

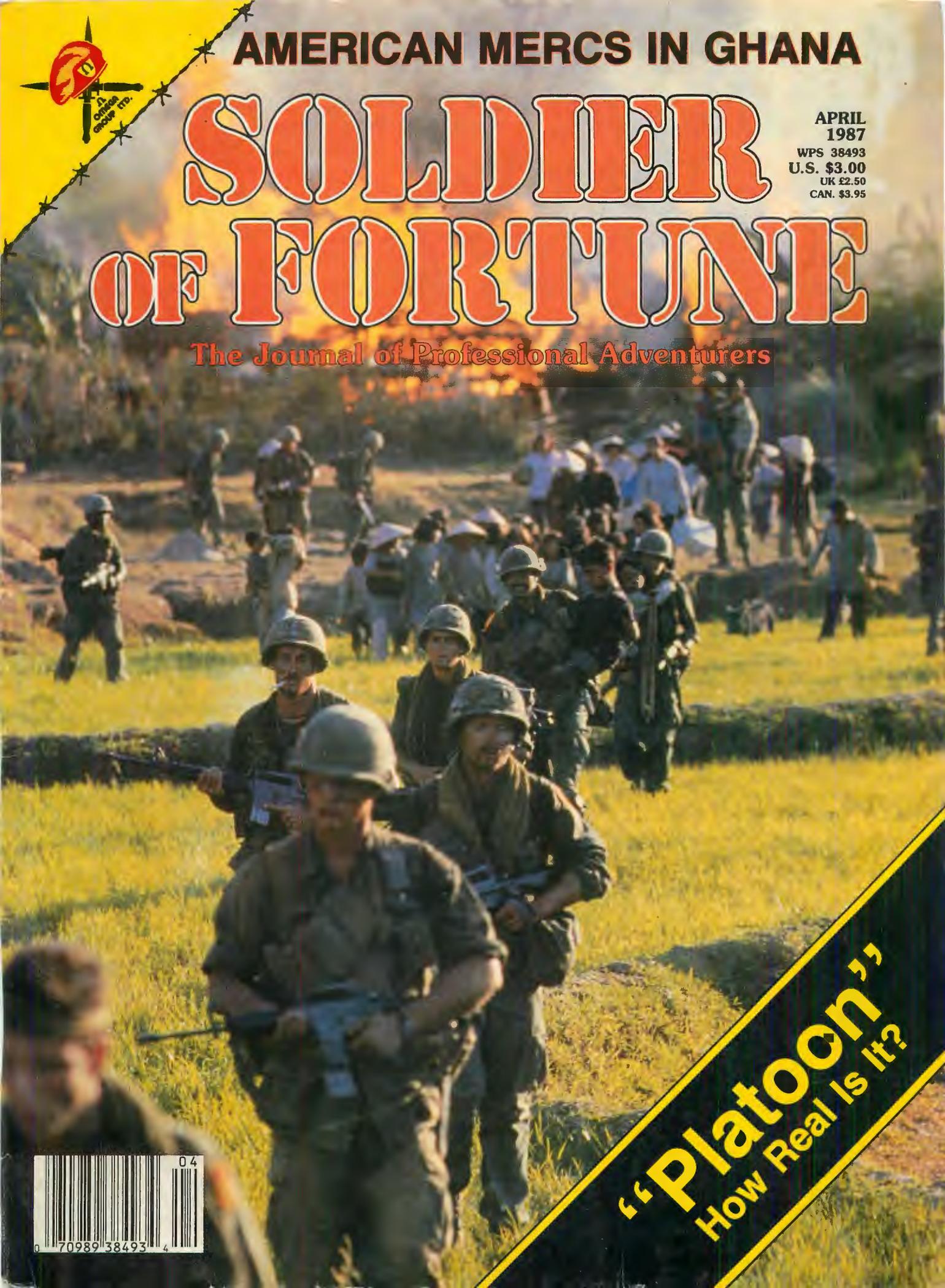


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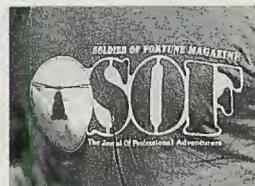
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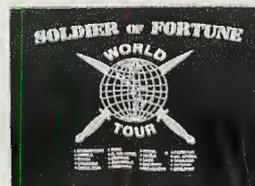
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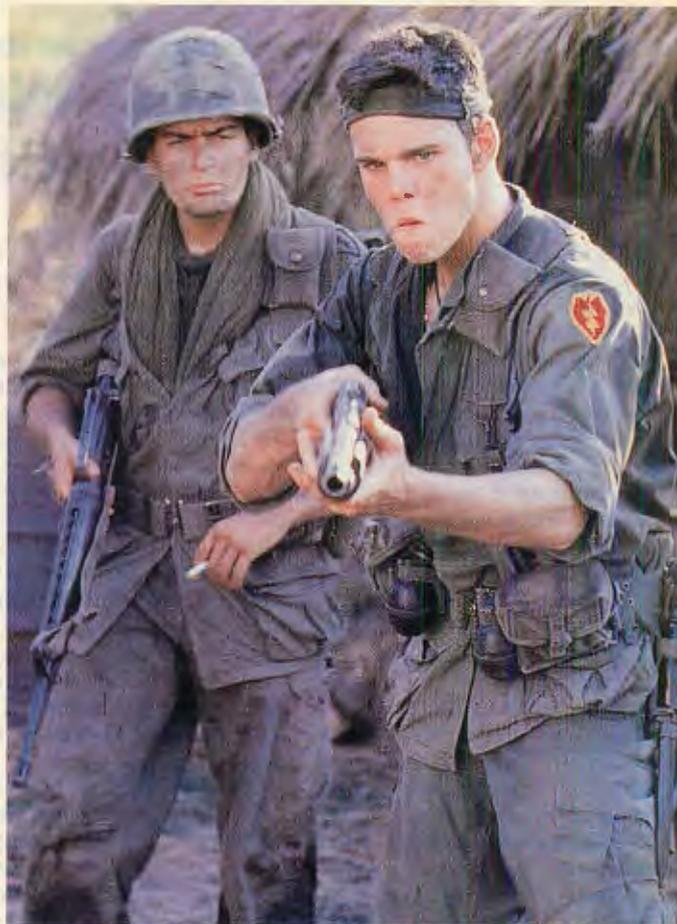
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COVER: "Platoon" — Hollywood's newest version of the Vietnam War. Critics love it. Many Vietnam vets hate it. Is "Platoon" just anti-war hype or is there more to it than that? See what SOF has to say on page 80 about this controversial movie. Photo: Ricky Francisco

