary days we came to the base from which the attack was to be launched. We had averaged a good fifty miles per day and were ready for a break before the action started.

As we entered the camp we became aware of a big difference between this one and those that we had encountered before.

UPPER RIGHT: Renamo RPD gunner displays 82mm mortar rounds destined for the fighting at Inhaminga.

RIGHT: Chimuarua power station, captured from Frelimo forces in March of 1986.



This one was alive with soldiers. They were men carefully picked from among Renamo's guerrilla forces and placed into battalion formations for conventional-style offensive operations. Two such battalions had rendezvoused here earlier in the day.

We saw an abundance of personal weapons, as well as 82mm mortars, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, RPDs, RPGs and ZPU-4 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns. There were also a few odd FN assault rifles and machine guns, captured in combat from the neighboring Zimbabwean troops helping Frelimo.

While we rested, Renamo commanders went into conference, planning the coming battle. We spent a peaceful night, ate breakfast and prepared for a 1600 hours departure.

An hour late, the column moved out, tense and expectant, the sun sinking slowly below the maize fields and bush behind us. In order to take the garrisoned Frelimo troops by surprise, Renamo decided not to approach the town by an existing route, but to make a new path by pushing through virgin bush. Progress was slow and tedious. It took our force all night to get within 10 kilometers of the town, which was only 30 kilometers away.

At 0700 it began to pour down rain. De-

spite the proximity of the enemy force, we were in single file with only sappers ahead — strange tactics to my way of thinking. One of the sappers uncovered mines, and this forced us to retreat and make our final approach from another direction. By 1400 the sun had made a brief appearance, and we began to advance on the enemy position.

Then it started raining hard again, closing visibility down to mere meters. The bush in this area was extremely thick, and the Renamo commander lost track of the Frelimo camp's location. We wandered some more, then the sudden African nightfall dropped over us. We settled down under a tree for the night, with the rain still pouring down. The troops, rather dispirited by now, made their camp around us and we all tried to get some sleep. Dawn took a long time to come.

With the sun up, all 300 men, as a result of a dubious tactical decision, went into extended line and began to advance to en-

BELOW: Frelimo's public enemy number one, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, in front of Renamo flag.

BOTTOM: Renamo soldier softens up an enemy position with an RPG. Much of Renamo's logistical base comes from captured Frelimo stock.

gage. Ricardo (a liaison officer sent by Dhlakama to be with us for the attack and to accompany us to his base), Almerigo and I tagged along behind. Spirits were higher now after yesterday's fruitless nine-hour search in the rain.

Mid-morning came and we were beginning to think that both the town and the enemy had vanished into thin air when suddenly the quiet was shattered by a huge explosion and waves of automatic weapons

TWENTY YEARS OF WAR

Since the mid-1960s Mozambique has been devastated by war, beginning in 1967 when FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) guerrillas began armed resistance against the Portuguese colonial government. The Russians were quick to aid Frelimo, and Tanzania joined in to offer rear link and base facilities for the rebels. Soon Frelimo operated in strength in northern Mozambique and to a lesser extent in other parts of the country.

War quickly drained the resources of the colonial government, but the Portuguese managed to hold their own against the bush-based insurgents until the rug was pulled from under them by the 1974 military coup in Lisbon. The army came to believe that the battle for Mozambique — and indeed Portugal's other African possessions — could not be won, and resolved to change government policy by force.

Portugal's new head of state, General de Spínola, announced that he would grant independence to Mozambique immediately, and the new administration in the colony began to make overtures to Frelimo leader Samora Machel, who had been running the war from safety in Tanzania. Simultaneously, however, overtures were made to other political groups vying for power. This did not fit in with Machel's plans. He began intensifying the war in order to show the government that Frelimo was the only political force to be recognized within Mozambique. Frelimo switched its attentions from Portuguese targets to bombing trains, machine-gunning buses and attacking native villages.

So savage were Frelimo's attacks that the Portuguese government gave in. In the face of mutinying troops, the destruction of the country and a complete inability to control the activities of Machel's terrorists, the two sides signed an independence agreement on 7 September 1974. Machel realized all his immediate aims, having gained control of Mozambique without opposition. Soon the world recognized him as the official leader of a one-party state.



fire. More explosions and the crump of mortars followed. We had at last made contact.

Almerigo and I set off toward the fighting, followed by our escorts. We came to an opening in the bush. We could see an airstrip, behind which lay the barracks defended by nearly 1,000 Frelimo troops, and

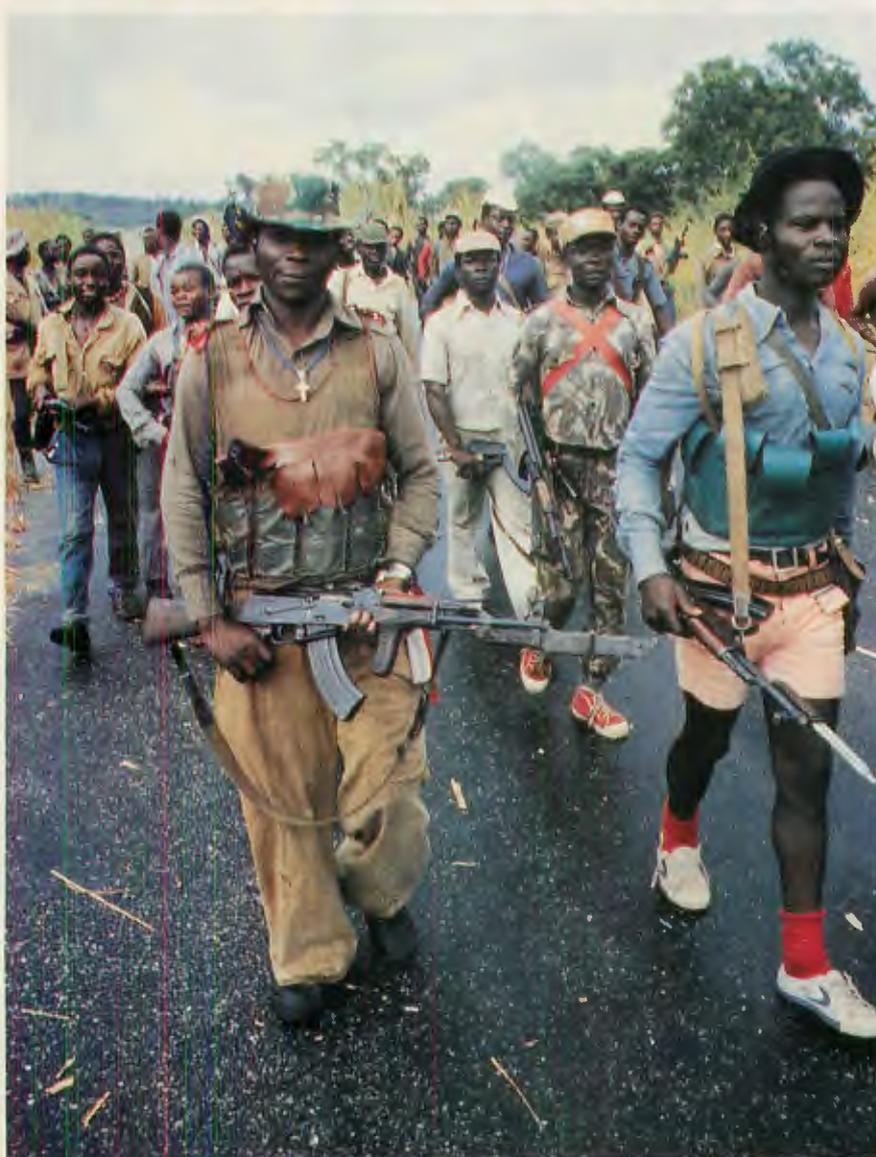
Guerrilla wars demand commitment from everyone — including children. This young Renamo trooper gets a drill lesson.

Not all opposition was crushed, however. In 1976 a group of disaffected Frelimo men returned to the bush to begin the struggle of ridding Mozambique of its already unpopular Marxist government. Initially conducting operations from bases inside Rhodesia, they were backed by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) and trained by the Rhodesian Special Air Service. They called themselves RENAMO (*Resistencia Nacional Mozambicans* — Mozambique National Resistance) and fought to rid themselves of the dictator they had helped bring to power. Rhodesia's CIO provided training facilities and allowed the Renamo radio station, *Voz de Africa Libre*, to broadcast into Mozambique from Rhodesian territory.

Renamo conducted hit-and-run attacks and began to build popular support until the end of 1978, when their leader, Andre Matsangaise, was killed and the Rhodesian support system began to fail due to the building intensity of its own civil war. The situation looked increasingly bleak for Renamo. But help was close at hand in the form of South Africa, which began to supply materiel and other support. Soon Afonso Dhlakama rose to lead the movement and the resistance again began to notch up successes. They were greatly aided by the growing unpopularity of Machel's brutally administered Marxist policies.

Today Renamo is in a powerful position, controlling a majority of the countryside, including many towns. Machel is dead, having been killed when his Soviet-supplied aircraft crashed into a hillside during a routine landing. Frelimo — bolstered by ComBloc advisers and troops from neighboring Zimbabwe and Tanzania — suffers setbacks at every turn, the least of which is continued desertion from its ranks to Renamo. The remainder, still a relatively strong force, are hanging on to the provincial capitals, main ports and whatever towns they can, but they control few of Mozambique's roads. As a result, Frelimo relies largely on air transport for resupply. The government only survives with the help of ComBloc military aid and extensive non-military aid from the West — including the United States.





beyond that the town of Inhaminga.

Up ahead on either side of the airfield we could make out Renamo forces milling around some slit trenches which they had just captured. We moved quickly, while the officers regrouped their men for the assault on the barracks. Suddenly there was a piercing scream overhead as an MiG-17 made a low pass. It was so close I could clearly see the pilot, and I was forced to dive for cover in an old shell crater.

Meanwhile we had come under fire from the ground, and rounds were whistling all around us. Apparently we had been spotted by an observation post and our fair skin was attracting attention. By now the MiG had come round again and was firing its cannon at random. Suddenly the Frelimo ground forces began a counterattack. We ran. The Renamo commander decided not to hold his ground and the whole body of men made a tactical withdrawal into the bush to plan their next move. A second MiG appeared and the two planes made several passes, raking the bush with cannon fire.

Luckily they didn't know our exact location, and we were well concealed by the trees. An hour later an Mi-8 chopper began circling around looking for us. On its third try it fired a salvo of rockets in our general direction. They flew overhead and exploded noisily and uselessly in the ground some 200 yards away.

By now the sun was sinking fast, as were any hopes of victory that day. However, the commander decided to have one more try. Soon another assault went in. Grilz and I followed along. Frelimo troops were beaten back to their rear positions in the dense scrub which concealed the barracks, but they couldn't be dislodged. Renamo was again halted, and in the confusion Frelimo counterattacked for the second time. For the second time we withdrew in considerable haste.

I sprinted back to the cover of the bush on the other side of the airstrip, bullets humming past my ankles. Our Renamo commander went into conference with his officers to plot our next move. Reluctantly he chose to go back to base. With the element of surprise lost and being outnumbered three-to-one, there was no logical alternative.

We began the long trek home around 2000 hours. With a short break in the journey our dispirited force made camp at about 1100 the next morning — very tired, thirsty and hungry. In the past 70 hours we had walked for 45 hours and slept six; eaten only three roots, a little sugar, and had a half pint of water to drink.

We woke just before dusk, feeling a lot better. We were intrigued to find three officers sitting with us whom we had not seen

UPPER LEFT: Renamo on its way to attack Inhaminga. Its first push failed, but the second was more successful.

LEFT: Ragged but effective — men of Renamo's "Leopard" Battalion.

before, and who had clearly arrived while we were asleep. Ricardo, the liaison officer, took us aside and explained that Dhlakama was embarrassed that his troops had not managed to capture Inhaminga and so had sent these men to lead a fresh attack. We were to go along with them. How could we refuse?

We did lay down a condition, however. If we were going to walk all that way back, we wanted to be in the front line during the attack. They agreed, and it was all systems go for the second assault on the town.

The next day was spent in battle prep, planning and giving orders. Squads of men entered the camp throughout the day, bringing in cases of rifle and machine gun ammunition, RPG rockets and another ZPU-4 to counter the expected air threat. A pause in the preparations gave us an opportunity to have a chat with the new commander, Bob Chalton, a confident young officer from Maputo.

Chalton spoke little English, his native language being Portuguese and the local dialect. He had recently been appointed the commander of Renamo's special forces, a unit divided into three-man groups tasked to go on missions of disruption and sabotage. He was a natural leader who had the uncommon ability to instill his personal drive and determination into the troops under his command. His battle plan was more elaborate than the last one, which had been nothing more than a frontal assault.

His scheme was to launch a diversionary attack from the airfield side of the town while infiltrating the main body from the rear. By doing so he hoped to take the deserted town unopposed and bottle up the enemy in the barracks while they were preoccupied with the diversion. Stage two was to drive Frelimo troops out of the barracks buildings — local intelligence reported that they had no entrenched positions — by bombarding them with rockets and mortars and gunning them down as they fled.

Soon our column wound its way out of the base for the second time in five days. Under Bob Chalton's leadership the men had a more determined and spirited air about them.

We arrived again at the far side of Inhaminga at 0830, after walking continuously for 22 hours and covering about 40 kilometers. Fallen trees, roots, streams, thorn bushes and dense thickets all conspired to slow us down.

Once on the far side of Inhaminga the men rested and Chalton set up radio communications with the diversionary force. The radio was a basic but effective TRA-93 powered by a hand generator. We sat under a tree, camouflaged our faces with *ink*, and rested our aching bodies.

At 0930 the word came over the air that the other troops were in position. Chalton gave them the thumbs up and we were off. Suddenly we were on our feet and running in two columns toward the town and the sounds of gunfire. First we passed over

ground which had formerly been cultivated. This gave way to abandoned huts and then the town. The soldiers were now in extended line as they advanced through empty streets.

The place was like a ghost town, its more than 2,000 inhabitants having fled two years ago. From a distance each house looked normal. As we got closer, however, we could make out the overgrown gardens, smashed windows and untended fruit trees.

The tension was unbearable. Still we had not made contact with Frelimo, and we continued our advance cautiously. We passed the children's playground with its rusty swings and slides, crossed the sports stadium and reached a maize field which divided the town and the barracks. Had Frelimo melted away in the bush? The Renamo soldiers moved forward into the maize, with us following about 150 meters behind at a half run, a mixture of sweat and ink pouring down our faces. Then without warning the maize erupted into a sym-

phony of automatic fire.

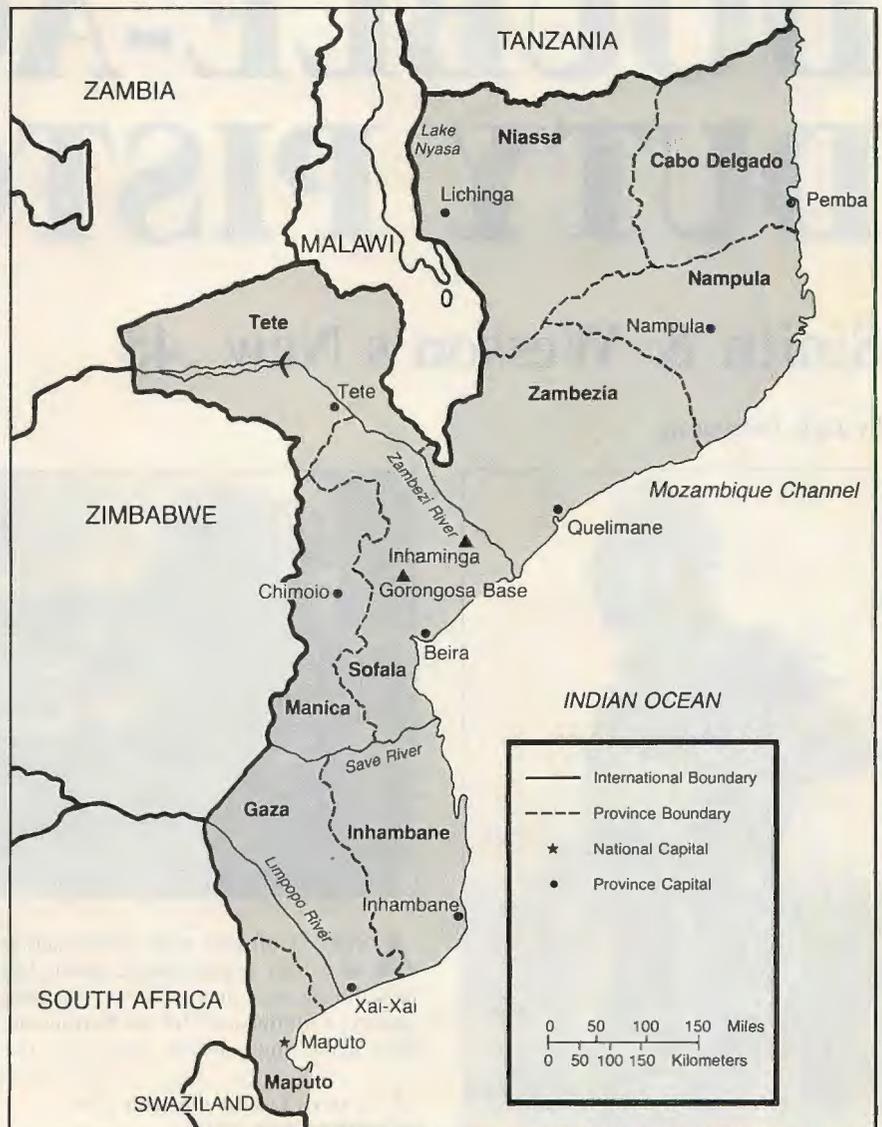
From our position the effect was dramatic. We dropped onto our bellies in the long grass. The sheer weight and proximity of fire was, to put it mildly, disagreeable. Rounds were zipping all about us and I could see bursts kicking up dirt on the track a few feet to my right.