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

OVER the last eleven years I've asked a great deal from my readers: support for anti-communist movements around the world; defending our right to keep and bear arms; backing local law enforcement; pushing for a strong national defense.

Aside from encouraging active participation in these issues, I've asked for help in more tangible ways: donating money and equipment to *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine's El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund, Refugee Relief International and Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund. Assisting individuals in need has also been a top priority — like helping out the family of Buzz Sawyer, the pilot who was killed while flying a contra resupply mission last October.

This extraordinary support has shown me that my readers are some of the real unsung heroes of this world. It has also inspired me to try to do more to further *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine's political

causes, such as serving on the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association, sending training teams to El Salvador and Honduras and continuing our efforts to bring home Americans still held prisoner in Southeast Asia. This added workload is a responsibility I accept without second thought or regret, and which I never take lightly.

However, the bottom line for the future success of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine and its special projects is a satisfied readership. That's why I'm asking for your help again.

It's not a difficult request, but it is an important one. I need to hear what *you* think of the magazine.

Your input in the form of letters to the editor has always helped shape our editorial policies and affected our decisions on what to print — and what to leave out. But I also realize that many people with good suggestions don't have time to sit down and write us.

That's why I've included a brief **READER SURVEY** in this issue. You'll see it again in the future. By completing the enclosed questionnaire on page 31 you can let me know what you think, not just of the current issue, but of the magazine overall. If you're unhappy about what you're getting every month, now's the time to sound off. If you like what you see, let me know that, too. Whatever you have to say, please let me hear it. My readers' interests come first — I trust your opinions.



What's in it for you? First of all, I'll report back to you soon on what the survey had to say and what I intend to do about it. Secondly, you'll probably see some changes due to your having helped us get

a clearer sense of what you want to read and what you don't. In the end, we'll all get a better magazine.

You're in control now. I'm giving you the chance to be "king for a day" by making the kinds of decisions my editors and I usually make. Join in on our editorial process that decides what your hard-earned money buys every month. Give all of us here at *Soldier of Fortune* a piece of your mind. I guarantee your input will make a difference.

So take a few minutes and put yourself in the editor's seat. Complete the enclosed survey and mail it back to me. Your opinion counts. And I appreciate your help. ✂

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by James W. (Jim) England, Master Sergeant, U.S. Army (Ret)

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FROM MANAGUA TO MANCHESTER...

Sirs:

Over here in the UK we have a number of extreme left-wing local city councils. Manchester, in the northwest of England, is one of them and is now heavily involved in supporting the Sandinistas. Not only have they organized a "carnival" in Manchester with such "peace-loving" groups as the British Communist Party and the Anglo-Korean (North) Friendship Society, but they have also linked the city with a town in Nicaragua.

Now, however, they have gone over the top and have sent a five-person delegation to the town of Puerto Cabezas, as a mark of solidarity with the town, which is under "constant contra attack."

The only saving grace is that these Marxist apologists have been subject to severe criticism locally, which I hope the readers of SOF are aware of, should the Sandinistas try to claim that the delegation is just one more example of "international solidarity" for their repressive regime.

Anthony David Jones
Ashton u Lyne,
England



FLAK



TAIWAN JUMP...

Sirs:

A very special thanks to Colonel Brown, Major Donovan and the SOF staff for making the Taiwan jump and tour a huge success. It exceeded all my expectations. I also wrote to Mike Epstein expressing my thanks for his part in putting the trip together.

I wish I could convey my sincere thanks to the officials and military personnel of the Republic of China for their warm and royal welcome. Thank you again for your extra efforts and a superb trip. Hope to see you on the next jump.

Eugene L. Plastino
Plantation, Florida

Don't miss next month's issue — SOF will give you the unexpurgated inside story of the recent Taiwan jump.



SEEING THE RIGHT LIGHT...

Sirs:

I was quite pleased to read David Horowitz's article "From Left to Right" in the January issue: It indicates another former radical is finally coming to his senses. I would very much appreciate your permission to reproduce this article and distribute it to my Social Theory classes. Communism needs to be viewed in practice as well as theory: Inevitably the practice of communism brings out the most sordid elements of humanity.

Brendan F.J. Furnish
Professor and Chair, Social
Science Division
Westmont College
Santa Barbara, California

I say hooray to David Horowitz on an outstanding article. One day, others who have been used by the left for the support of communism will see the light also. Communism isn't an economic system in which factories and farms are owned in common by the workers, but merely a system which is suppressive and intimidating and which kills many people whom it is imposed on.

I think we should all send a copy of David Horowitz's article to our congressmen in Washington, D.C., to remind them that this is a system we must stop from spreading.

I've always bought SOF at my local bookstore, but now, because of Horowitz's story, I'll subscribe to SOF and am also contributing funds to the freedom fighters.

Keith A. Lawson, D.A.V.
Lake Havasu City, Arizona

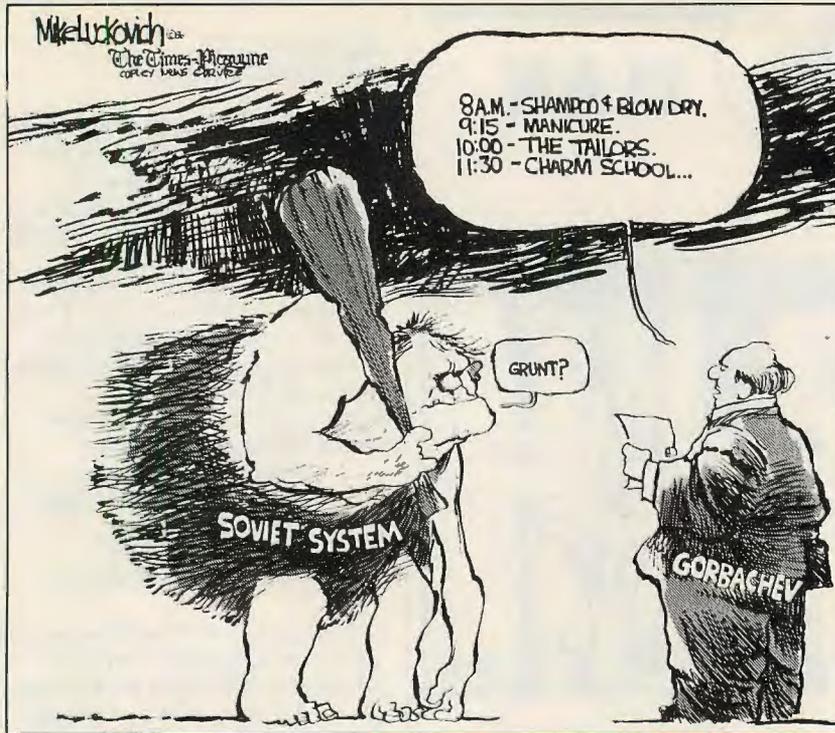
HEARTBREAK RIDGE...

Sirs:

I have just finished reading your article on Clint Eastwood's movie "Heartbreak Ridge" [SOF, January '87]. I'm surprised at how little you know about the movie. First off, the guitar player is not named String, as you say, but Stitch. Also, when Tom Highway, the Top and their sergeant went up Heartbreak Ridge, they were in the 23rd Infantry Division. They joined the Marines later.

Your story did have some great photos, though, and I will still buy SOF.

Mark Walker
Stem, North Carolina



I am a usually enthusiastic reader of SOF and have been for several years, but now you're losing some credibility with me. I read James Pate's review of "Heartbreak Ridge" and then went to see the movie. I was sure I had seen a different movie than Pate had. First, Tom Highway does not return to "the same recon unit where he started, this time as an instructor." He returns as the platoon sergeant.

Secondly, the film does not credit the Marine Corps with the victory at Heartbreak Ridge. The sergeant major clearly states that he and Highway were in the 23rd Infantry at Heartbreak and joined the USMC after the war.

Keep up the good work, but let's get accurate.

1st Lt. Edward Kertis
27th En. Bn.
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

No, our reviewer didn't use the screening of "Heartbreak Ridge" as an opportunity to catch up on his sleep! Looking back at James Pate's story, you'll notice that he says he saw the film last summer, before it had been edited, and that "we won't know until it gets to the box office what changes, if any, were made in the final version." The reference to Highway and his buddies being in the Army at Heartbreak Ridge was added late, after Eastwood was publicly criticized for his original plan to credit that victory largely to the Marines. So, if

you think you saw "a different movie than Pate had," it's because he saw a rough cut of the film, not the final version.

Pate adds that he used the words "instructor" and "platoon sergeant" synonymously, but realizes it could have caused confusion.

M¹ GARAND...

Sirs:

I'm having a great time shooting my M1 Garand rifle, but now that I've gone bang-bang with all of my surplus ammo and similarly depleted my stock of PMC, I'm faced with a few questions. What do I reload for it? Should I use cannellured bullets? What, if any, ball powders are appropriate for the M1? Are there any lubricants you would recommend specifically for the Garand?

Just how often should my weapon be detail-stripped? I have heard that frequent detail-stripping can affect the fit and tolerances of the gas system and other critical areas. Any thoughts on the "Tanker" modification kit?

I always look forward to Peter Kokalis' weapons reviews and feature articles. Thanks for the continued good work!

Richard A. Rivera
Lakewood, California

Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis

writes: "I recommend the Sierra 168-gr. .308 International Hollow Point bullet in front of 45 to 47 grains of IMR 4895 propellant. Maximum is 47.4 grains, so approach with caution. Stay away from ball powders and cannellured bullets.

"There is no better lubricant than PARR All Weather Weapons Lube (PARR, Inc., Dept. SOF, 5151 Denison Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102). Use it sparingly on all the reciprocating parts.