Then I witnessed an even more disturbing development. We began to come under fire not only from our front but from our left as well. Frelimo troops were trying to outflank us and the situation was starting to look grim. We were pinned down, outnumbered three-to-one, and now mortar fire was being laid down on our lines of retreat.

We had no choice, so one-by-one our group zigzagged back to a ruined house 100 yards to our rear. Chalton had the same idea, and we could see Renamo men moving back and taking up positions on the edge of the town. We went through them, hustled on by our minders, who were concerned for our welfare. We settled into a house which had been chosen as a command post and waited for Chalton to turn up. An MiG screamed over at treetop level and simul-

Renamo, the Mozambique National Resistance force fighting the Marxist Frelimo government, now controls most of Mozambique.

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ABOVE: S&W 645 double-action fills a gap in the law enforcement market.

SOF SIDEARMS

DOUBLE-ACTION DUTY PISTOL

Smith & Wesson's New .45

by Jack Thompson

BELOW: S&W 645 in recoil and the inevitable muzzle whip, which can be corrected.



ARMING officers with double-action .45-caliber semiautomatic pistols has been the dream of many a law enforcement agency. Unfortunately for the bureaucrats who make such policy decisions, the

LEFT: Davis Leather Company's law enforcement duty holster.

SIGHTING IN

Jack Thompson has served in a number of military and law enforcement-oriented positions around the world, and is a frequent contributor to SOF.



Venerable Colt Government Model (top) and the slightly larger S&W 645 double-action .45.



Nothing complex here. Quick and easy disassembly/assembly of the S&W 645 makes maintenance an easy chore.

thought of officers patrolling streets with holstered pistols cocked and locked is a nightmare. Consequently, in their attempts to avoid being outgunned, officers have had to settle for either large-frame, low-capacity revolvers or single-action, high-capacity 9mm semiautos. And options for duty sidearms in .45 caliber have been limited to two imports: the SIG P220 and the Heckler & Koch P9S.

Smith & Wesson has finally changed all that. Its new Model 645 answers the demand in the law enforcement community for a U.S.-made double-action .45-caliber semiauto.

Based on the Smith & Wesson Model 39 design and available only in .45 caliber, the 645 evolved from the developmental work on the "super gun" that Smith & Wesson employee and top shooter Tommy Campbell has campaigned with since 1979 on International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) tours and other action shooting circuits. Shooters concerned with the Model 39's history of extractor problems will find that the 645 has benefited from the redesign work that went into the Model 39s — no extraction problems were encountered in our rigorous testing of this new Smith & Wesson.

Aside from its stainless steel finish, the first thing you notice about the 645 is its size — it looks massive. However, it is only 1/8-inch longer and taller than a Government Model .45 and, when empty, is actually several ounces lighter. These characteristics give the 645 good intimidation effect while keeping it a manageable size for officers of any stature.

Trigger reach for the double-action first shot is slightly greater than that of a Smith & Wesson K-Frame revolver. But after firing the first round the pistol functions in single-action mode, requiring a much shorter trigger pull. Making the transition from double- to single-action trigger pull is not difficult, but it is a factor worth serious consideration. Sufficient time and ammunition during training or familiarization must be allowed

for the officer to develop proficiency and confidence in the system.

Maximum capacity of the 645 is nine rounds — eight in the straight-line box magazine and one in the chamber. This gives the shooter one more round than a Government Model and 50 percent more rounds than a standard service revolver.

The two stainless-steel magazines that come with the 645 have seven holes, numbered two through eight, on both sides of the magazine tube so you can tell at a glance how many rounds are left. They also disassemble quickly for proper cleaning and maintenance.

Other special features have been incorporated into the 645 that shooters have been paying gun mechanics to do for years: The trigger guard, front and backstrap are squared and checkered, while the ejection port and magazine well are precisely beveled. Also, the rear sight, which is drift adjustable for windage only, is black with white outlines and is rounded off to reduce snagging on clothes. The front sight is a highly visible red ramp on a ramp base.

Safety features of the 645 are typical of most semiautomatic pistols. Activating the ambidextrous manual safety drops the hammer onto a stainless steel bar and disengages the trigger. Disengaging the safety is accomplished by rotating the lever forward and up. There is also an internal firing pin safety which locks the firing pin until the trigger is fully compressed.

A magazine disconnect (or interlock) prevents the functioning of the trigger or hammer when the magazine is removed. This is an advantage to someone who wants to have a safe but loaded firearm at home, because the 645 can be kept with a round chambered and the magazine kept in some other separate yet convenient location. In an emergency, the magazine can be inserted and the pistol is ready to fire.

Fit and finish of the 645 are superb production line work and suitable for duty use right out of the box. Though trigger pull is smooth, a gunsmith can easily customize the action if required.

Felt recoil of the 645 is not significantly different from that of a Government Model. However, one noticeable difference between the 645 and the Government Model is

the 645's muzzle whip, which lengthens recovery time and delays follow-up aimed shots. This problem is caused by the 645's line of bore, which is higher than that on the Government Model. For a shooter with average-sized hands, this leaves the tang of the 645 totally unsupported.

This minor defect can be cured by lowering the tang or, preferably, removing some of the material at the root of the trigger guard (where it joins the front strap), giving the shooter a higher grip on the weapon. This modification takes advantage of the tang by lowering the line of the bore in relation to the shooter's hand.

As for actual shooting performance, the 645 is not finicky about the ammo it's fed. Several hundred rounds of mixed-origin .45-caliber ammunition were fired during our testing with no stoppages or malfunctions of any kind.

Holsters used during range testing were duty type, straight top draw, inside thumb break with adjustable tension device, provided by Gordon Davis (Davis Leather Company, Dept. SOF, 3930 Valley Blvd., Number F, Walnut, CA 91789).

A single-action only Model 745 IPSC 10th anniversary commemorative is available from Smith & Wesson in limited quantity. Though some 645s have been modified in the field to function as single-action, I don't recommend it — this will void your warranty. Should you decide on this course of action, be advised to check the credentials and reputation of the person doing the work. There are more gun butchers out there than gunsmiths.

Smith & Wesson has done its homework. It focused in on a demand in the duty firearms market and has filled it admirably with the Model 645. Though not a "perfect" handgun (some shooters will argue that it is not even necessary), the bottom line is that the Smith & Wesson 645 will give a lot of cops what they want. And when you're walking the beat, confidence in your sidearm goes a long way toward saving your life. ✖

172ND MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

National Guard Retakes the High Ground

by Warren Jorgensen



Ice scaling is a dangerous but vital part of mountain training. Guardsman from the 172nd Mountain Infantry practices until he gets it perfect. Photo: Warren Jorgensen

FOLLOWING THE ACTION

After four years in the Marine Corps, Warren Jorgensen has turned his talents to freelance journalism. He's covered the Middle East, Central America and Northern Ireland for several international publications, including *Soldier of Fortune*.

I could almost make out voices and the faint "chink" of ice axes high above me as I worked my way up the 65-degree, 600-foot slope that ended at the base of 65-foot-high ice-covered cliffs. In the summer it would have been little more than a heavy walk even with my 20-pound pack, but now, in the dead stillness of a January snowfall, my chest was heaving at 3,600 feet.

I trudged on, a step at a time. Carefully. The entire mountain was under a blanket of snow, which in some places barely concealed slick ice patches that wouldn't offer me any footing and could send me sliding back down. I was less worried about falling than about having to climb this mountain again.

I followed the crampon prints that wound their way upward into the mist, digging in each foot, getting it set, finding something to grab on to, pulling myself up and repeating the process. My off-the-shelf rubber soled boots, having proven themselves on hunting trips and assignments in far colder places than this, were next to useless, even dangerous, in these mountains. I began to hate those crampon prints.

I felt the sweat running down my back and sides, and stopped to take off the heavy jacket I had put on down in the bivouac area against the 15-degree cold and high winds coming through the mountain notch.

If there were infantry holding those heights, I thought, they would have time to recruit and train the guy who was going to shoot me. Slowly I continued toward the top. Rounding an outcropping, I was looking almost straight up and still had 40 yards to go when I saw a trooper spread-eagled on a sheer perpendicular wall of ice, slowly inching his way toward the top of the cliff with an ice axe in each hand. Men atop the cliff and below shouted encouragement, instructions and orders.

This was "The Playground," and the man scaling the ice wall was a member of the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Mountain Infantry, U.S. Army National Guard, the first mountain unit to be formed since World War II.

White letters on a blue background above the gate at headquarters read "MOUNTAIN" and tell the visitor that this is no ordinary Guard unit. Located 20 minutes northeast of Burlington, Vermont, the Mountain Warfare Training Center and School is home to the 172nd Mountain Infantry, though members of all branches of the service train here.

The 172nd came into being in 1982. Authorized as a battalion, it is now at about two-thirds strength and its numbers and proficiency continue to grow. Authorization is eventually for a full brigade, to include the Rocky Mountain states and the North Central flatlands.

Basic gear for mountain troops includes carabiners, ropes and appropriate clothing to stay alive under winter conditions.
Photo: U.S. Army

Mountain warfare and training are different, and so are the men who practice them. Troops look sharp in mountain boots and gaiters, carabiners and safety lines dangling from their belts. They are confident and ready to face a challenge head-on, qualities instilled in them after hours spent jumping from the 65-foot rappelling tower that now stands unused under a mantle of snow.

They are the newest addition to a proud New England and mountain unit tradition that dates back to the French and Indian War. This is Vermont. It is not the land of the summer soldier or the sunshine patriot, and it never has been.

Vermont traditionally has the highest per capita Guard enlistment, and the spirit of the citizen/soldier is very much alive here. Robert Rogers, a New Hampshire man, drew his rangers from all over this area and cut his notch in history.





ABOVE: Moving as efficiently as possible in alpine terrain is the name of the game for mountain infantry. Skis are used whenever possible, though snowshoes are sometimes the only alternative. Photo: Warren Jorgensen

Mountain troops are generally men who respond to a challenge, are accustomed to isolation and cold, are independent, tough and work well in the small unit warfare that the mountains demand.

The 172nd fits into all these categories. As a Guard unit, these are hard New England boys from the upper reaches of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, where the thermometer drops below zero and the snow rises above your hips and stays there. Their mission is the same in peacetime as in war — first, to operate in alpine terrain, and second, to operate effectively under winter conditions. Their rotations have occasionally taken them out to train with Austrian and Italian mountain units in the Alps, and they have a lower turnover and a higher re-enlistment rate than a regular Army unit.

The 172nd notwithstanding, the United States stands alone among its NATO allies in that it doesn't presently field a mountain unit. This despite the fact that the manual on

mountain training justifies its existence by stating that there are mountains in nearly every country in the world, and that mountain warfare has been a part of almost every conflict in recorded history. And wherever they're located, mountains are strategic. In the United States alone, there are two major mountain ranges and a 3,000-mile border that's under snow six months out of the year. You have to wonder where the thinking has been.

And there's a lot of catching up to do. Manuals are not up-to-date with modern techniques or equipment. Cold weather gear, the M1950 series that came into issue during and after the Korean War, is cumbersome, heavy and hopelessly out of date.



BELOW: Although most NATO — and ComBloc — countries have mountain infantry units, the United States has only recently revitalized its own mountain warfare capability. These troops from 3rd Battalion, 172nd Mountain Infantry are among the first to receive intensive mountain training. Photo: Warren Jorgensen



Although warm, it's more suitable for a second siege of Leningrad than the swift, close-quarter combat, rapid movement and portability that modern warfare requires.

For example, the basic unit, the "Akhio" group, is based around a covered fiberglass sled of the same name. Designed to haul 200 pounds, the sled usually ends up hauling closer to 300 because it must carry a wide range of items, including the 10-man arctic tent. This tent alone weighs 76 pounds and is suitable for little more than extended bivouac. A simple, lightweight two-man arctic tent isn't currently available in the inventory, although a search is underway and prototypes are now being tested. For the time being, troops of the 172nd, if they don't use the large tent, simply dig a snow hole and make a warm and dry cocoon consisting of poncho, sleeping mat and bag.

A couple of the local newspapers have sent reporters up here expecting to find a fully equipped force-in-readiness — rope over the shoulders, skis on their feet, a rifle in hand and a knife in their teeth — and were disappointed when they didn't find it. It isn't that easy or that fast. The 3rd Battalion will not be deployable until about 1988 and the full brigade, when it comes into being, is about eight years down the line. This time element is due to a number of factors. First, the Guard itself is a part-time force. More importantly, much of the time so far has been taken up with finding, testing and procuring new equipment. Polypropylene underwear, Goretex camies and synthetic mountaineering boots will one day be standard issue, replacing the M1950 series.

According to the center's former commandant, Colonel Dave Freeman, the 172nd "has quite a ways to go when it comes to skiing, but in the area of climbing we are on par with most of the NATO countries. Germany and Austria are a cut above us, but we are as good, better even, than most of the others."

Unusually mild winters the last few years have hampered ski training, but each trooper is now issued state-of-the-art skis and may soon be allowed to keep them at home. In this way proficiency and mobility in the snow should increase.

Mountain training has gone faster for a number of reasons, mainly because it's available all year long. Two detachments have been sent to the Alpinist's School run by the Austrian Army. When you take into consideration that the German Army formed its *Gebirg*, or mountain, units in 1915, and the Italians and French prior to that, you can get an idea of what kind of a gap has already been closed.

According to the book on mountain warfare, there are three adversaries that troops operating in the mountains must face: the enemy, the mountains and the weather. But the book has it backwards.

The mountains cannot be defeated and the only constant about the weather is its unpredictability. To operate in the mountains you have to live with them, work with them, become part of them, use them to your advantage and accept the fact that they were here a long time before you and will be here long after you're gone. And you have to prepare yourself psychologically and physically to deal with and protect yourself from the weather. *Then* you can close with the enemy, kill and defeat him. That's what mountain warfare is all about.

In mountain/winter operations there are 10,000 variables, and every one of them has the potential to kill you if you make a mistake. This is Infantry, Mountain. On top of the troops' basic infantry skills, a whole different set of requirements needs to be met to prepare them for the mountains.

The subject range is wide, starting with basic ropes and knots (nine of them, and every one of them can save your life), rappelling (from the tower and a chopper) and belaying, rock hammers and ice axes, pitons, crampons, glissading (the art of controlled sliding), rock and ice climbing, mountain walking, glacier ascents, descents and traverses, crevasse rescue ("throw 'im down a hole and let 'im get himself out"), field expedient litters, buddy rappels, extended first aid, mountain and winter medical treatment, avalanches (and what to do if you're buried in one), one- and two-rope bridges, mountain direction finding



Getting up the mountain is only half the fight. Getting back down is equally important — and in many cases tougher.
Photo: Warren Jorgensen

using compass and an altimeter, weather forecasting, dressing for drastic climatic changes in the mountains, and of course, alpine and cross-country skiing. In almost every subject, the emphasis is put on night operations, with and without night vision goggles. To be here, you have to really want it. Not surprisingly, they've had very few dropouts.

Where skills are initially lacking, the spirit is there. Tenfold. On the slopes it's evident that their skiing is not where it should be, at least technically. But they fall, get up, come down, practice their moves, regroup, and head right back up. Again and again. Skiing is a skill acquired only with practice, and

practice continues until the skis are as comfortable on their feet as a rifle is in their hands.

During an afternoon of glacial traverse exercises, a trooper sat in the snow while a buddy held his bare feet inside his jacket, next to his skin, to warm them. Sergeant Tom Cook, a former Army Ranger instructor, explained, "He hung his booties (the inserts in the Koflach boots they wear) out last night, and put them on wet this morning. He's been standing on ice all afternoon, and what we've got here is a minor case of frostbite."

The errant Guardsman was sent down off the mountain, mad at himself for making the mistake. He had learned a lesson that he wouldn't soon forget.

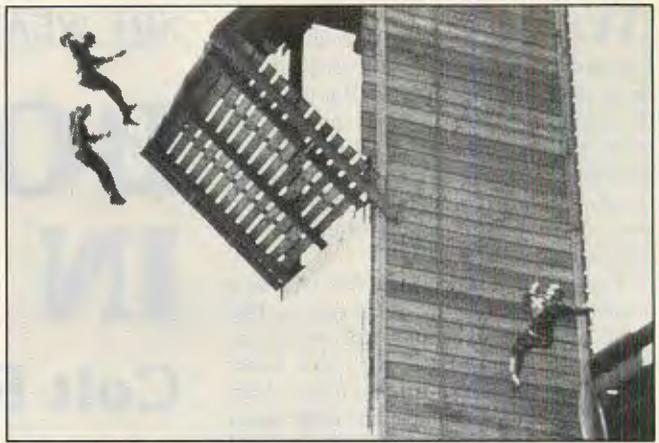
Sergeant Pat Moriarity, another instructor, explained one of their problems to me later. "We have to keep a pretty close eye on them, have the section leaders check their feet every night, because they don't want to get sent down and miss out on anything." The spirit is definitely here.