"There is no need to fear cleaning the M1 Garand thoroughly after use. As you must enter the bore on this rifle from the muzzle end, use a cleaning rod with a guide to prevent excessive wear of the rifling and muzzle crown.

"'Tanker' Garands were never issued. Several prototypes were fabricated during WWII, but the project was terminated without type classification. Performance and reliability are less than acceptable in this configuration."

INDISCREET REPORTING?...

Sirs:

This letter is directed to your correspondents and the editors who approve their stories. The September '86 article "Afghan Attack" contains photographs and a map of mujahideen camps and bases. I feel this could compromise their safety.

Your magazine is read by Russians here in the U.S. They have a staff of people whose purpose is to read every news magazine printed each week. The photographs from "Afghan Attack" were undoubtedly sent to the KGB. I feel this kind of reporting threatens any freedom fighter.

Ralph Sloane
Cincinnati, Ohio

As is the case with all of our reportage of guerrilla warfare, the photos in "Afghan Attack" were at least several months old by the time they were published in SOF. Since guerrillas are always on the move, locations of several months ago are not of much use to the enemy. Also, in all such cases, one has to try to strike a balance between secrecy and telling the story so that the "outside world" knows about the struggle and can be mobilized in support. ☒

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(A Kaufman's Exclusive): 2 GI stainless steel tags, specially treated to be non glare flat black plus 2 black (4" and 2 1/2") ball chains \$5.00/set.

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These light-weight 100% cotton tank tops are genuine issue to the West German military troops to wear during physical training exercises. "Bundeswehr" (the name of the West German Army) is proudly embroidered above their crest on the front of the shirt. This comfortable, cool, European tank top is stylish, avant-garde, and perfect to wear while working out or relaxing in the summer sun. Brand new.

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Choose: White, or Black
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ILLUMINATION

Angle Head Flashlite -

This is the heavy duty olive drab plastic flashlight issued to all military units.

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Green or Black \$6.50/each;
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This cap features a mesh back and fully adjustable headband to fit all heads comfortably.

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Specify: Woodland Camo or Olive Drab (OD) Green. S,M,L,XL \$5.95/each.



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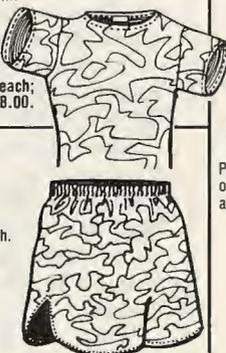
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Camouflage T-Shirts -

50% cotton/50% polyester. Choose from:

- Woodland Crew (Round) Neck
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- Desert Pattern Crew (Round) Neck

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- Hot Weather, 100% Cotton Ripstop Woodland Camouflage Pattern - latest issue to all US services for hot weather use. Regular lengths only.

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Specify: Jacket or Pants \$32.00/each; \$63.00/set.

- Olive Drab (OD) Green - 100% cotton, ripstop; as used in early Vietnam. Current GI manufacture. Brand New.

Specify: Jacket or Pants \$30.00/each; \$59.00/set.

- Solid Black - a favorite of SWAT teams, these fatigues were manufactured in the US by a government contractor to military specs. 50% cotton/50% nylon. Regular lengths only (no longs).

Specify: Jacket or Pants \$32.00/each; \$63.00/set.

- Tiger Stripe Pattern Camouflage - Commercial Manufacture - these are made by a US Government contractor to military specs. The tiger stripe pattern is true. Regular lengths only (no longs).

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- Urban Camouflage Pattern - 50% cotton/50% polyester, made to gov't specs, the pattern is identical to the GI woodland but the colors are black, grays and white. Regular lengths only.

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SOUND OFF TO SOF...

We here at *Soldier of Fortune* know why we are so committed to producing this magazine each month. In this world there is clearly a need for SOF, and there is no other magazine like it. What we would like to know more about is why so many different kinds of people — like you — read our magazine month after month for so many different reasons. Now you can tell us. On page 31 of this issue is an SOF Wants You! form for you to complete. Fill it out, fold it up and mail it to us. Thanks.

HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

Robert Bell, Mark Sisson, Michael S. Bilson, Mike McPike, James H.F. Gunn, Keith Lawson, Jeffrey Johnston, Patrick J. Greene, Marty Shlechter.

Refugee Relief International, Inc.:

In memory of those who died in the crash of the C123 in Nicaragua, Giles Small.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund:

James H.F. Gunn, Wayne Morrison.

Numerous donors requested their name not be printed.

1987 Soldier of Fortune Convention information and registration on page 93.

BULLETIN BOARD



Watch out for Nick Emmanouilides. He's armed with energy and experience and he's on the loose out there, plugging away as *Soldier of Fortune's* new field man in advertising sales and industry relations. He's also a serious shooter — that modest trophy parked under his arm in the photo above is but one of many he's taken home. Nick came to SOF from California, where he's been a member of the Southwest Pistol League for seven years, serving more than five years on its Board of Directors, two years as assistant director and two years as promotions manager. He served on the Steel Challenge Match Organization Committee for five years, being one of the key persons responsible for making the match purse grow from \$20,000 in 1981 to almost \$300,000 last year. Nick is a member of the Combat West Pistol Club and has competed in more than 130 matches in his career, shooting virtually the entire spectrum of weapons in competition. He's worked in sales and sales management since 1970, and he's been a serious follower of SOF since our first year of publication.

RETURN FIRE ON "PLATOON"...

This month's issue features coverage of "Platoon," a movie as controversial as the war it depicts. On page 80 we tell you what we think of this movie. But what do you think? If you served in Vietnam and have seen "Platoon," please send us your comments for publication in an upcoming issue. Preference will be given to those who served in Marine or Army infantry. Please limit your comments to one typewritten page (about 100 words) and be sure to include your name, rank, unit served with in Vietnam and dates of service in Vietnam. Send your comments to *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*, Attn: "Platoon," P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

ALPHA 34 OPS INFO NEEDED...

SOF wants to contact any Vietnamese who participated in **Alpha 34 operations in North Vietnam**, especially those who were captured and subsequently released. Write **SOF, Dept. Alpha 34, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.**

REUNIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS...

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

The **46th Seabees Reunion** will be held **6-8 May in Ft. Worth, Texas**. For information or for directions to the bulldozer parking area, contact: **Mary Holliday, 1833 N.W. 11th, Oklahoma City, OK 73106.**

Reunion for "The Wild Ones," **3/60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division**, who served in 1966-67, is set for **8-10 May** at the **Clarion Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado**. Contact: **Ed Blackledge, 2295 Satinwood Dr., Mansfield, OH 44903, (419) 589-4749 or (419) 522-2711.**

Get out your jump boots and suntan lotion: The **173rd Airborne Brigade Annual Convention** is set for **20-24 May** at the **Continental Royal Motor Hotel in Orlando, Florida**. For more information, write or call: **Jeff Mazer, Convention Project Officer, 173rd Airborne Brigade, P.O. Box 716, Casselberry, FL 32707, (305) 695-3611.**

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

World War II and Korea vets of the **7th Infantry Division**, be advised: The 7th Infantry Division Association has scheduled its **11th Reunion for 11-14 June in Norfolk, Virginia**. Prepaid reservations must be made to attend. For information, contact:

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#5001A Fang I	\$120.00	\$108.00
#5001B Fang II	\$160.00	\$144.00
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"Awright, you assholes! Break it up!" Civilian authorities in **Killeen, Texas** stand warned that the **720th MP Battalion Reunion** is scheduled there for **12-14 June**. For information, contact: **Joseph Selovich, 1909 35th St., Kenosha, WI 53140, (414) 654-0517.**

Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association has been activated. For membership information, call or write its executive director: **George H. Ecker, 201 Apache St., Huachuca, AZ 85616, (602) 456-9561.**

FORMAL ALLIES IN TERRORISM...

Iran and Syria have made a formal agreement to coordinate more closely the activities of Syrian- and Iranian-sponsored terrorist cells operating in Lebanon, foreign intelligence sources have told SOF.

Under the agreement, Syria is supposed to call most of the shots in Lebanon, while Tehran-backed groups such as Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and Islamic Amal will increasingly serve Syrian interests. In return, Syria is to provide professional intelligence training and a secure base for Iranian operatives in the Middle East and Western Europe.

Many of the Iran-Syria meetings cannot be confirmed, but one foreign source said the deal was consummated in a 12 October 1986 meeting between Syrian President Hafez Assad and Mohsen Rafiqdoust, Iran's Minister of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. That meeting was confirmed by a brief dispatch mentioning both men which was transmitted by SANA, Syria's official news agency. Also in attendance, according to SANA, were Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara, Syria's state security chief Ahmad Diab and Iran's new ambassador to Damascus, who was not identified by name.

Further confirming that source was Tehran's government-run daily, *Kayhan*, which reported that Rafiqdoust was in Damascus to "exchange important information with the Syrian government." Certainly noteworthy is *Kayhan's* description of Syria as "Iran's ally in the war against Iraq."



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MEDICAL AID FOR AFGHANS...

Californian Robert Brenner made a contact that changed his life when he met Afghan resistance leader Hassan Gailani at the *Soldier of Fortune* Convention in 1985. Gailani, head of the National Islamic Front in Afghanistan, told Brenner about the thousands of freedom fighters and their family members who die from lack of medical care.

As a result, Brenner, a private fire investigator, and his wife, Gay LeClerc-Brenner, a lawyer, quit their jobs in Sacramento. The Brenners convinced six others to join them in raising \$30,000 in seed money to set up a medical training program in Pakistan for families of the anti-communist Afghan resistance. Dubbed "Freedom Medicine," the program trains guerrillas in Pakistan to become medics. Freedom Medicine has also set up treatment clinics near the border.

Another group raising tax-deductible monetary donations for the anti-Soviet resistance is **The Free Afghanistan Foundation**. Write or call Abdul H. Shams for more information at: **38679 Hastings St., Suite 1, Fremont, CA 94536, (415) 795-7171.**

And don't forget that we run our own relief organization. If you'd like to help with SOF's effort, send your donations to: **Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.**