Just below the crest of Smuggler's Notch, with the snow falling and wind whipping across the crest, a bone-tired section shuffled into the bivouac area and fell in. Barely visible in the late afternoon darkness, their combined breath formed a vapor cloud around their heads. You could almost hear their hearts pounding as they stood at attention.

Lieutenant John Merkle dismissed them, came over and introduced himself, almost crushing my hand in the process. "I took them on a little walk this afternoon," he said with a smile, and told me about the four-hour bushwhacking march over the mountain they had just finished.

"Had to teach them that walking in snowshoes is a bit harder in the bush than on a well-packed road," he said. I looked over at the tired troops. Many of them were leaning on their ski poles, but they looked as if they could go right out and do it again.

At noon chow, I interrupted Specialist Fourth Class James Halleck as he alternately ate and busied himself cutting notches



Guardsmen practice on a 65-foot rappelling tower before attempting to use their newly-learned skills in the mountains. Photo: U.S. Army

in his boots to better take the bindings. In response to Dumb Question #1, he laughed.

"Do I like it? I love it! I did enough pushups to push down half of Camp Johnson for burning out their rappelling ropes. I came out of that chopper and only stopped once. Man, were they pissed off!"

Dumb Question #2. "The hardest part is crevasse rescue. We did that yesterday. That was some scary shit!"

Whether it's "scary shit" or not, the Guardsmen of the 172nd Mountain Infantry stick with it. There were no quitters; Spec.4 Halleck had in fact just re-enlisted for another three-year hitch. These guys have what it takes to be the best, and given the right equipment and support, they'll soon stand in the ranks of the world's best mountain infantry units.

The spirit is definitely there. ✕

MOUNTAIN TROOPS LEAD THE WAY

Hannibal fielded the first mountain troops as early as 200 B.C., when he led his men and elephants across the Alps — much to the surprise of the Romans, who thought themselves safe behind this natural barrier. Since then, mountain units have played an important part in mankind's many wars, often leading the way and turning the tide of battle.

More recently, mountain units operated during the Revolutionary War. In one instance, Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys came down from the mountains, crossed frozen Lake Champlain, attacked the British garrison wintering there, defeated them and carried their cannons back to Boston. American colonists operated from mountain bases throughout the war to harass British rear areas and supply lines.

During the early stages of World War I, the slow going by Austro-Hungarian forces in Serbia can be partly attributed to their lack of effective mountain units. The German Army, on the other hand, had well-trained *Gebirgsjaeger* (mountain troops) and they operated with great success against the Romanians as well as the Italians in the Alps.

Before attacking Finland in 1939, Stalin said that it would be a war of machines. The Finns thought differently. Using their experience and knowledge of the cold arctic wastelands, they held off the Soviets although vastly outnumbered. Superior numbers enabled the Soviets to eventually overwhelm Finland, but Stalin saw the importance of mountain troops and ordered winter/mountain training accelerated. By 1944 Russian mountain troops were among the best in the world. Today, the Soviets can still field a formidable mountain/winter fighting force. Members of this force are currently getting on-the-job training in Afghanistan.

During World War II German mountain units operated on all fronts. In Russia they fought their way farther into the Soviet Union than any other unit and scaled the highest peaks of the Caucasus. In the Balkans they battled large partisan armies and in Italy helped slow the Allied advance to a crawl.

By the winter of 1944 the German Army had stopped the Allied advance through Italy cold. They held Mount Belvidere and the 1,500-foot Riva Ridge, which was less heavily defended because they considered it too difficult to climb. The newly-formed American 10th Mountain Division thought differently. On the night of 18 January 1945, aided by Italian alpine guides, elements of the unit made the 10-hour climb, threw the German defenders off the ridge and spearheaded the attack on Mount Belvidere. The gates to the Po Valley were soon opened and the Allies were able to move on.

The U.S. Army elected to disband its mountain division at the end of World War II, but nations around the world continued to field these units. Today mountain units are generally organized into brigades, although India fields 10 mountain divisions, Switzerland three, Spain two, China and France one each. Other nations, such as Italy and Sweden, have a sufficient number of independent brigades to bring their total mountain troop strength up to division level.

Since mountains exist on every continent, nations with international interests find it necessary to have units trained to fight in this rugged environment. While the United States presently lacks an effective mountain fighting force, the 10th Mountain Division is coming back into service — but is currently "Mountain" in name only. Steps are being taken to remedy the shortage of mountain/winter troops. The 172nd and the Mountain Warfare Training Center are certainly steps in the right direction.

WITH the U.S. military's preference for assault rifles, American weapons manufacturers have generally been hesitant to produce submachine guns. But while the Pentagon has for the most part spurned submachine guns, U.S. lawmen have not. For special-tactic teams at the local and federal levels — and *both* sides in the ongoing drug war — submachine guns often are the weapon of choice.

Lawmen and drug smugglers choose a submachine gun for the same reasons that have made the weapon effective in the hands of certain armies. It's much better suited than the assault rifle for house clearing, close-quarters combat and other urban scenarios. And a good submachine gun still delivers the high-volume firepower needed in ambushes and raids. It's small, hides easily and can be carried further without fatigue; it's preferable in dim light, for engaging unarmored moving targets and for use in thick vegetation.

Major U.S. arms manufacturers have been ho-hum on the submachine gun since Smith & Wesson dropped its M76 in 1970. So most U.S. police departments, federal agencies and specialty military units ended up with foreign-made subguns, usually the Israeli UZI or the German H&K MP5.

Now, for the first time in decades, a major American manufacturer is introducing a new submachine gun, the Colt 9mm SMG.

Despite its rather generic-sounding name, Pentagon planners might like the Colt 9mm SMG, if for no other reason than because it's based on Colt's M16A2 rifle issued to U.S. armed forces. The Colt 9mm SMG is an abbreviated version of that weapon. It has a 10.5-inch barrel and a shortened handguard. Its telescoping buttstock is the same one used by Colt on the company's M16A2 .223 Carbine (Model 723), .223 Commando (Model 733) and the semiautomatic 9mm AR-15.

The M16 ancestry of the new Colt 9mm SMG is also obvious in the large, .223-sized magazine well from which the skinny 9mm magazine — available in 20- and 32-round double-column box — extends. A plastic spacer fills the void. The SMG's tri-mode selector switch, magazine release button, charging handle and ejection port dust cover will all be familiar to anyone who's ever handled an M16.

Don't look for a gas system like that of the M16A2, though. The Colt SMG uses an unlocked blowback design.

It fires from a closed-bolt position, allowing excellent practical accuracy for single shots. And the Colt SMG has a standard feature not found on the H&K MP5, which is probably the most popular closed-bolt submachine gun. Colt's SMG bolt locks open on the last shot, a nice feature because it signals the need to reload and makes that process quicker.

The Colt SMG's cyclic rate of full-auto fire is about 800 rounds per minute, varying slightly depending on ammunition. A 9mm NATO ball has a velocity of 1,300 feet/second leaving the muzzle of the SMG's

SOF WEAPONS

BORN IN THE USA

Colt Reintroduces the SMG

by Emanuel Kapelsohn



With stock extended or retracted, the 9mm Colt SMG is longer than the UZI or the H&K MP5, a vital consideration in restricted situations like rappelling. Photo: M. Vevera

LAWYER, GUNMAN, EXPERT

Emanuel Kapelsohn is president of The Peregrine Corporation, a defense consulting firm based in Princeton, New Jersey. After graduating from Yale with honors, Kapelsohn received his law degree from Harvard. Certified by the FBI, the NRA and the American Pistol Institute as a firearms instructor, he has also been declared an expert witness on firearms by the New York Supreme Court. Among other endeavors, Kapelsohn has worked as a private investigator, a bodyguard, a technical editor for *Police Marksman Magazine* and a corporate security adviser. Readers will remember his name from other firearms articles in SOF.

barrel.

The weapon weighs 5.75 pounds empty without magazine, or 7.07 pounds with loaded 32-round stick, about the same as the H&K MP5 and over 1.5 pounds less than the UZI.

Stock-extended length of the Colt SMG is 28.9 inches, two or three inches longer than the MP5 (26.7 inches) or the UZI (25.6 inches). The difference is even greater when the stock is retracted. Colt's SMG length drops to 25.6 inches, the same as the UZI with its stock extended.

So in the stock-retracted mode, Colt's weapon is not nearly as compact as either the UZI or the H&K MP5A3, both under 19 inches with folded stocks. Therefore, while the Colt compares favorably in length with an extended stock, the MP5A3 and the UZI are easier to hide and more compact with stocks folded. This could make a definitive difference in transportation, use by paratroopers, in rappelling, or in other situations involving constricted areas.

It was obviously more convenient for Colt to use an existing telescoping buttstock design. And that design does provide a more rigid and comfortable stock, almost as good as that of a fixed-buttstock weapon. The Colt SMG's longer buttstock is a good design for shooters who favor the hip assault position.

I test-fired a Colt 9mm SMG on three separate occasions, first at Marine Corps Base Quantico, where it was evaluated by various federal agencies. My second and third shooting sessions with the weapon were at the Connecticut State Police Range and the Glastonbury Police Range, both near Colt's West Hartford plant.

Seven shooters, including myself, all representing a wide range of shooting experience and skill levels, participated in testing two different Colt 9mm SMGs. Well over 1,000 rounds were fired through the two guns. Included were commercial and NATO-spec, full-metal-jacket ball made by one foreign and three domestic manufacturers; two brands of hollowpoints with widely differing bullet configurations; and hundreds of rounds of reloaded ammunition.

The only malfunction was a single failure-to-feed by one of over 250 hollowpoint rounds fired. This aspect of the evaluation would be more complete with some rigorous endurance and environmental tests, something I did not have the opportunity to do. But the SMG's excellent reliability in digesting this many rounds of mixed ammunition is certainly an indication that it is not a finicky eater.

Hollowpoint ammunition sees limited use in most military scenarios. But it is much more in demand by special response and tactical entry law enforcement teams, who must be concerned with over-penetration, especially in cases involving hostages or critical equipment like nuclear reactors, aircraft, electronics, or flammable and explosive materials.

The test group fired the SMG in both the underarm assault and shoulder positions, burst firing at single and multiple targets at ranges varying from point blank out to about 35 yards. Very limited muzzle climb greatly enhanced aim control during full automatic fire. It was easy firing from the shoulder to consistently place two- or three-shot bursts on the torso of a silhouette target out to

30-plus yards. This isn't as easy as it sounds with other submachine guns and may be attributable in the case of the Colt 9mm SMG to the manufacturer's use of an in-line design, which minimizes muzzle rise.

When setting the SMG in the semiauto mode for single shots on targets out to 100 yards, it was easy to print 10-shot groups of less than 10 inches when firing from a stable position.

Colt's SMG has an excellent rear sight, adjustable for windage and with flip-type apertures marked for 50 and 100 meters. The well-designed short-range setting uses a very large aperture with a thin "ghost ring" around it, an extremely fast combination. The front sight is adjustable for elevation. These are some of the best sights I've seen on a submachine gun. When combined with closed-bolt firing, a rigid buttstock and good M16A2-type trigger pull, the sights allow the Colt SMG to be fired with carbine-

Even disassembled the Colt 9mm SMG readily reflects its M16 ancestry. The 20-round magazine is loaded with Winchester Silvertip hollowpoints, the 32-round with NATO-spec, full-metal-jacket ammo.

like accuracy.

Practical effective range of this weapon should extend to perhaps 150 meters. To fully evaluate the gun's potential for accuracy, I mounted a compact Bushnell Lite Site on its carrying handle, using the quick-detachable ARMS mount (a variety of low-light optics or lighting devices can be attached to the Colt SMG's carrying handle). Firing Winchester 9mm Silvertip hollowpoints — which produced the best accuracy of any of the loads tested — the SMG printed 10-shot groups of 6-7 inches at 100 yards.

A crucial test of the SMG's suitability for use by tactical entry teams was our firing at hostile-and-hostage targets. With an 800 rpm cyclic rate in full auto, even those with a nimble trigger finger could not get off single shots. If the situation calls for a single shot, the SMG's selector switch must be placed in that mode. Shooting quickly from the standing position at up to 15 yards, it was easy to place head shots on the hostile target with a margin of safety for the hostage, again thanks to the SMG's good trigger, good sights, rigid buttstock and closed bolt.

In handling, the SMG's well-shaped pistol grip, buttstock length and good balance allowed easy, one-handed control while opening doors and performing similar maneuvers. Its M16-type selector lever and magazine release show good bio-engineering and are much easier to use than those on some competing submachine guns which cannot be reached with the strong hand in firing position.

In assault-position firing, the gun was easy to point accurately. Both guns we tested were equipped with the familiar bird-cage-type flash suppressor. Colt has also constructed the gun with a sound suppressor built into what appears to be an elongated (M16-length) handguard that extends all the way to the SMG's muzzle.

Colt has said the SMG was developed without regard to any specific military contract. It would be quite suitable to paratroops in an airborne assault scenario.

A Colt spokesman told SOF that "there are some [U.S.] government agencies we expect contract awards from," but he declined to specify which agencies are evaluating the weapon. Colt's 9mm SMG certainly has great potential in this area, especially with local and federal law enforcement agencies, given its high compatibility with Winchester Silvertip hollowpoints and competitive retail price of \$775.

No doubt Colt hopes to see its 9mm SMG penetrate the foreign market, especially countries in which the M16 and its clones are standard issue. The spokesman said Colt has just started getting demos and samples out to potential foreign buyers and that Colt had already received a small order from a Middle East nation that he declined to name.

Given its compactness, reliability, versatility and home-grown heritage, Colt's 9mm SMG will definitely be one to watch. ☒



COLT 9mm SMG SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	9mm
Action	Unlocked blowback semi/full auto.
Magazine capacity	20 and 32 round available.
Weight	5.75 pounds
-with 20-round magazine	6.67 pounds
-with 32-round magazine	7.07 pounds
Length (stock extended)	28.88 inches
Length (stock retracted)	25.63 inches
Sights	Apertures for 50 meters and 100 meters, adjustable for windage. Front post adjustable for elevation.
Barrel length	10.5 inches
Muzzle velocity (9mm NATO)	1300 feet/second
Muzzle energy (9mm NATO)	431 feet/pound
Cyclic rate of fire (RPM)	800-1000

ARMSON'S BRIGHT SIGHTS

All the Better to See You With

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

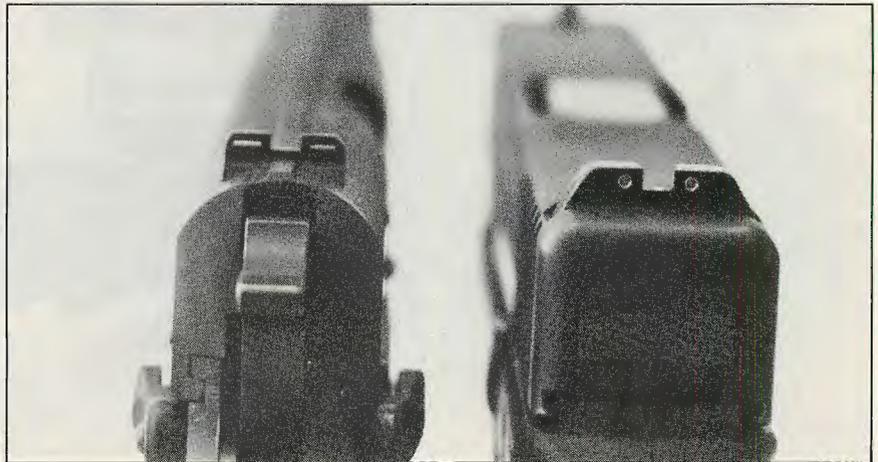
MILITARY and civilian minions of the Evil Empire lurk in the shadows. And contact with the enemy — on the streets or in the bush — usually occurs between dusk and dawn.

Drawing a bead under these lighting conditions should not be a hit-and-miss proposition. Unfortunately, it *has* been ever since firearms were first used to settle disputes. Though night vision devices have solved this dilemma for modern military and law enforcement services, few of us have \$5,000 to shell out for such sophisticated equipment. Additionally, night vision gimmickry is not yet small enough to be attached to concealment weapons. How then can we tip the odds in our favor when the light begins to fail?

Armson, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 37716 Hills Tech Drive, Farmington Hills, MI 48018. (313) 553-4960) has been slicing through shadows since its introduction of the Occluded Eye Gunsight (O.E.G.) several years ago (see "Armson's Deadly Dot," SOF, July '84). Developed in South Africa for combat operations in the deep bush and used by Colonel Arthur "Bull" Simons in the 1970 Son Tay prison raid, its luminous red dot, mounted to well-worn M16s, has also greased no small number of Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador.

Applying the same nuclear technology to handguns, Armson has recently developed what they call Trijicon self-luminous inserts for pistols, with applications to some rifles and shotguns as well.

Each insert is self-contained within a metal cylinder. A tritium isotope inside the cylinder





LEFT: Two types of rear sights can be installed on most pistols: two horizontal bars, as seen on Browning Hi-Power, or two tritium dots, as shown on Glock 17.

LOWER LEFT: Warning label on slide of Glock 17 states that sights contain nuclear isotope tritium, and absolves Armson of liability in case of user injury.