SOF 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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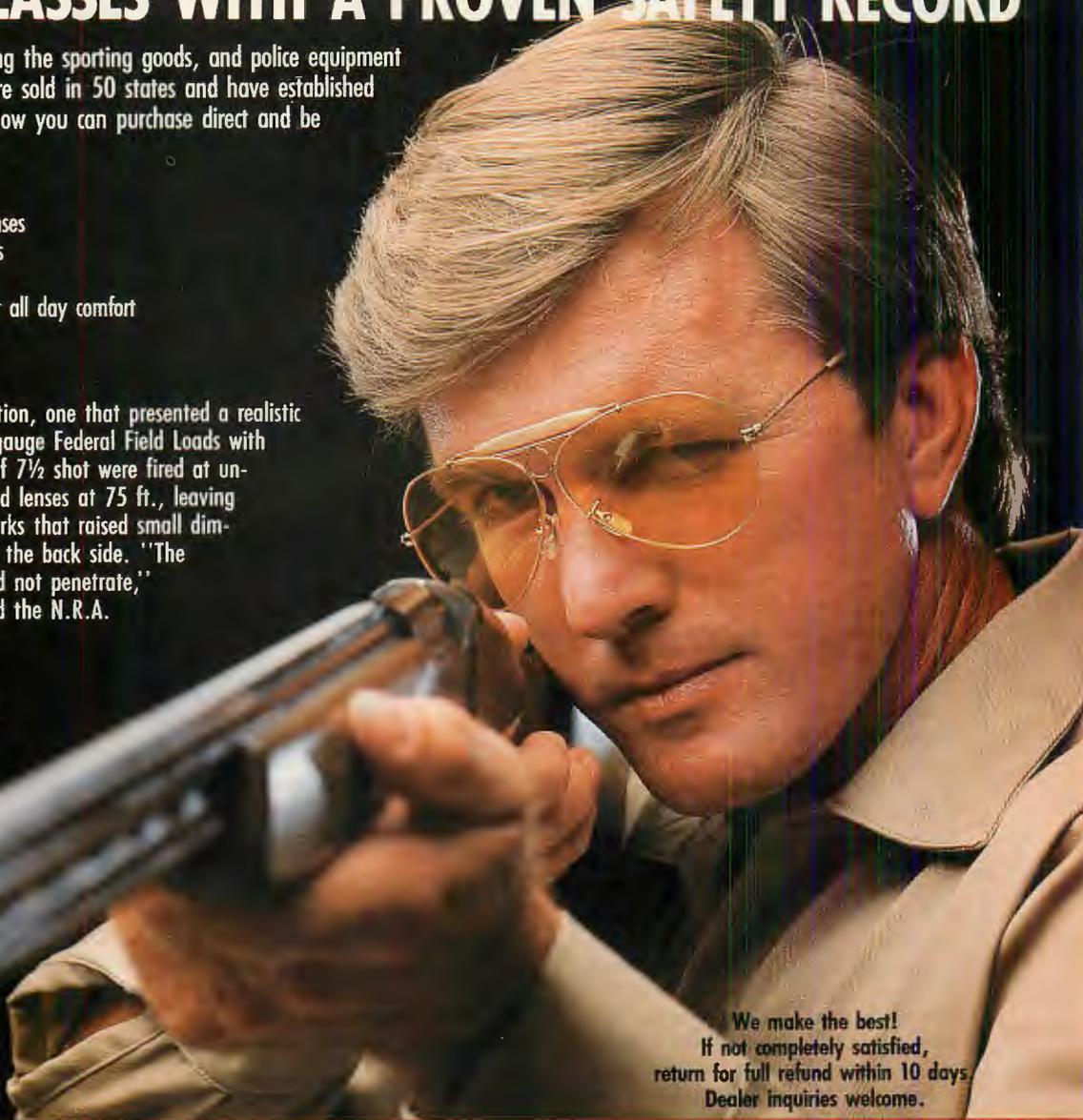
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RIDGWAY'S PARATROOPERS - THE AMERICAN AIRBORNE IN WORLD WAR II. By Clay Blair. Quill/William Morrow Publishing Inc., Dept. SOF, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1985. 588 pages. Softcover. \$15.95.

FROM an American perspective the story of airborne troops in World War II is a chronicle of the war itself. American airborne forces were continually on the cutting edge of the war, usually jumping into areas where no Allied soldier had gone before.

Clay Blair, a prolific writer with numerous historical books to his credit, brings us the story of America's sky warriors, beginning with their inception when the tactic of vertical envelopment was in its infancy. Four long years later, Hitler's Nazis and the Third Reich lay vanquished and parachute operations had evolved to the forefront of modern warfare.

Generals Bradley, Patton, Gavin and, of course, Ridgway are among the many principal characters in the drama that unfolds in these pages. Blair shows us American failures such as the debacle over Sicily — where hundreds of para- and glider troops were killed by friendly antiaircraft fire — as well as our devastating successes.

Unfortunately for the lay reader, **Ridgway's Paratroopers** at times comes across like a textbook. It seems to lack some of the pathos and emotional involvement found in Blair's earlier works, such as the brilliant **Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan**. Nonetheless, the overwhelming wealth of detail, from exact unit genealogies to accurate operational information, lifts this book far above others of the genre. Blair has taken extreme care to present only the facts and has corrected several fallacies found in earlier works on the same subject. **Ridgway's Paratroopers** will serve as an excellent secondary reference source for historians and is a must-have for both airborne and "leg" readers.

The American legend that is the 82nd Airborne Division is the focus of this book — but the elite breed of warrior known as the paratrooper is its heart and soul.

BENT & BATTERED WINGS — USN/USMC DAMAGED AIRCRAFT 1943-1953. By Jim Sullivan. Squadron/Signal Publications, Dept. SOF, 1115 Crowley Drive, Carrollton, TX 75011-5010. 1986. 64 pages. Softcover. \$8.95.