ABOVE: Five pistols were used in SOF's test and evaluation of Armson's Trijicon self-luminous sights (clockwise from top): stainless steel Walther PPK (.380 ACP), Glock 17 (9mm Parabellum), Browning Hi-Power (9mm Parabellum), stainless steel Colt Officer's Model (.45 ACP) and Heckler & Koch P7M8 (9mm Parabellum). Amazingly, all sight conversions run less than \$200.

provides the energy source and reacts with a phosphor (any substance that can be stimulated to emit light by incident radiation) that is also in the cylinder. This mini-nuclear reaction between the tritium and the phosphor generates a green light that will glow brilliantly for at least ten years. Since this reaction is self-perpetuating, there is no need to expose these inserts to another light source to reactivate the tritium — it will glow continuously on its own. To complete this package, each lamp is protected by a shock-proof clear sapphire crystal.

This three-dot (or one dot and two bars) sighting system requires that one insert be installed in the front sight and two in the rear sight. It sounds impressive, but how well does it work when the sun starts to set and visibility crumbles?

For SOF's test and evaluation we chose to install Trijicon self-luminous sights on five different pistols: a Colt stainless steel Officer's Model (.45 ACP), Walther stainless steel PPK (.380 ACP), Heckler & Koch P7M8 (9mm), Browning P35 Hi-Power (9mm) and Glock 17 (9mm).

Though installation requirements differ slightly with each gun model, the principle

remains the same: Holes, 5/64 inch in diameter, must be drilled through the front and rear sight blades, .020 inches from the top. Heckler & Koch P7 pistols are already tapped with the necessary 1/4-inch-deep holes. The Colt Officer's Model and Walther PPK require thicker rear sight blades than those provided by the factory. Both the front and rear plastic sights on the Glock 17 are replaced by steel equivalents. The Browning Hi-Power — a so-called "New Model Single Action" — was fitted with two self-luminous bars at the rear.

We tested these excellent sights under every possible lighting scenario. In bright sunlight they detract not one whit from the all-important flash front-sight picture. In dimly lit interiors, at dusk or dawn, in the deepest shade or the dead of night, in back alleys or the darkest rain forest, they glow with outstanding brilliance. In the very environments where trouble is most likely to lurk, target acquisition and hit probability take quantum leaps forward. If you don't take our word for it, ask the FBI. Tests at their academy have demonstrated a five-fold increase in night-firing accuracy.

Some of our test personnel preferred the bar/dot system mounted on the Browning Hi-Power. Others felt the three-dot system rendered faster sight alignment. If you're like me and prefer to concentrate on the front sight when shooting under stress, it makes no difference whether bars or dots occupy the rear sight.

The best news is that such high-tech perfection will not empty your wallet. Since all Heckler & Koch P7 pistols are pre-drilled for these inserts, a set of Trijicon sights for this series costs only \$81.95, *installed*. Glock 17 owners can pay either \$114.95 for the sights alone or have Armson's gunsmith install them for a total cost of \$149.50. A three-dot system, using MMC-type rear sights, will cost \$158.60 for the Colt Officer's Model and \$165.75 for Walther PP, PPK or PPK/S pistols, completely installed. A bar/dot system fitted to the Browning Hi-Power will set you back \$124.15.

Prices for other handguns are comparable. To make the modification, Armson requires only the slides from semiautomatic pistols. Therefore, no Federal Firearms License (FFL) is required to ship or receive this part. If you want Trijicon sights installed on a revolver, you will have to ship the entire weapon through an FFL holder. Semiauto pistol slides and revolvers should be sent directly to Armson. Contact them for details.

I recommend this outstanding and useful product without reservation. If you prowls about when the moon is full, you need a set of Armson's Trijicons. You shouldn't bet your life on anything less. ✕

TARGET TCHEPONE

ARVN Jumps Fence into Laos

by David C. Isby

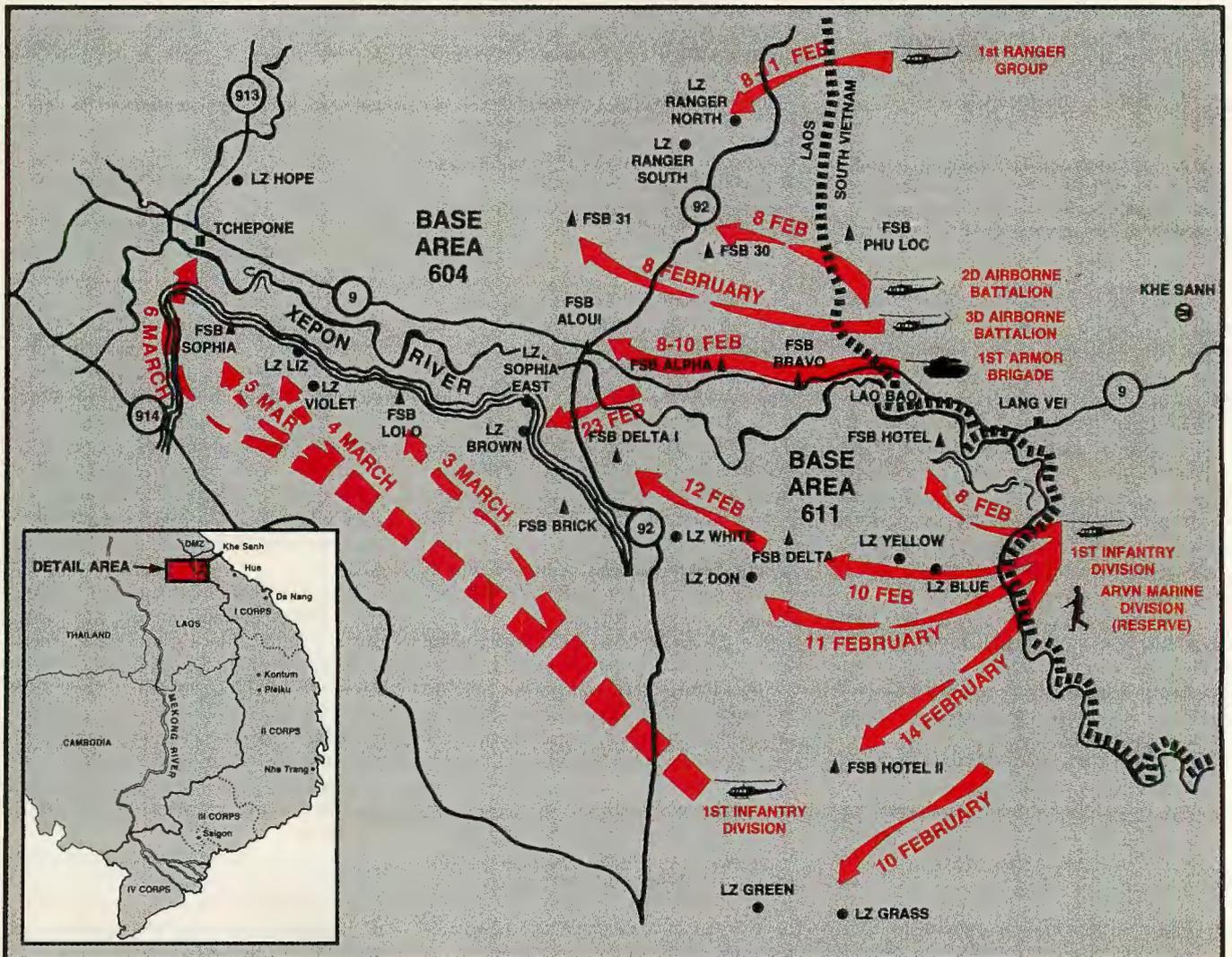
VIETNAMIZATION of the war, as the Pentagon described it, was well under way in 1970. U.S. ground troops — by that time involved mainly in defensive operations — knew the end of Uncle Sam's presence was near. The enemy knew it, too, and was eager to take advantage of the situation.

By then, even the American press had caught on that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was

not just a figment of LBJ's imagination. In the fall of 1970, near the trail's route through southern Laos, allied intelligence reported a large accumulation of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) supplies at points designated Base Areas 604 and 611, just west of South Vietnam's Quang Tri Province. As later events were to prove, the supply build-up was in preparation for an

NVA spring offensive aimed at capturing Quang Tri Province.

With a steady flow of solid intelligence coming in, the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) decided it would be a good chance for South Vietnamese troops to "get some" on their own. If the troops of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) could successfully de-



stroy the pre-positioned equipment and supplies, it would not only upset plans for the communists' spring offensive, but it might also disrupt the logistical network farther down the Ho Chi Minh Trail that would support NVA operations in South Vietnam and Cambodia during the next summer.

Coordinating with the ARVN high command, MACV drew up a plan — known as Lam Son 719 — to attack the North Vietnamese in February and March. The destruction of NVA supply dumps in the Cambodian incursion of 1970 had shown that these types of operations could be effective. And a solid ARVN victory prior to a U.S. pull-out would at least leave the Saigon government with a psychological edge in the war. Success in such an operation would be proof that Vietnamization was working and that Saigon could fight its own war.

As a practical matter, MACV had to let ARVN conduct the cross-border op. A U.S. Senate resolution banning U.S. ground troops from Cambodia and Laos had been passed in 1970.

The Plan

Lam Son 719 called for ARVN troops to cross into Laos from the old American base at Khe Sanh, scene of major fighting in 1968. ARVN would then advance along route QL-9 to seize the operational objective, Tchepone.

Route QL-9 was a dirt road that ran along the valley of the Xe Pon River. The valley was narrow and contained many boulders and rock outcroppings that would make excellent cover for tank-killer teams. So armor would have to stay on the road, which was overlooked on both sides by high, jungle-covered mountains.

Tchepone, 45 kilometers into Laos, was a once-sleepy mountain village that had grown into a bustling NVA logistical nerve center. It was a central transshipment and supply point for North Vietnamese forces.

Planners tried to pick the cream of ARVN's crop to attack Tchepone: two brigades of the 1st ARVN Infantry Division, three brigades of the 1st ARVN Airborne Division, the entire 1st ARVN Armored Brigade, two brigades of the 1st Vietnamese Marine Division and two entire ARVN Ranger Groups. Most of these troops were seasoned combat veterans, although many untested recruits were added to bring the

STRATEGIST AT WORK

David Isby is widely known among long-time SOF readers as a former contributing editor and Soviet analyst. He is known in military circles as an author and expert on the Soviet military. David was editor of *Strategy and Tactics Magazine* from 1970-79. His books include "Weapons and Tactics of the Soviet Army" and "Armies of NATO's Central Front," both published by Jane's, and "Russia's War in Afghanistan," published by Osprey Books.



TOP: An ARVN M41 tank column rolls into Laos during Lam Son 719. Tanks could not maneuver off the single dirt road to the objective and many were later destroyed or abandoned.

ABOVE: An American medevac crew lands with wounded South Vietnamese troops at a U.S. fire support base on the Laotian border during Lam Son 719. Photo: AP/Wide World

units up to strength. Officers at all levels were U.S.-trained as part of Vietnamization. Planners figured the chances of success for ARVN couldn't be higher, under the circumstances.

The attack plan was laid out in two stages. The first stage called for the 1st Armored Brigade to move up QL-9 to Objective Aloui, halfway to Tchepone. Using helicopters, the 1st Airborne Division and the Rangers were to establish a series of fire support bases (FSB) north of the land route. Protecting the flank against counter-attack, the 1st ARVN Division was to establish similar bases to the south along an escarpment parallel to QL-9. These positions were designed to protect the line of communications of the 1st Armored Brigade, with the FSBs established by the 1st Division, paratroopers, and Rangers being leaptfrogged forward as the armor advanced

along the ridges to the north and south.

In the second stage, once Objective Aloui had been secured, the 1st Armored Brigade was to press on to Tchepone. As in the first stage of the offensive, flanking support would be provided by the 1st Airborne and 1st ARVN divisions.

Tchepone was to be encircled, then taken. After this, a series of sweeps around the area would destroy supplies and engage the enemy. The ARVN was to stay in Laos for two months, blocking North Vietnamese use of the trail and road system before withdrawing at the start of the rainy season in May. Serious resistance was not expected.

But no matter how well planned the operation was, it's always useful to remember the adage of a great German general. "No plan survives contact with the enemy," Field Marshal Helmuth Von Moltke said.

U.S. Involvement

If U.S. ground forces could not cross the border, planners would certainly use them to full advantage inside South Vietnam to support Lam Son 719. Uncle Sam's support operation — dubbed Dewey Canyon II — involved the 101st Airborne Division, the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and the 11th Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division, as well as other support and aviation units. As well as providing support for the South Vietnamese inside



Once the NVA cut off the ARVN column pushing into Laos by road, all available aircraft had to be called in for resupply — and later evacuation. Photo: U.S. Army

Laos, U.S. troops would also serve to block and tie down North Vietnamese forces along the DMZ and protect ARVN supply routes along QL-9 into Laos. [See accompanying story by Keith William Nolan.]

Dewey Canyon II preceded Lam Son 719 by several days. The 101st Airborne Division was designated to seize Khe Sanh, plus the border areas near QL-9, as a prelude to kicking off Lam Son 719. Dewey Canyon II launched 29 January 1971. By 5 February, the "Screaming Eagles" had secured Khe Sanh and the road to the border. Khe Sanh became the advanced operating field for all helicopter sorties into Laos.

With that accomplished, Lam Son 719 opened at 0700 on 8 February, when elements of the 1st Armored Brigade crossed into Laos along QL-9. American support elements had softened up resistance over the border with a massive artillery bombardment and 11 B-52 strikes.

Coinciding with ARVN ground elements were airmobile ops. Three battalions of the 3rd Regiment, 1st ARVN Division were deployed from two landing zones (LZ) inside Laos, designated Hotel and Blue. One Ranger battalion landed at LZ Ranger South, and two battalions of the 1st Airborne landed at two LZs, 31 and 30.

The operation went well during the first day. ARVN's 1st Armored Brigade advanced nine kilometers along QL-9 against minimal resistance. On the 10th, Objective Aloui was seized by a battalion of the 1st ARVN, and the 1st Armored Brigade rolled in during the afternoon. On the flanks, prog-

ress continued. LZ Delta was seized by the 1st ARVN.

But rather than maintaining its momentum and pushing on toward the objective at Tchepone, the armored brigade spent the next two days consolidating its position around Objective Aloui, while the heli-lifted infantry continued to secure its flanks.

The 1st ARVN did seize two more LZs, Don and Delta, while a Ranger battalion was airlanded in LZ Ranger North. To help secure the route north to Tchepone, another airborne battalion airlanded with artillery and supplies. This formed a salient north of Aloui up on QL-9. But for all intents and purposes the offensive had bogged down.

The easy part of Lam Son 719 was now over.

NVA Strikes Back

The surprise of NVA commanders at this daring cross-border strike did not last long. After an initial hesitation to assess the situation, the NVA reacted with typical professionalism and force. They hit the QL-9 supply route to Operation Aloui. This was the first glitch in the allied operational plan.

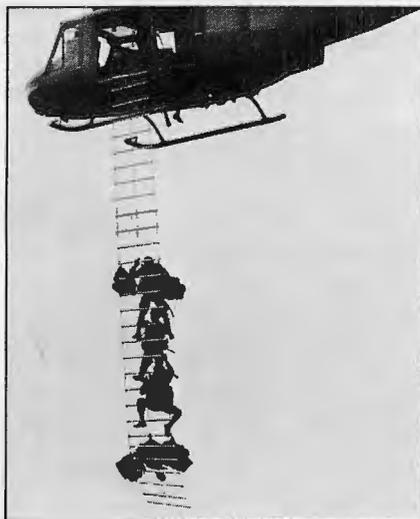
Planners had counted on making most of their resupply runs by truck along QL-9. They figured U.S. and ARVN helo assets would only be needed to supply the flanking fire support bases. But by the end of the first week, the NVA had cut off the road. This meant that ARVN troops inside Laos would have to be resupplied by helicopter for the remainder of Lam Son 719.

With Highway QL-9 cut in two, NVA commanders stepped up the counterattack. Hard-fighting NVA light infantry units began to pour into the area, supported by numerous anti-aircraft batteries, howitzers and other artillery, and armor. The communists had demonstrated ample skill with

heavy weapons in I Corps in the fighting of 1968-69, yet American and South Vietnamese operational commanders expressed surprise when these heavily supported NVA units began an effective counterattack.

NVA counterattacks hit the northern flank of the QL-9 salient, north of Objective Aloui. On 20 February, after suffering heavy casualties in a major engagement the day before, the South Vietnamese 39th Ranger Battalion had to abandon LZ Ranger North. Attacks were also launched on South and Objective 31, the latter being held by ARVN paratroopers. FSB Delta was over-

Crewmen in this Huey watch as three members of an ARVN LRRP team are hastily evacuated from Laos to Khe Sanh during Lam Son 719. American crews braved intense fire from NVA troops to rescue trapped allies. Photo: AP/Wide World



run by NVA infantry and tank units on 25 February. Attacks on QL-9 escalated, now aimed at cutting the overland supply line to the 1st Armored Brigade.

Fearful that a successful counterattack might leave thousands of their troops cut off inside Laos, ARVN commanders acted to shore up their sagging offensive. The ARVN's 1st Armored Brigade left its position around Objective Aloui and attacked north to relieve heavily engaged airborne forces at Objective 31. Elements of the 1st ARVN Infantry Division were lifted onto LZs north and west of QL-9. Fierce fighting ensued.

Efforts by ARVN commanders to rekindle their offensive failed. By 28 February the spark had died. All energy that might have restarted the drive into Laos was now being drained away to secure the rear line of communications and ARVN's northern flank. Only an air assault into Tchepone could salvage the operation, they decided. But they would need help. They called MACV.

Left with little choice, U.S. commanders began gathering all available helo assets that could be spared. It would be one of the biggest airmobile assaults of the war. On 3 March, the 1st ARVN Division was lifted from its guard positions on the southern flank of the 1st Armored Brigade to the escarpment overlooking Tchepone. The landings were all combat assaults. NVA air defense artillery was deadly. Eleven helicopters were lost, 44 damaged.

The ARVN high command was now throwing in all their remaining forces. The 1st ARVN Infantry Division was reinforced by a third regiment that had been held in reserve in eastern Quang Tri Province. Thus strengthened, and backed up by U.S. helicopters drawn from throughout the country, the 1st Infantry Division was to take Tchepone.

On 6 March, two battalions of the 2nd Regiment, 1st ARVN Division, were airlifted into LZ Hope just north of Tchepone. They fought their way into the town and raised South Vietnam's flag over the rubble remaining from repeated air strikes.

But more and more NVA reinforcements were pouring into the area. Their first assignment was to hit ARVN's 1st Infantry Division. The men of the 1st could not hold without armor, despite intense air support. ARVN's armor was still blocked north of Objective Aloui. ARVN's 1st Division would have to withdraw. A helo evacuation began 10 March.

U.S. helicopter pilots repeatedly ran a gauntlet of intense anti-aircraft fire to effect the evacuation. Time was severely limited. Believing that each flight in might be the last, pilots urged every man possible to grab on to the helicopters any way they could. Choppers set down back in Vietnam with battle-weary ARVN troops literally hanging from the struts.

Now-famous photos of these landings were transmitted back to the States. As they did in the Tet Offensive of 1968, stateside



TOP: ARVN suffered heavy casualties during Lam Son 719 from RPG-2 anti-tank rocket launchers like the one carried here by an NVA infantryman.

ABOVE: This North Vietnamese photo shows an ARVN M48 knocked out and overrun by NVA infantrymen during Lam Son 719. The weapon in the foreground is a 7.62 SGMB machine gun.

editors decided on the basis of photos alone, without waiting for more definitive information, that Lam Son 719 was a defeat for South Vietnam and the United States. This time they happened to be right.

The withdrawal continued and NVA pressure continued to increase. A battalion of the 1st ARVN Infantry Division waiting on the banks of the Xe Pon River as a covering force was hit and wiped out. In other places, an orderly retreat degenerated into a panicky rout. By 18 March, all ARVN positions west of Objective Aloui, the 1st Armored's base of operations, were evacuated.

On the 19th, the 1st Armored Brigade, which had previously withdrawn back to its defensive positions at Objective Aloui, began to retreat along QL-9 toward the South Vietnamese border. It was ambushed by the NVA. Disabled vehicles prevented ARVN from pushing through the ambush on the narrow dirt road. The NVA had set up a blocking force behind them. Panic spread.

Then fully functional armored vehicles were abandoned by ARVN, prompting calls for U.S. helicopter strikes to destroy the abandoned vehicles in order to prevent their capture.

The ARVN Airborne, itself hard pressed, was unable to keep the flank of the column secured. On 20 March, thousands of U.S. sorties from helicopters, tactical aircraft and B-52s were launched in support of the retreating column.

On the flanks, the remainder of the South Vietnamese forces were being withdrawn by U.S. helicopters. NVA forces caused heavy losses there, too, hitting 28 of the 44 helicopters assigned to the evacuation.

This withdrawal saw some of the heaviest fighting of the operation, with repeated North Vietnamese attempts to cut the route. There was some panic, but the majority of the South Vietnamese forces fought bravely.

But the NVA's combination of light infantry liberally supplied with RPG-7s, mines and roadblocks, backed up by extensive artillery and air defense assets, was an effective one. Morale in ARVN ranks dropped drastically. ARVN's airborne troops and marines abandoned key positions and mobbed the evacuation helicopters.

Despite the hundreds of rescue sorties by U.S. helicopters, much of ARVN's 1st Armored Regiment had to fight its way out

Continued on page 74

PERU'S SENDERO LUMINOSO

Down the "Shining Path" to Anarchy

by Charlie Harris



HURLING crude dynamite charges with Incan llama-hair slings, hooded guerrillas of the Peruvian *Sendero Luminoso* blast their "shining path" to communism.

Crude weapons are not the only hallmark of these bizarre left wing extremists. Fanatical, ruthless and dangerous, the *Sendero Luminoso*, or guerrillas of the "Shining Path," combine Andean mysticism with Maoism and follow a leader whom they believe is the reincarnation of an ancient Incan chief. They issue no manifestos, make no statements, refuse to negotiate and view Peking, Moscow, Havana and Washington with equal disdain. As the largest clandestine organization fighting Peru's democratic government, the *Sendero Luminoso* may well be the last Maoists on earth still under arms and fighting.

Born of the turbulence that affected the communist movement in Peru in the mid-

Public burial of a *Senderista* terrorist demonstrates wide popular support in some impoverished regions of Peru for *Sendero Luminoso*. Such support baffles government officials and police since *Sendero* terrorists offer no manifestos, claim no goals and refuse to negotiate.

LATIN AMERICA SPECIALIST

Charlie Harris is a former major in the U.S. Marine Corps who served two tours of duty in Vietnam as an adviser and helicopter pilot. He also worked on-and-off for 10 years in Latin America as a U.S. government employee. Since leaving Latin America in 1975, Charlie has written over 100 articles for major gun, hunting and aviation magazines.

60s as a result of the rupture between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, the *Sendero Luminoso* first appeared at the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho, Peru. Its founder, Abimael Guzman, was head of personnel at the university and professor of philosophy. Guzman and other Marxists virtually took control of the university 20 years ago and gained a devoted following from students and *campesinos* from the surrounding area. The continued economic stagnation of the Ayacucho region, combined with the university serving as a front for Marxist thinking and action, has helped maintain the revolutionary fervor which fuels the bloody activities of the *Sendero Luminoso*. Today, while *Sendero* activists fan out into the countryside, intellectual leaders coordinate their efforts from Ayacucho.

The group's name, which officially is *Partido Comunista Peruano Sendero Luminoso*, is derived from a phrase in a work by Jose Carlos Mariategui, founder of the Peruvian Communist Party. He said the true road to communism is the *sendero luminoso*, or "shining path," of Mao Tse Tung's ideology. Living an austere, simple life in the countryside, *Sendero* guerrillas have a determined spirit of sacrifice that confounds many government attempts to fight their insurgency.

According to an article in the Peruvian newspaper *Diario La Republica*, the *Sendero* claims there "exists in the country a revolutionary situation in development" and "there is no other path than armed struggle . . . for the attainment of the revolution; all the rest is reformism and revisionism" (a clear attack on the more peaceful policies of other communist groups in Peru). A Peruvian magazine, *Equis X*, has compared the *Sendero* with the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia. A foreign military observer comments: "They do not explain what they are fighting for. They do not seem to know what they are fighting for. They are anarchists." Gustavo Forriti, a Peruvian newspaperman who has followed *Sendero* activities over the years, writes that they are "attached to the Quechua [Indian] interpretation of a Maoism that no longer exists . . . [To] the crypto-dogmatic Abimael Guzman . . . Fidel Castro would be . . . a peon of imperialist social revisionism."

Since 1980, when the *Sendero* publicly announced a "generalized offensive," they have remained silent, never claiming their acts of terrorism. No outsider has even seen Guzman in the past five years — some claim he might be dead and secretly buried. All of this only adds to the mystique of their group. However, there is no mistaking their ideological orientation: In December 1980, they hung a dog from a lamppost in downtown Lima, and on it was the name of an anti-Maoist Chinese leader. Also, whenever the guerrillas raid a *hacienda* or overrun a police post they leave a hammer-and-sickle red flag.

Violent, evasive, and surprisingly well disciplined, the *Senderistas* are mainly

MAKING OF A TERRORIST

The Senderistas came to my village before dawn, explained the Indian in a quivering voice as he squatted next to me on the dirt floor of the deserted hut. I heard shouts and noises toward the justice of the peace's house so I put on my sweater and went out. There was confusion and I didn't realize what was going on at first. But they had guns and one, who was from the city, told me to bring my family to the square. I decided to run away but there was a man on the path with a shotgun and he forced me back into the pueblo.

The sun was up by the time the village had been collected together, he continued as he rocked back on his heels and rubbed his gnarled hands. There were only a few Senderistas, maybe eight or 10, but they had the justice prisoner. Their leader said they were bringing a new life for us and then asked us, "Has this man committed crimes against you? Has he stolen from you? Is he honest or evil?" No one said anything, we were very afraid.

The leader eyed the crowd. Then his stare fell on me. I was very scared and I wondered if he knew that the justice had taken my chickens the last month. If I didn't tell him maybe he would kill me so I said, "Señor, he took my chickens."

"What else, what else?" demanded the leader. "Where is Juan Acosta?"

My cousin Juan shuffled his feet, looked at the ground and replied, "That's me, señor." I knew what was coming and I was happy I told about the chickens.

Lowering his voice, the leader continued, "What do you have to say, Juan Acosta?"

My cousin mumbled a reply. "My wife, señor. He [the justice] accused her of stealing and then violated her in return for freedom."

"Are you sure, Acosta?" asked the leader in a loud voice. He then looked around to the whole village. "Did she steal... was she violated?"

My Aunt Carmen was the first to reply, "He raped her, your excellency!" A murmur of agreement from the villagers followed. "The justices have always stolen and claimed whatever girls they wanted."

"No more!" shouted the leader defiantly. "You shall have justice and a better life. This man shall be punished. What shall the punishment be?"

There was no reply.

"Come here, Acosta." The leader reached out his hand for my cousin. "You were wronged, and you shall have your justice." He placed a revolver in my cousin's hand and turned to the



First attack by Sendero Luminoso anarchists in Lima, Peru, illustrated their cultist underpinnings. Hanging a dog from a lamppost with the name of an anti-Maoist Chinese leader tied around its neck, these guerrillas of the "shining path" are probably the last armed Maoists on earth.

crowd. "What is the punishment?"

"I want to kill him, señor, but I am afraid," my cousin replied. "Do not be afraid, my son," said the leader. "Kill him, he merits no further life."

My cousin then shot the justice in the face.

Afterward, the Senderistas opened the two shops we have in our village and passed out the bread and liquor in them, saying the merchants exploited us. We were all a little drunk and the leader asked for volunteers to join the Sendero Luminoso and to fight against the government and make a free Peru. "Who will go with me? You are free now but many of your friends are not!"

My cousin Juan Acosta said he would go. He was smart enough to know that he couldn't stay now that he killed the justice. No one else said anything.

"Come here," said the leader as he motioned to my neighbor, Teofilio Rodriguez. "You will go with me to liberate your cousins over the mountain."

Teofilio pleaded, "Please, señor, I would rather stay here. My animals need attention." The leader then shot Teofilio with the same revolver that had killed the justice.

I joined the Senderistas that day in fear of my life. Six more men from the village were taken as well. We stole dynamite from the mine.

We trekked down the valley to the

Guardia post at Tambo Chico, where I threw dynamite bombs while the old Senderistas shot up the post. There were only two Guardia and we killed one.

The next time we went to the village of my wife's uncle. By this time I was trusted enough that I was given a shotgun. We took the village in the early morning, but two Guardia ran through the blockade and we had to leave before the villagers were converted, because the trucks of the police were coming up the track from the city. The combat squad was broken up by the pursuit and I went off with my cell leader, Luis. He told me to go home, that he would contact me in a week.

I walked home and came into my house late at night. My wife was happy, but she told me that the Guardia had beaten her, claiming that I was a Senderista now, and they knew somehow that I had been involved in the attack on the Guardia post at Tambo Chico. I left again before dawn and she brought me food every other day on the mountain until I made my rendezvous with Luis. Since then, I have not dared to return home.

Luis took me to the big city of Ayacucho, where I became a waiter at a university restaurant. I had to be very careful. There were many Senderistas among the students but many spies too. I was used as a courier for messages to the mountains and I did this for a year.

My missions would be to deliver messages to other commands. I never saw the message, because it was somewhere in a pack of cigarettes or a book, which were the most common ways of concealing it. I was told once that the message was on the cellophane of the cigarette package, but how that could be I don't know. Once I was stopped by the PIP as I sat in the square at Ocros waiting for a contact. They took me apart, even found the cigarette pack, which they kept, smoked all of the cigarettes but never found the message. They let me go but I decided that I didn't want to be a Senderista anymore after that.

I knew I would be killed eventually. Luis had been killed, and Esteban, my only friend, had vanished. I think they got him in Puno because the intelligence service is very active there.

I sat on the hill above my village for three days, wanting to stay, but there were Guardia in it now, a whole squad and I could not return. I sent word to my wife through my cousin and she came up the hill to me. I told her I was going away to Lima, and I would send for her. So far I cannot bring her here, I don't have enough money. I must be very careful because the Sendero Luminoso is after me and the police will kill me too if they discover who I am. I am cursed by both sides.



Police efforts to root out and eliminate elements of *Sendero Luminoso* are hindered by mountainous terrain, limited transportation and a population often forced into cooperating with the *Senderistas*. Here police surround, then search, a dwelling suspected of being a guerrilla safe house.

targeting the police forces of the nation, with an eye toward destroying the government's control of the population — the classic guerrilla strategy. Though no one knows how many *Senderistas* there are, they have established "subversive cells" in over half of the country's 24 *departamentos*, or provinces, and are doing their best to tie the impoverished country of Peru in knots.

A concerted terrorist and guerrilla warfare campaign by the *Sendero* has increased in intensity since 1979. Ambushing government convoys, theft of weapons, blowing up power lines and buildings, attacks on rural police posts, killing of specific individuals (landowners and suspected police informers) have all been part of this campaign. These actions have not been limited to Ayacucho but have occurred in Lima and other parts of the country as well. Indications are that the rebels are beginning to intensify their activities throughout Peru.

Adding to this increase in *Sendero* terrorism is the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Asaru* (MRTA), the armed wing of the Communist Party in Lima. The MRTA, named after the last of the Incan rulers who rose against the Spanish, is prevalent in the universities around Lima as well as the secondary and trade schools that dot central Lima. Its principal contribution to the mounting chaos is a bombing campaign in the cities, while the *Sendero* attacks the rural population. Also, unlike the *Sendero*, MRTA appears to have outside support from the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and Cuba.

Because they ally themselves with no foreign power, the *Senderistas* have always had difficulty maintaining a sufficient store of modern weapons. Initially they attacked village officials and rural police with hoes, axes, and *onda* — a llama-hair slingshot. Later they acquired better weapons by seizing them from murdered police officers, and they now add to their arsenals by raiding

police and army installations. Consequently, *Sendero* weaponry is a hodgepodge of sporting arms, pistols, submachine guns and shotguns.

The favorite weapon of all *Senderistas*, however, is dynamite, since there is an abundance of it in Peru as a result of the mining industry. The Andean people use dynamite for everything from mining to "harvesting" fish, so its proper use is no mystery to *Sendero* members. Crude explosives are fashioned with pyrotechnic fuses for hand-thrown bombs or with acid-delay fuses for car bombings.

Though their Maoist purism has kept them out of the ubiquitous South American cocaine trade, *Sendero* terrorists often solve their chronic weapons shortage by trading services with narcotics traffickers in return for automatic weapons brought in from Colombia by light aircraft. As the *Sendero* has expanded its area of operation into the drug traffickers' territories on the eastern slope of the Andes cordillera, it is increasingly common to find that an "unholy alliance" has been wrought, where the traffickers buy protection from the terrorists and even mount joint operations against the common enemy, the government.

How does the Peruvian government counter this protean terrorist network? Specially-trained troops, such as the U.S.-trained Bolivian Rangers who pursued and captured Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Fidel Castro's LCB (*Lucha Contra Bandidos*) and cleaned the Sierra del Escambray of guerrillas in 1961, would be the ideal bulwark

against this malignant insurgency. However, the reality falls far short of this. The government combats the *Sendero* with police, making Peru one of the few countries in the world that uses police against rural guerrillas.

Peru has three police forces: the *Guardia Civil* (street police), the *Guardia Republicana* (which guards the borders, prisons and official buildings), and the *Policia Investigadora Peruana* (the detective or investigative service referred to as the "PIP"). One Peruvian military observer openly admits that the Peruvian police are "not prepared to fight guerrillas. They are not prepared in training. They are not prepared in weapons. They are not prepared psychologically." Armed primarily with a motley collection of 1903 Springfields, Model 98 Mausers, M1 Garands and U.S. carbines for rifles, and Colt and Smith & Wesson .38 revolvers and .45 ACPs, Peru's police forces are woefully ill prepared to snuff out the *Sendero* insurgency.

One reason for the conspicuous absence of Peruvian regular army forces in this struggle is that the nature of guerrilla warfare — hit-and-run tactics by rugged fighters operating from within jungle or mountain areas — has historically proven resistant to conventional military tactics. More importantly, however, according to one military observer, "The army chiefs don't want to go in. If things go badly, they will be blamed. They are also suffering from the criticism they received during 12 years of military rule. They want the government to beg them on bended knee." Unfortunately, the present democratic government has no intention of calling on the military to fight the guerrillas. Peru's last freely elected government before 1980 was toppled by a military coup not long after the army wiped out the last significant guerrilla campaign in the country.