IN REVIEW



RIDGWAY'S PARATROOPERS THE AMERICAN AIRBORNE IN WORLD WAR II

"By far the most sensible study
of the American airborne..."
—*Washington Post Book World*



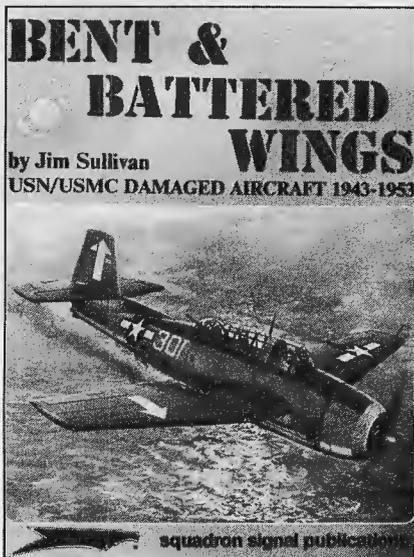
CLAY BLAIR

THERE'S a latent morbid streak in all of us. Admit it. Who doesn't strain their neck to check out a traffic accident? Or sit glued to the tube while news footage of an airliner crash or other disaster rolls across the screen? It's a normal reaction to tragedy, the

"there but for the grace of God go I" syndrome.

Perhaps that's why **Bent & Battered Wings** will find a ready audience. We read hundreds of books that deal with the aerial combat; rarely do they dwell on those jocks (some more dead than alive) who bounce, smash, slew or otherwise deliver their craft back to earth. That's what these 64 pages are all about. Page after page of the survivors and their aircraft: shot-away wings and rudders, aircraft ditched right side up or upside down, nose in or tail sheared off — it's all enough to indelibly etch in our minds a hellish portion of the gut-searing war that aviators fought in World War II and Korea.

Squadron/Signal Publications is the master of short, slick, photo-oriented books of this type. Although its emphasis is on aircraft (some 70-odd titles), it offers a wide variety of subjects, ranging from armor and combat troops in action to a number of specials. Most of these stand well-thumbed on the SOF reference bookshelf; check 'em out for yourself.



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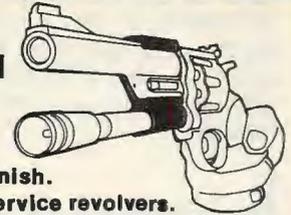
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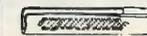


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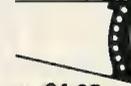
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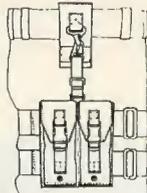
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TOP SECRET — A CLANDESTINE OPERATOR'S GLOSSARY OF TERMS. By Bob Burton. Paladin Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO 80306. 1986. 127 pages. Softcover. \$10 plus \$3 shipping.

IN communities where people perform the same tasks, a jargon is sure to develop. You find it in the military and in high-tech industry, and even journalists sling their own secret verbal codes around with an insider's easy nonchalance.

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If nothing else, you'll open some ears down at the bar when you let drop, "Well, my crateologist says..."

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

By Leroy Thompson. Paladin Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO 80306. 1986. 241 pages. Hardcover. \$17.95.

MOST of the world's military formations have units responsible for the traditional unconventional roles, but the newest "elite" units are those designed for counter-terrorism. When all else fails, the task of ending a terrorist incident falls to the members of the world's hostage rescue teams.

In **The Rescuers**, long-time SOF contributor Leroy Thompson gives us a glimpse into these units and the hazardous missions they carry out. The focus is primarily on the more established (although not necessarily the best) HRUs (hostage rescue units). Among others, the German GSG-9 and British SAS fall under Thompson's sharp eye, along with the less well-known French GIGN and Spanish GEO. He doesn't neglect the rest of the world, however, as units of 31 other countries also earn a place in the book.

As with organization, training and missions of these counter-terrorist units, Thompson also examines many of their actual operations. Some, such as Karachi, Cyprus and Ma'alot, went



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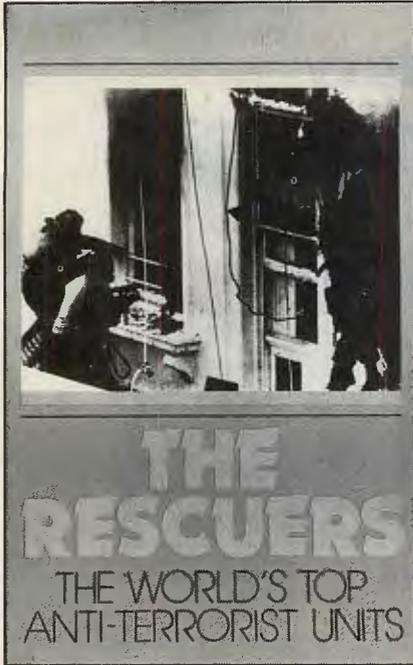


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bust, while others — Entebbe, Mogadishu, Princess' Gate, Depunt and Djibouti — fared better.

Thompson is a recognized expert in these matters, but a few areas of the book present problems. He'd be hard pressed, for example, to support his



claim that the minutemen of the American Revolution, or Golda Meir, could be considered terrorists. But the focus of the book is not on terrorism. It's on the units charged with ending a terrorist incident when other options have failed, and in this Thompson has succeeded admirably. Put **The Rescuers** on your list of books to read.

HISTORY OF THE BRITISH ARMY. By Charles Messenger. U.S. edition available from Presidio Press, Dept. SOF, 31 Pamaron Way, Novato, CA 94947. 1986. 224 pages. Hardcover. \$25.00.