As a compromise to direct involvement, the army provides trucks and the air force helicopters. Choppers are useful for patrol and for transporting police to places difficult to reach via land routes. But because of the high altitudes at which the choppers must operate in the Ayacucho area (sometimes more than 12,000 feet), their carrying capacity is limited to between six and eight men on each flight. The government is also obtaining new materiel for police, ranging from light infantry weapons to communications equipment. This includes long-range rifles, fragmentation grenades, tents, sleeping bags and raincoats. Such outlays by the government for materiel put a heavy strain on Peru's already fragile economy.

During the 1965 guerrilla outbreaks, a special unit called *Sinchis* was set up and trained specifically for counter guerrilla fighting. In some areas, the *Sinchis*, distinguished by their red berets, are once again in action against guerrillas. Their commander in Ayacucho, General Rivera, is a veteran of the 1965 campaign who is well-versed in guerrilla tactics. Before this present command he was director of the *Guardia's*

School for Officials. Rivera took command in Ayacucho on 8 April 1982 and soon gave the police what he calls "a more dynamic, more energetic phase." In layman's terms that translates to getting the police out of the barracks and after the guerrillas. He uses *Sinchis* and men of the *Servicios Especiales*, Lima's riot police, for search-and-destroy missions, though the usefulness of urban riot police in a mountain setting is clearly open to criticism.

Two hot spots of *Sendero* terror are Ayacucho and Lima. As the intellectual wellspring of the *Sendero Luminoso*, Ayacucho is patrolled by several thousand khaki- and green-uniformed *Guardias Civiles* and blue-bereted, camouflage-suited *Guardias Republicanas*. In front of the *Comandancia* of the *Guardia Civil* — now the headquarters for all police in this city of 80,000 — stand *tanquetas*, armored vehicles, and a bus protected by wire mesh.

In Ayacucho, Lima and other cities, the government has gone so far as to decree states of emergency, suspend some constitutional rights and impose curfews. The government has also sought to tighten control over the sale of weapons and dynamite. In February 1982, the government finally passed an anti-terrorist decree which clearly defined terrorist activities and set forth prison penalties for participating in them (10 to 20 years), providing weapons or funds (10 to 15 years), or supporting them (5 to 10 years).

Since September 1985 there have been no official communiqués issued regarding activities in the 19 provinces that constitute the government's emergency zone. Peru's newly elected government, headed by the charismatic Alan Garcia of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), has chosen to put a lid on press information regarding *Sendero* attacks. As a result, this little-known insurgency has all but disappeared from the international press. Garcia hopes that by denying the *Sendero* access to the media, these terrorists will decide that negotiating with the government is the only alternative for gaining popular appeal for their cause.

To facilitate this reconciliation with the



Increased *Sendero*-inspired violence in Peruvian cities has forced authorities to impose curfews. This known *Senderista* member is body-searched when found after hours on the streets of Lima.



Two captured *Senderistas* at the scene of their ambush of a government official cooperate with police in reconstructing the murder. Concealing their faces is imperative to avoid bloody retribution from other *Sendero Luminoso* members.

government, Garcia has established a Peace Commission whereby amnesty is granted to any terrorist who agrees to lay down his arms and enter into a dialogue with the government through the Commission. To date, the government claims that more than 150 terrorists and *campesino* sympathizers have been granted amnesty under this new plan. As a reciprocal show of goodwill, Garcia has personally forced the resignation of 369 police officers convicted of committing atrocities against the opposition. These recent developments are hardly enough to proclaim the new government initiative a success, but it is a hopeful start.

The question still remains as to whether the Peruvian army could bring a swift end to

the terrorist activities of the *Sendero Luminoso* if given a free hand. The Uruguayan army did an effective job of routing out the *Tupamaros*, as did the Argentine army against their terrorists. As a result, both of these countries are still relatively free of organized terrorist activity.

Aside from the problems already mentioned concerning bringing the Peruvian army into the fray, there is yet another handicap that exists *within* the ranks — a wide language barrier between the officers and troops. That is, Peruvian military officers speak Spanish while the lower echelon troops speak either of the two highland Indian languages, Quechua or Aymara. This inherent lack of cohesiveness makes it extremely difficult to counter guerrilla tactics, when disciplined coordination and split-second timing are often the first line of defense against terrorist groups who can assemble and disperse almost at will.

Until Peru's economy emerges from its doldrums and financial opportunity supplants revolutionary idealism as a viable means for effecting social mobility and change, democratic institutions in Peru will continue to struggle against fanatics of both the left and the right who view democracy as politically impotent.

Alan Garcia and future democratic leaders of Peru will have their hands full suppressing violent rebellion among their constituents. They deserve our full support in making their fellow Peruvians confident that democracy is the only way to accommodate opposing political views without succumbing to anarchy or totalitarian rule. ✕

NIGHT ACTION IN LIMA

"The bastards are usually in full session by nine o'clock." The intelligence captain swerved his dilapidated Volkswagen beetle to narrowly miss a kamikaze Toyota as we hurtled down a Lima boulevard toward the scene of the evening's adventure. He continued: "They come once or twice a week and work until midnight."

"How did you find this bunch?" I asked him, bracing myself as we careened around a corner. "Must have been tough. I hear *Sendero* cell organization security is very tight."

The little captain grinned, clenching a fine Havana cigar in his teeth. "The old woman who runs the boarding house has a cousin next door who hates her and she was turned in. Seems the old woman ran off with her boyfriend 20 years ago, and the wound has festered all the while!"

We turned into a quiet side street, away from the turmoil of the main avenue, and traveled a few more blocks. Nodding toward a two-story colonial building, he dropped the Toyota into low

gear and we took a hard look. "They meet on the second floor. The uniformed police will break the main door in." He motioned toward the ornate old wooden door, "and my guys will be at the back door, on the next street over. We should get most of them."

We drove once by the back side of the boarding house as he nodded at the surveillance — an old man selling candy, popcorn and soft drinks out of a little stand. "He's mine," a retired *Guardia*. He used to work for my father, years ago."

"This is a *Sendero Luminoso* school. I want the teacher real bad. The students won't be so interesting, but the teacher will be more than a cell leader and he might well know something." The captain puffed reflectively on his Havana cigar. "Their security is pretty good and most of the jerks we get don't know nothing."

At nine that night we were back in the neighborhood. Surveillance was up on both entrances. The front door post was in a closed van parked a half-block up

Continued on page 83

MADDEN'S MOUNTAIN PAK

by William B. Guthrie



Madden's soft pack is sturdy, roomy and can be custom fit — a good combination for the outdoorsman.



A disadvantage of soft packs is the amount of weight they put on the spine. Madden's generous padding helps minimize this problem.

MADDEN'S Mountain Pak is a good example of the way commercial gear manufacturers make life easier for the outdoorsman. The Mountain Pak embodies all the characteristics the buyer should look for in a large, soft pack for general outdoor use. It's comfortable: You can make your own custom fit (the pack can be adjusted to fit anyone from 5 feet to 6 feet 7 inches tall). Aluminum stays are removable and can be shaped to individual spinal curvature, and there are seven levels at which the shoulder straps can be fixed. Padding is dense and thick, and protects the wearer from hard or sharp objects in the load.

Mountain Pak's most important feature, as it should be for any pack of this nature, is that it easily holds a lot of gear. A simple open sack forms the body of the pack, so large and bulky objects can be accommodated. Single-compartment packs tend to swallow small objects, so outside pockets are attached to the sides and top flap of the Mountain Pak. Full-zip side pockets hold over 400 cubic inches of knives, toothbrushes, flashlights or det cord, and the top flap pocket is a compact 3x7x12 inches — enough for most kinds of rain gear, or lunch and a first-aid kit. The top flap pocket is zipped front and rear to allow access from either side. It's backed by an inside-the-pack pocket that's closed by a full-length hook-and-pile fastener and nylon coil zipper, offering plenty of room to safely store documents, maps, traveler's checks or anything else which is small and vulnerable to moisture.

Though the Mountain Pak is comfortable and carries more gear than you should have on most trips, it also has a few disadvantages inherent to soft packs. Its sturdy construction and numerous adjustment features pile up considerable weight. At over five pounds, it's heavier than many winter sleeping bags. Although the aluminum stay support system allows the weight to fit correctly along your back for improved balance and reduced load sway, you bear the burden all along your back instead of at the strong points of shoulders and hips. This makes soft packs hot, and most agree that they carry heavy weights less comfortably than a frame pack. Madden, like most producers of premium packs, has diminished these effects by using thicker pads at the hips to push the sack away from the back, and by wrapping the hips in a 6-inch-wide girdle of ¾-inch foam to carry the load with the straight bones and heavy muscles of the legs. A horizontal, adjustable chest strap holds the shoulder straps securely in position.

If you need a soft pack, the Madden is an excellent choice. Madden has modified the drawbacks of soft packs and accentuated their strengths in its Mountain Pak. It's big, sturdy and convenient, and at \$240, the Mountain Pak is also competitively priced. ❧

MADDEN MOUNTAIN PAK

Volume:	5,075 cubic inches in large size (extension sleeve adds 925 cubic inches).
Construction:	Top-opening sack, drawstring-closed. Opening covered by adjustable-height flap.
Suspension:	Seven-position, adjustable-length shoulder straps attached across chest by adjustable strap, all mounted to frame stay sleeves. Aluminum stays hold pack shape. Padded hip strap bears most of weight when properly adjusted.
Features:	Large top flap pocket, flat document pocket, fully-zipped side pockets, top flap tie strap slots, compression straps which stabilize smaller loads, two ice axe loops, ski slots behind side pockets.
Materials:	Waterproofed 1000-denier fabric, Fastex quick-release hardware, YKK coil zippers, 1-inch nylon webbing.
Colors:	Green-black and grey-black (camouflage and other colors available on special order).
Weight:	5 pounds, 6 ounces.
Manufacturer:	Madden USA, Dept. SOF, 2400 Central Ave., Boulder, CO 80301.
Phone:	(303) 442-5828.
Price:	\$240.

by William B. Guthrie

POCKET knife seems a misnomer in most cases. Good knives rarely fit the pocket, and the little folding tools that fit in the pocket rarely resemble knives. The standard Swiss Army knife is a good example of the syndrome: Its blade is hard to sharpen, easy to dull, bends with little provocation, and is bound to close on the fingers at the worst possible time. Yet, it's hard to find a hunter or soldier who doesn't carry one, just because it has such fine scissors and corkscrew. Real cutting is best left to the Ka-Bar. Despite the pocket knife's heritage of failure, some manufacturers persist in trying to make blades that fold. One contender for the title of world's most serious pocket knife is the Cold Steel Shinobu.

Shinobu is the name of three folding knives of similar construction. They are all made of the same stainless laminate as the Cold Steel Master Tanto, and they all share a blade-profile and grind nearly identical to that of the standard Tanto. Shinobu handles are composed of a formed stainless-steel sheet liner mounted around a backstrap ground from stainless bar-stock. Grip panels are molded from a dense, somewhat resilient black plastic called Thermorun. This thermoplastic is much harder than the handle material of the fixed-blade Tantos, because the grip material of the Shinobu is part of the structural strength of the knife and is cast onto perforations in the handle's liner for a strong bond between handle and scales. (Flexible handle materials and rivets can be a weak combination, since plastic flexes and rivets are relatively rigid.)

The three Shinobus are nearly identical, except for size. They come in blade lengths of 1¾, 2¾ and 3¾ inches, weighing .9, 2.6 and 5.5 ounces respectively. Aside from size, they are all virtually identical, except for certain strengthening features on the largest knife. The 3¾-inch blade Shinobu has relatively larger bearing surfaces and a stiffer lock-release spring (to lessen the risk of the blade closing during use), and incorporates a washer system around the blade axle to minimize movement between the blade and the handle — a problem with most larger folders.

The new Shinobu line is sound in concept and careful in execution. The knives are relatively light, incredibly strong and the fit between blade and handle rivals that of fixed-blade designs. The only conceivable criticisms are against the preservation of the armor-piercing point from the fixed-blade Tantos (at least in the small- and medium-sized knives) and the almost ridiculous size of the 1¾-inch knife. As impractical as these aspects may seem, it must be admitted that when the box of test samples arrived at SOF offices, the smallest knives disappeared first and were produced from more pockets later, and the relatively obtuse

COLD STEEL'S TANTO FOLDERS



Cast in the mold of Cold Steel's Master Tanto, the three Shinobu pocket folders — in 3¾-, 2¾- and 1¾-inch blade lengths — keep a good cutting edge and rate a 10 on corrosion resistance.

angle of the blade point should keep the Shinobu from acquiring the usual accidentally angled tip of a Swiss Army knife.

The first surprise the Shinobu offers is its cutting ability and edge-retention. They are up to the standard of good carbon blades. Owners of ordinary 440C-bladed pocket knives will also be surprised at the ease with which the Shinobus re-sharpen.

The next surprise is the Shinobu's stain and corrosion resistance. Since every part is stainless steel or plastic, there's nothing to rust under normal conditions. One SOF test blade suffered ten days of kayak-camping on the California coast without ever being

oiled and without ever being cleaned in anything but seawater, and there was no spot of rust anywhere on the knife.

The smallest Shinobu makes a fine and moderately-priced folding knife that will fit in dress slacks or work clothes without wearing a hole in the pocket. And the big Shinobu works as much like a fixed-blade knife as any knife that folds. But — to get back to our original problem of how a useful knife can fit in a pocket — the 2¾-inch blade model is a successful compromise of fixed-blade function in a useful blade length, that can still be carried in a pocket. The middle-sized Shinobu is just right.

Small, medium and large Shinobu folding knives are available for \$24.95, \$59.95 and \$79.95 respectively, from Cold Steel, Inc., Dept. SOF, 2128 Knoll Dr., Unit D, Ventura, CA 93003. Telephone customers may call toll free: (800) 255-4716. ✂

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SOF

ARVN IN LAOS

Continued from page 67

of Laos. Here again, though, U.S. airpower saved the day after the ARVN armored convoy was halted by the NVA east of FSB Bravo, several kilometers west of the South Vietnamese border. The use of U.S. airpower — including C-130 transports dropping immense "Daisy Cutter" fuel-air explosive bombs — proved decisive. The 1st Armored reached South Vietnam on 23 March.

As the 1st Armored was making its escape, U.S. helicopters were lifting out the remaining flank guard forces. On 23 March, the last elements of ARVN's 1st Marine Division were airlifted out. Except for two battalion-sized airmobile raids against North Vietnamese supply caches in Laos's Base Area 611 on 31 March and 6 April, Operation Lam Son 719 was over.

Lam Son's Aftermath

For the U.S. military, Lam Son 719 was the last major military operation of the war involving ground forces. It was also the high watermark of U.S. helicopter operations. During the two months of the offensive, the 101st Airborne (responsible for helicopter support for the entire offensive) controlled about 600 helicopters.

Even ARVN's limited operational success would have been impossible without the tactical range of U.S. helicopters. Combat assaults were carried out 45 kilometers into Laos. The NVA's air defenses were broad and intense, but fortunately for ARVN and U.S. helicopter crews, they were not very sophisticated. The NVA relied on massed deployment of 12.7mm heavy machine guns. There was also widespread use of 37mm and 57mm AA guns, many of the latter radar-aimed. ZU-23 twin-barrel 23mm anti-aircraft guns saw some of their first combat action in Vietnam during Lam Son 719.

While Lam Son 719 certainly disrupted the North Vietnamese build-up in Laos and pre-empted any chance of an offensive against I Corps in 1971, it appears that it proved of little lasting effect. The NVA launched its multi-divisional offensive into three of South Vietnam's four military regions in the spring of 1972.

The overall plan of the operation was certainly consistent with U.S. operational thinking, and in this, as in so many things, everything the ARVN knew had been learned from the U.S. Army. While it temporarily prevented ARVN armor from being cut off, the decision to consolidate the position at Objective Aloui also precluded a swift blow at Tchepone before NVA reserve units could be committed to battle.

Advancing on basically a one-tank frontage, with an increasingly long and vulnerable supply line that required more and more of the total invasion force to defend, it was not surprising that 1st Armor could not fight its way through to Tchepone. The limitations of road-bound armored forces in

difficult terrain have been seen many times, especially in Vietnam. Because these forces had to contend with opposing combined-arms forces, including North Vietnamese tanks, it made their inclusion necessary, but their use more difficult.

Lam Son 719 showed a glimpse of the future development of the Vietnam War. The failure of much of the South Vietnamese effort in their first major independent operation was certainly a bad sign, a prophetic one. It showed the limitations of ARVN capabilities, which endured despite the hopes of "Vietnamization." The scenario would be repeated again in 1972 and for a last time in 1975.

ARVN's inability to operate successfully without direct U.S. support — advisers, helicopters, airpower — became painfully clear in Lam Son 719. The NVA's skillful use of armor and artillery was again a glimpse of future fighting in Vietnam, culminating on 30 April 1975, when Soviet-built T-55s from the NVA's 203rd Tank Regiment battered through the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon. It wasn't a "people's army" of anti-imperialist farmers in black pajamas crusading for self-determination that marched into Saigon. It was a hard-bitten professional army that had adapted to the use of armor, artillery, air defense and combined arms without ever forsaking its true building block: the light infantryman. The shape it took in 1975 —

and maintains to this day — was seen in Lam Son 719.

DEWEY CANYON II

[The following is by Keith William Nolan, author of "Battle for Hué," "Death Valley" and "Into Laos: The Story of Dewey Canyon II/ Lam Son 719," all published by Presidio Press in Novato, CA.]

No matter how history judges the outcome of Lam Son 719 — the 1971 incursion into Laos by the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) — there can be no argument that the ARVN troops would have suffered much more than they did had it not been for the valorous performance of the U.S. Army helicopter crews who flew support through skies electrified with antiaircraft fire. A less dramatic role also was played in Operation Dewey Canyon II by U.S. ground troops of the 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Infantry Division, reinforced by units from the 101st Airborne and the Americal Divisions. It was to be the last major ground campaign by U.S. troops in Vietnam.

In Dewey Canyon II, Uncle Sam's ground troops were tasked with a number of demanding missions that laid the groundwork for the ARVN push into Laos to destroy supplies for the North

Vietnamese Army (NVA). Their first mission was to advance west along Route 9 from the 1/5 Mech basecamp at Quang Tri to the abandoned LZ Vandegrift and reopen it as a fire support base and supply point.

Once this was accomplished, the mech task force was to move on to the deserted airstrip on the Khe Sanh plateau, which would become the main supply point for Lam Son 719. Its next task was to set up U.S. artillery batteries right along South Vietnam's northwest border, to provide fire support for the ARVN offensive into Laos. The final mission was to disrupt the local NVA forces so supply convoys could move unimpeded from Quang Tri to Vandegrift and Khe Sanh. From these two points, the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army helicopters would ferry supplies to ARVN columns inside Laos.

Operation Dewey Canyon II kicked off at 0400 hours on 29 January 1971, when 1/77 Armor (1/5 Mech) rumbled out of the dawn fog around Quang Tri toward Vandegrift. Infantry units were airmobiled along Route 9 and onto the Khe Sanh airstrip. Combat engineers worked to repair downed bridges along the route. By 31 January, the road was open all the way to the Laotian border.

The NVA never massed to cut this supply line, but they did carry out

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harassment operations when the opportunity arose. For example, the NVA launched daily rocket attacks from the forested ridgelines around LZ Vandegrift. Dismounted patrols from the 1/77 Armor and 1/61 Mech made contact in the foothills and the 4/3 Infantry (American) was helicoptered in. It was a trying operation for these grunts. From 12-18 February, Alpha Company 4/3 fought along the jungled spines. Two of its platoon leaders were seriously wounded in Claymore ambushes and six other Americans from that unit went home in body bags.

The days were scorching, the nights atop the misty ridges freezing, and medevacs and resupply ships sometimes had to lay off because of NVA mortar barrages. Most of the U.S. infantrymen involved were newbie draftees who had seen little or no combat. Some froze in fear and others refused orders to advance. In at least a couple of incidents, enlisted men were arrested for fragging officers.

It should be noted, however, that most Americans did the best they could.

On the last day of the Alpha Company skirmish, Staff Sergeant Jack Kegerreis walked point as his unit headed back toward some NVA positions. Right behind him was First Lieutenant John Dewing, the only surviving platoon leader. The point man spotted a spider hole and rushed it. A bareheaded NVA

popped up before "Keg" could reach it and blazed away with his AK-47. The staff sergeant was knocked backward from the impact of AK rounds hitting his flak jacket and drilling into his arm. As Keg fell into Dewing, a ricochet round drilled into Dewing's hip. Dewing fell with a grenade in his hand, frantically jerked the pin and tossed the frag into the hole as the NVA dropped down to reload. No sooner had the grenade neutralized this immediate threat than NVA mortar rounds started exploding around the American position. A medevac put down on a bald knoll atop the nearest ridge. Dewing and Kegerreis were awarded the Silver Star.

In another incident on 28 February, the NVA began lobbing mortar rounds into the high ground around Vandegrift. As rounds began exploding inside his platoon's night laager, Spec. 5 Larry White, a tank commander in A Troop, 3/5 Cavalry, found himself barefoot and terrified in the turret of his Sheridan tank, firing a .50 caliber into the darkness. His driver and gunner fired M16s from the rear deck of the parked tank. An RPG round blasted through the turret ring, killing White's loader and peppering White's feet with shrapnel. A second RPG round blew the gunner off the rear deck, minus a foot. The driver threw down his weapon and bolted for a sand-bagged mortar pit. A third rocket killed a platoon leader who was running toward

White's tank.

Now NVA troops began running into the camp. Five suddenly came into focus in the flarelight. White immediately stitched them with a sweeping burst from the fifty. A sixth NVA emerged from the grass, drawing back to hurl a satchel charge. White dropped him in his tracks. White later was awarded the Silver Star.

While the grunts fought along the ridgelines, supply convoys from the Da Nang Support Command rolled down Route 9 around the clock. Morale problems that became evident in infantry units late in the war were exacerbated among these support units. The aroma of marijuana mixed with diesel fumes as the convoy snaked along, a few GIs hunched over steering wheels with the gaunt, hollow-eyed stare of heroin addiction.

But most of the truckers worked hard and served, whether the road was choked with hot dust or mired in red mud. They saw to it that supplies got through. But their efforts were not without cost. Occasionally, NVA RPG teams slipped down to the roadside brush. Almost every day 122 rockets slammed into Vandegrift and the truckers who were trying to grab a few winks under their vehicles had to scramble for a bunker.

Combat intensity increased in March, as support elements fought to keep

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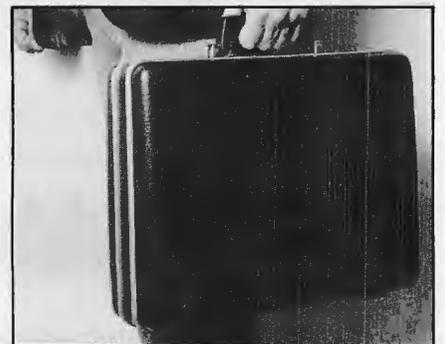
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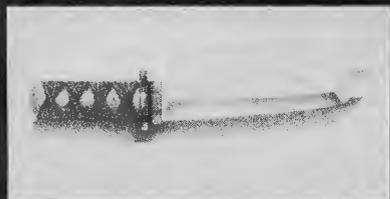
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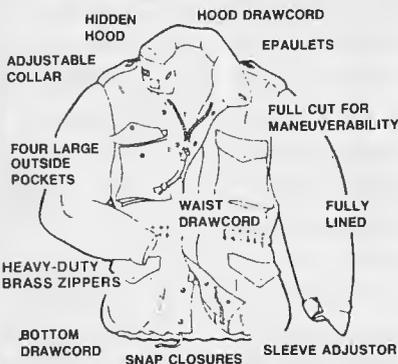
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Route 9 open for the ARVN withdrawal from Laos. At the same time, 2/94 Artillery (XXIV Corps) attempted to evacuate its isolated firebases on the border. Enemy artillery barrages from Laos and ambushes on the main road behind them left two batteries pinned down. The 1/1 Cav (Americal) was sent in to help. But for a variety of reasons — primarily inexperienced leadership — morale was at a crisis point in this armored cavalry squadron.

On 20 March, A Troop, 1/1 Cav led the way down Route 9 and drove right into a withering crossfire from entrenched NVA troops. Some GIs fought bravely, others panicked; all were confused and scared. The unit made a hasty, chaotic retreat. They then received orders to regroup for a counterattack. The dazed and exhausted grunts collectively refused to advance.

That afternoon the 1/77 Armor was also dispatched from Vandegrift down Ambush Alley to rescue the besieged artillerymen in the 2/94. The battalion commander of the 1/77 Armor, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Meyer, fired a .50 caliber from the turret of the lead tank as his column cut a dusty path down Route 9. The NVA popped away at the tank column with RPGs and small arms. GIs died as tanks and tracks shuddered with hits, but they broke through to the isolated firebases. Then, with artillerymen hanging from the back of tank decks, the armored column fought its way out again.

Most U.S. forces pulled back to Quang Tri with relative ease. But the NVA did disrupt the efforts to dismantle and evacuate the positions at Khe Sanh. Despite the aggressive efforts of 3/187 Infantry (101st Airborne) in the mountains around the airbase, the NVA were able to shell the airbase on an hourly basis.

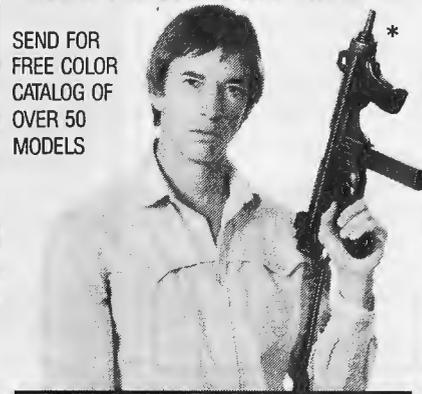
On the night of 22-23 March, an elite NVA sapper team slipped the wire at Khe Sanh and raced into a bunkerline manned by D Troop, 2/7 Air Cav (101st Airborne). They tossed satchel charges into the base's ammo and fuel depot, setting off a spectacular sound and light show.

The NVA victory would have been complete were it not for the never-say-die tenacity of Spec. 4 Michael Fitzmaurice, an unassuming young guy in Delta Troop. Twice the NVA sappers tossed satchel charges into his bunker; twice he pitched them back out to explode on open ground. A third satchel charge was tossed in and — unable to throw it out — Fitzmaurice threw himself on it to save his buddies.

The explosion was muffled beneath his body and the fully zipped flak jacket. His stunned buddies didn't believe what they saw next. Jumping up, with his body riddled by shrapnel and bleeding from his mouth, nose and ears, Fitz-

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maurice grabbed an M16 and scrambled from the bunker into the communications trench, from which the sappers were raising hell.

Uh-oh. The NVA had pissed off Fitzmaurice.

The ragged and bloody GI shot two NVA dead. Out of ammo, Fitzmaurice tossed away the rifle and grabbed a machete to return to his work. He slashed and sliced three more NVA sappers in furious hand-to-hand combat. The NVA foolish enough not to flee the trench and the enraged American were hacked to death.

Fitzmaurice was awarded the only Medal of Honor for the operation.

By the first week of April 1971, the U.S. Army had completely withdrawn from Khe Sanh, Vandegrift and all their other temporary positions near Laos. They left them as shell-pocked and littered ghost towns, just like the U.S. Marines had left these exact same positions when they were withdrawn two years earlier. The operation to support the ARVN thrust into Laos turned out to be the last major ground campaign for the U.S. Army in Vietnam, one in which over 220 Americans were killed. ✕

FRENCH PARAS

Continued from page 45

This battle of attrition around Hoa Binh tied up French reserves and left other areas vulnerable, especially the Red River Delta. In an attempt to hold critical outposts, mobile airborne combat teams under perhaps the three best airborne colonels — Gilles, Bigeard, and Langlais — were shifted from trouble spot to trouble spot to reinforce threatened areas. These airborne combat teams often functioned as mobile groups, but the Colonial Paras were kept busy with reinforcement jumps as well. During 1952, for example, the 2nd BPC jumped into Hoa Binh on 8 January; the 3rd BPC into Thanh Huong on 4 September and then into Phat Diem on 11 October; and the 6th BPC into Tu Le on 16 October and into Ban Som, Thailand on 27 December.

The jump by the 6th BPC into Tu Le was the beginning of one of the most heroic episodes involving the Colonial Paras in Indochina. This final battle for the T'ai Highlands began in October, and Bigeard's 6th Colonial were dropped to fight a rear guard action while other troops evacuated their positions and pulled back. By 17 October the 6th were already in combat against heavy odds, but they held at Tu Le until 20 October, giving many of the other garrisons in the Highlands time to pull back. When the 6th finally began their own retreat on 20 October, their progress was slowed because they were carrying many of their wounded — being taken prisoner by the Viet Minh

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was a fate not to be endured. During the retreat, the 6th were hit hard by ambushes — nearly three-fifths of the battalion was lost during the retreat — but Bigeard's leadership kept them a cohesive fighting force and most made it out alive.

As the situation in the T'ai Highlands worsened, Operation Lorraine was launched on 29 October 1952 in an attempt to destroy the main communist supply depots and stall their offensive. On 9 November 1952, Airborne Group No. 1, consisting of the 3rd Colonial Paras and two Legion para battalions (a total of more than 2,350 men), was dropped over Phu Doan, which they seized with little opposition.

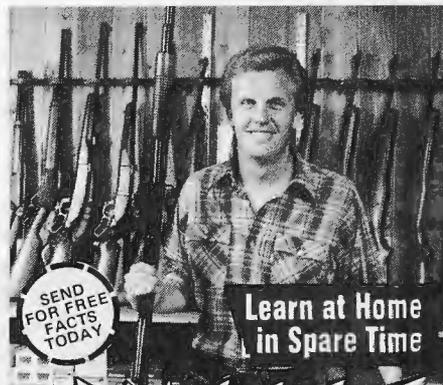
Meanwhile a large motorized force was advancing overland to link up with them. Phu Doan was, without a doubt, an important supply center; among the items captured were some of the first Russian trucks and weapons supplied to the Viet Minh. Once Airborne Group No. 1 had been joined by the mobile groups advancing overland, the drive continued, but it soon became obvious that Operation Lorraine was not stopping the Viet Minh from taking the T'ai Highlands. Consequently, the column was ordered to pull back. Despite ambushes during the retreat, the column returned to its starting point by 1 December. Once again it was shown that hitting supply areas would not stop what was essentially a non-mechanized guerrilla army.

As French-controlled territory in Indochina shrank in 1953, so did the number of airborne operations. Despite this, the year would see three major operations, including the largest jump of the war. The first of these was launched on 17 July 1953 at Lang Son to destroy Viet Minh depots. The 2nd BPC, along with Legion and Metro para units, carried out this jump.

On 20 November 1953, the French undertook their largest airborne operation of the war when 4,525 paras jumped to overtake the airstrip at Dien Bien Phu. Among the units taking part in the jump was the 1st BCP, as well as Legion and other para units. Most of the paras were pulled out after the seizure of the base and were replaced by infantrymen, but more paras would soon return.

On 31 January 1954, Dien Bien Phu came under communist artillery fire. For the next month and a half the fortress faced bombardment and probing attacks, but the real offensive began on 12 March 1954. The next day more than 3,500 paras jumped in to reinforce the garrison. Included in the reinforcements were the 1st and 6th BPCs. During the epic defense of Dien Bien Phu, Bigeard's 6th Colonial Paras played an especially heroic part as they carried out courageous counterattacks to regain strong points taken by the communists.

So critical were the paras to the defense of Dien Bien Phu, in fact, that command of the defenses effectively passed to the "Paratroop Mafia," which included Langlais and Bigeard. After the fall of Dien Bien Phu the remnants of the para battalions and other



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units marched into captivity, many of them never to return. Although there were one or two jumps by members of the GCMA (French equivalent of the U.S. Army Special Forces) after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the French war in Indochina was over. France and the Colonial Paras now had a new war to fight in Algeria.

The record of the Colonial Paras in Indochina was a heroic one. Their various units made well over 50 combat jumps: The 2nd Colonial Paras made 21 jumps and the 3rd Colonial Paras made 17 jumps. Because of the fierce battles in which they were deployed, many of the Colonial Para units were virtually wiped out—the 1st at Ba Vi, the 3rd at Na Cham, and the 6th at Mao Khe, to name a few.

Unlike U.S. airborne and airmobile troops in Vietnam, the Colonial and other paras couldn't count on helicopter gunships or even air support for their missions. Their M1A1 Carbines, MAT-49 SMGs and light machine guns served as their "backup."

Veterans of the Indochina Colonial Paratroops are justly proud of their record. Occasionally you can see a veteran of the old Colonials in a parade or an old paras' tavern. On his arm is likely to be a distinctive and garish Indochinese tattoo, usually a dragon, along with his para brevet and brevet serial number. And perched atop his graying head will be a worn red beret with the badge of the Colonial paratroops.

Meeting such a Colonial Para veteran is a rare honor. Most of them never came home from Indochina. ✘

SIEGE IN MOZAMBIQUE

Continued from page 51

taneously a cannon burst exploded in the ground in front of us. We dropped to the floor and crawled to a vantage point. Three ZPU-4s opened up and the plane darted away. The pilots were known to be battle-shy and after the first pass would fly so high that they had no chance of using their bombs and cannon with accuracy.

Night fell and Chalton turned up from the front line, having put the Frelimo defenders under effective siege. After his first attack had been held, he decided to starve them out, wearing them down in the meantime by aggressive probing and mortar bombardment. Almerigo and I wolfed down some rice which had been prepared over a fire in the garden of our house and then curled up on the ground and fell asleep. It had been a long day.

The next morning we consulted with Ricardo. Should we stay and see the siege through or should we go on with the next stage of our trip? A check on the date decided for us. We were running out of time, and at 0730 Ricardo, Almerigo, our small escort and I wound our way back the way we had come, and on to Gorongosa and our

meeting with Afonso Dhlakama.

Five days of interviewing Dhlakama confirmed the conclusions we had already drawn from our journey: The general view of Renamo is wrong. Far from consisting of disparate murdering bands of robbers feared by the people, it is a well-organized guerrilla army, effectively led, and operating with the full support of the civilian population. How else could Renamo control some 80 percent of Mozambique?

Mozambicans want to be rid of the Frelimo regime and its collective farms, public floggings and chronic shortages — and that's the key to Renamo's success. With a bit of luck, it will be the key to its eventual victory.

MOZAMBIQUE AFTER MACHEL

Samora Machel, Mozambique's Marxist dictator since 1975, was killed along with 33 others in October 1986, when his Soviet-piloted and -supplied aircraft crashed into a rainswept South African hillside.

Without Machel, the Frelimo ruling party is left in a very exposed position and speculation suggests that collapse, if not imminent, is inevitable. Serious questions arise as to whether Frelimo can survive without massive external military and economic support, and if such support will be forthcoming.

Renamo has stepped up its military activity to further complicate Frelimo's position. Renamo's current strategy centers around isolating the large cities of Maputo and Beira and cutting land links between Mozambique and its neighbors. It already controls the vital internal road network. Its troop strength is at an all-time high, with some 25,000 soldiers in permanent action.

Frelimo is growing nervous and has asked the Russians and Cubans for weapons and more troops. During the past two years the number of MiG-21s has increased from 12 to 34 and Mi-25 helicopters from eight to 16. How much the ComBloc is willing to invest in the unpopular regime remains in question, especially in light of its major-league involvement in Angola. Mozambique has not been as well supported either in quantity or quality of equipment as the dos Santos regime on the other side of the continent.

South Africa, which the Mozambican government claims actively supports Renamo in violation of the Nkomati Accord, has warned Mozambique not to allow more foreign troops on its soil. Mozambique has in turn accused South Africa of massing troops on its border in preparation for an invasion, leaving the sides clearly defined and stalemated.

A political settlement between the warring factions seems unlikely, as Renamo has already indicated it is interested in talking only with the military leadership and not with the politicians. This makes a continuing military conflict — and eventual showdown — increasingly likely.

Who would win a clash of arms depends largely on how determined the backers of each side are to see the war to a victorious finish. Renamo suffers from equipment shortages, an ill-defined Western geopolitical strategy in southern Africa and worldwide ignorance of its plight. Frelimo's economic base is floundering, its party is in political upheaval, the morale of its army is disintegrating — and it lacks the vital aspect of popular support.

All factors considered, Renamo's chances of victory are better today than ever before. It remains to be seen if they can capitalize on their own successes.

— Tom Slizewski

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 22

CRAWL — Using the high or low crawl, move into cover while keeping your body as low as possible. Make good use of what protection you have available, keeping it between you and effective enemy fire.

OBSERVE — Look around or through — never over — your cover to locate the most immediate threat. If an enemy trooper saw you go to ground, he'll be waiting for you to pop your head over the top. Scan the area and locate your enemy's position: look for shape, shine, silhouette, movement, muzzle flash or smoke to give him away. Don't fire unless you've got a target, as that will give your position away, and will simply waste valuable ammo. Remember — at this point you don't know how many enemy troops you're facing or how long this fight will last.

SIGHTS — Judge target distance, set your sights and **AIM YOUR SHOTS!** One well-placed round may take out one ill-placed enemy trooper without giving your position away.

FIRE — Depending on the threat you're facing, decide on the rate of fire you'll use — high or low, single-shot or double-tap. Even if they're coming over the wire, *don't* go mad-minute rock 'n' roll. It wastes ammo and you rarely hit anything. If you have a target to engage, or at least a likely enemy position, aim low. Ricochets off the ground will do more damage than rounds zinging through the treetops.

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This kind of fire will produce enemy casualties, thus helping to keep you from becoming one. It's kill or be killed at this point.

Remember: DASH-DOWN-CRAWL-OBSERVE-SIGHTS-FIRE. Simply put — take cover and shoot. This sequence can be accomplished quickly and reflexively — if you practice it until it becomes second nature. It will help save your life, take the life of the enemy, and win the firefight.

Remember the recon patrol at the water hole? They executed their reaction drill quickly and aggressively and came out on top.

I know. It happened to me. ✕

FULL AUTO

Continued from page 25

siderations. But in general — with the exception of barrels, belts and magazines — your main concern should be with moving internal parts. Throw the right bits and pieces into your tool box and you'll be able to keep that rattle gun cranking no matter how close you come to the red line.

(Owners of Colt, Beretta, Heckler & Koch and some other manufacturers' weapons should be aware that those companies will not sell machine gun parts to individuals.)

The following is a list of reliable sources for components to older Title II firearms.

Dolf L. Goldsmith (WWI vintage: Maxim, Vickers, Lewis Gun), Dept. SOF, Suite 202, 800 Isom Road, San Antonio, TX 78216; Robert I. Landies (WWII: German and Soviet), Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 687, Chardon, OH 44024; Sarco, Inc., Dept. SOF, 323 Union Street, Stirling, NJ 07980; The Gun Parts Corp., Dept. SOF, West Hurley, NY 12491; Sherwood International Export Corp., Dept. SOF, 18714 Parthenia Street, Northridge, CA 91324. ✕

I WAS THERE

Continued from page 28

was, Cap'n Rat then squatted down and banged the um on the rail. There was a sudden epidemic of raised eyebrows and gaping mouths. With the second or third solid thump, the ashes broke free and fell out into the air. The breeze off the stern had picked up a little by that time, however, and instead of carrying the ashes off into the wind, they were blown back into the face of, and onto the uniform of, the skipper. With a hysterical look on his face he dropped the um onto the deck

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and furiously began brushing the ashes off himself.

Up until now, the crowd gathered for the ceremony had been doing a pretty good job of holding their laughter. It was, after all, a funeral. But seeing a company-grade commissioned officer doing what resembled the Charleston on the flight deck, and with an expression on his face that looked a lot like Don Knotts in "The Ghost and Mr. Chicken" to boot, was just too much. Laughter started and quickly became contagious. The crowd, the honor guard and pretty much everybody except the captain, the chaplain and the dead guy were in hysterics.

The chaplain, with a mixture of horror and disgust showing on his face, walked over, picked up the urn and tossed it overboard. That was that. The crowd gradually dispersed, laughing, mumbling and shaking their heads.

There wasn't too much fallout from the incident. Weapons Company was never again asked to participate in ceremonies of any kind, which wasn't all bad as far as I was concerned.

One thing did come of that little show, however. A lot of people, myself included, changed their minds about a burial at sea. ☒

SENDERO LUMINOSO

Continued from page 71

the street. Through their peephole the team had observed at least six males entering since sundown.

"We'll watch the back door," my cigar-chewing chauffeur told me as he stuck a vintage Walther P-38 9mm auto pistol in his belt. "The uniforms are going in the front door pretty soon. My guys will scoop up anybody that comes out the back. You stay with me, and do duck if there is any shooting. I would have a hell of a time explaining an American corpse on this operation! I might even have to say that you were with the *Senderos*." He blew an asphyxiating cloud of cigar smoke in my direction and smiled, "It might be the best story if you weren't in any shape to talk back."

The FM radio crackled with the announcement that the uniformed assault squad was about three minutes away. Turning the volume down on the radio, the captain pulled up to the old *Guardia's* candy stand. Watching the back door carefully we dismounted.

"See the truck?" The captain pointed at a Volvo one-tonner parked directly across from the target's door. "That's my Q-ship, full of people."

As we exchanged pleasantries with the old *Guardia*, four figures dismounted from the rear of the Volvo and scattered up the street, effectively cutting off any

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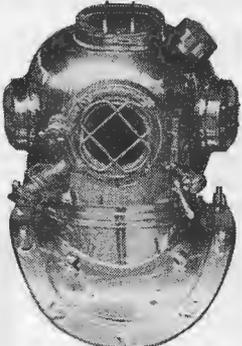
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avenues of escape.

"Come on, we're better off in this doorway," my host said. I grabbed a bottle of Coke from the candy stand and followed obediently into the shadows. He drew his P-38 and spoke softly into a handi-talkie. "Back and ready to go."

"We're moving," the voice on the radio replied. "We'll have the door down shortly."

Police cars raced in from both directions, blocking off the street as the uniformed officers burst through the front door. We heard shouts, a series of pistol shots, then a burst of submachine gun fire and more curses. The back door flew

open, a figure dashed out, closely followed by a cop. At full tilt the *Sendero* raced across the street toward us. The cop suddenly stopped and emptied his submachine gun at the *Sendero* — with the little captain and me directly in the line of fire!

A round shattered the Coke bottle in my hand, leaving me with a slashed wrist from the flying shards of glass. I threw myself on the ground.

The *Sendero* was down in the street. The captain ran over to him, coolly cold-cocking him with the P-38 as he tried to scramble up, and shouted at the pursuing cop, "Savage, imbecile, dumbshit, you

almost killed me. Put that gun away before I stick it up your ass!"

The other intelligence squad members ran up to help and I saw they were armed with Model 97 shotguns, an ideal weapon for dark encounters. I scrambled to my feet, doing a mental once-over that everything was okay, and walked over to appraise the catch. Surprisingly enough, the *Sendero* was not wounded; he had either slipped or thrown himself down.

"Throw this son of a bitch in the truck." The captain shined a light in the terrorist's face, revealing a well-dressed man of perhaps 35 years, with an educated look about him. "This is no worker. Perhaps he's a fucking intellectual. Who are you?"

The *Senderista* made no reply, throwing himself limply against his captors. The little captain, his blood up, caught the black hair of the terrorist and threw his head back, forcing the nasty snout of his P-38 into his mouth. "Talk or don't talk, son of a bitch. I kill you now or I kill you later."

I never did find out what happened to him.

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Still, inflation has been running be-

Continued on page 95

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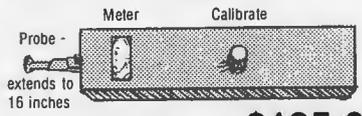
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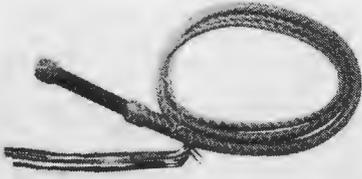
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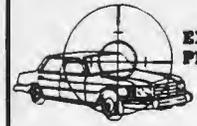
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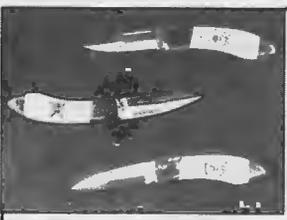
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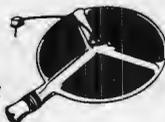
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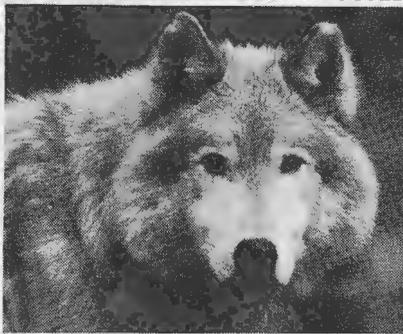
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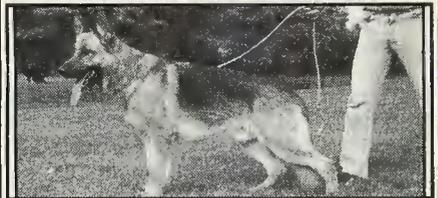
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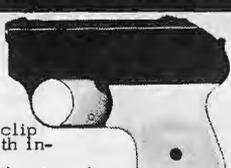
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Continued from page 84

tween 50 and 100 percent annually, labor is demanding wage hikes, unemployment and underemployment in Lima are estimated at 50 percent of the working force and per capita income in 1985 was at a level equal to that of 1965. The declining standard of living and the lack of hope for anything better provides a fertile breeding ground for anarchy, terrorism and violent change, and adds to the headaches of a government facing a growing insurrection.

The only alternative for many desperate *campesinos* is to become a part of the cocaine trade. Though not a guarantee of great wealth for everyone involved, it is a source of quick, hard cash for those engaged in the cultivation, processing or transportation of this "white gold."

Cultivation of the coca leaf has always been legal in Peru because cocaine has been a part of Peruvian culture for centuries. The highland Indians chew on the coca leaf to quell their hunger pains and brew it into the pleasant *mate de coca* tea as a remedy for upset stomach and altitude sickness. Indeed, there is a considerable legal market for extracts of the coca leaf, including the original recipe for Coca Cola and a wide variety of pharmaceutical products. Therefore, the cocaine processing laboratories buried deep in the jungles on the eastern side of the Andes mountains have become one

of Peru's few growth industries.

As the international market for cocaine has increased over the past ten years, unskilled laborers have left the economically stagnant villages and towns to seek work in the cocaine laboratories, where they earn substantially more than an ordinary farm or factory worker. Many observers have concluded that the government has refused to mount an energetic anti-cocaine campaign because this readily available source of income for Peruvians serves as a safety valve that prevents mass uprisings.

In the long run, however, failure to crack down on the cocaine trade will only further weaken the government. Because black market economies cannot be taxed, the government does not benefit from the cash generated by unregulated industries. More importantly, as illegal drug trafficking increases, a complex subculture evolves over time, one which operates independently of the government and legal system and, therefore, undercuts the authority of officially sanctioned institutions.

The existence of anarchistic groups like the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru is a sure sign that such a schism between public and private authority is in the making. Until trust in the government's ability to maintain order is established, that schism will continue to grow. ✕



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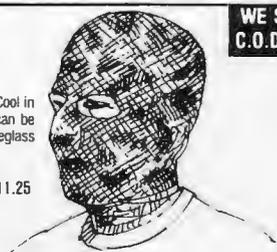
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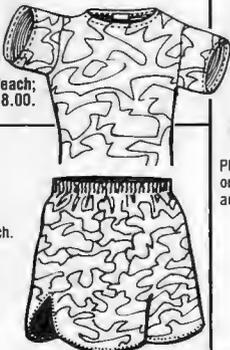
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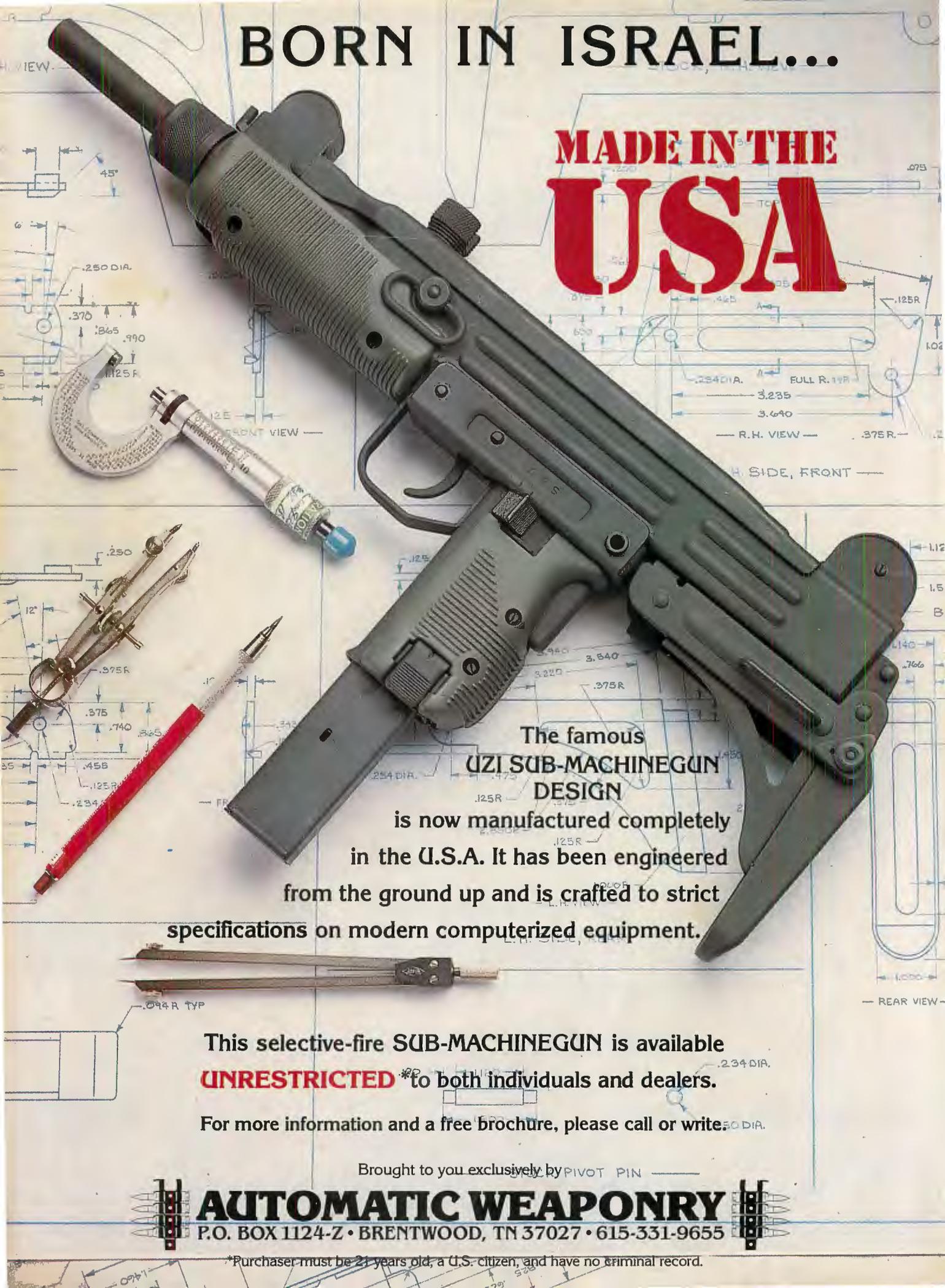
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