OF all the world's military formations, none has a longer or more colorful history than the regiments that make up the British Army. To get an idea of how long the British Army has been around, consider that in 1985 at least 12 regiments celebrated the 300th anniversary of their founding. Their service in countless campaigns is the subject of thousands of books, but unfortunately a good general history has been hard to come by — until now.

Presidio Press offers **History of the**

British Army, a single-volume history that was previously available only in England. Written by Charles Messenger, author of several works on the British military, **History** is not meant to be the complete story, but rather a general introduction to the British Army's long history.

Messenger traces the institution from its inception in 1685 through the post-World War II campaigns that accompanied the dismantling of the empire. While nothing is dealt with in great detail, neither is anything completely left out. Messenger recounts the conquests that forged the empire, the classic battles with Napoleon, the "little" wars of Queen Victoria's long reign, the death of a generation in the trenches of France and the brutality of Northern Ireland.

With 300 years of service in defense of the realm and participation in more than 100 wars, revolts and uprisings, it would be impossible to give a complete account of the army's history in a single volume. What Messenger has produced may be the next best thing: an informative, well-illustrated book that serves as an interesting introduction and useful reference to one of the world's most fascinating military organizations. ✕

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AFTER 30 years of humping, hauling, disassembling, repairing, studying and firing military small arms under every conceivable condition, you're bound to develop some opinions concerning the grunt's needs. I have. If I could get both the designers and arsenals lined up in a proper column of ducks, what would I place in my battalion's battery, using only current technology and modification of pre-existing systems? Could the best be made better? I think so. Nothing is perfect. Let's take a look at everything from pistols to heavy machine guns and see what needs to be changed.

Unless you're clearing tunnels, pistols play an insignificant role in the military. But for promenading about the parade ground, I'd like to see the Glock 17 chambered for the .45 ACP cartridge and fitted with Armson's slick, all-steel, self-luminous pistol sights. I'll take less beans in the box to get that 230-grain pill. When stepping off-post in civvies, I'd like to stuff a stainless steel Colt Officer's Model (manufactured without either a grip safety or the pathetic firing pin lock) in my Nelson #1 Professional cross-draw holster — cocked and locked with seven rounds of Winchester's 185-grain Silvertips. Again, it would be equipped with Armson's Trijicon sights.

As far as the military is concerned, submachine guns have had their day in the sun. For those limited applications where they can still be justified, three of this dying breed still stand tall. Steyr's MPi 81, Beretta's Model 12S and the Sterling will all more than do. I would, however, like to see a really reliable 40-round magazine for these burp guns. We have the technology. Either two nested follower springs or a long spring with diminishing coil diameters should do the trick. Clandestine ops still beg for a truly efficient suppressed SMG. We need merely turn over a Sterling Mk 5 to Deadly Doc Dater and direct him to re-design the guts so that it's user-maintainable, quiet and reliable with military ball without serious ballistic degradation, and equipped with a bolt-lock for single-shot fire.

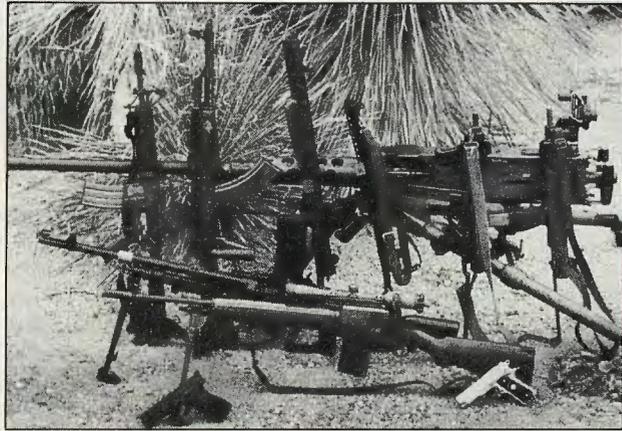
The dirty little wars that fill the headlines each day are still mostly fought by riflemen and will be into the foreseeable future. Infantry rifles are the soldier's most intimate and important possession; they deserve no small amount of design effort. Thirty million Kalashnikovs can't be wrong, but they need some corrective measures. I'd re-chamber this rifle for the 5.56X45mm NATO cartridge with the Belgian SS109 projectile. Let's rifle the barrel with a twist of one turn in 9 inches. The 1:7" twist adopted by the U.S. military in an effort to prevent the new tracer



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Dream Battery



Peter's "dream battery," although most would require extensive modification.

round from keyholing is a mistake, in my opinion. Tracers are seldom fired through infantry rifles and the faster twist over-stabilizes the SS109 bullet, seriously affecting its lethality. Usually tumbling upon impact, the older 55-grain M193 bullet depended upon accentuation of its yaw to increase wound efficiency by enlarging the permanent cavity and dumping its entire energy load into the target.

My Kalashnikov will require a re-designed trigger mechanism with three-shot burst (in addition to full-auto) and a clean-breaking, two-stage let-off. I want nylon glides on the selector lever to reduce the noise of its movement, enhanced accuracy potential through increased structural rigidity of the sheet-metal receiver body and an improved muzzle device to lessen the side blast associated with the current AK-74 muzzle brake. Black, high-impact plastic furniture of the M16 type would be best, and the average grunt would be better served with a rigid buttstock. Also, the entire package needs to be lightened. A scope, if required, should be mounted directly to the receiver, not the insubstantial receiver cover.

For paras and armored vehicle crews I'll take the Colt M16A2 Commando with its collapsible stock and 11.5-inch barrel (1:9" twist). A muzzle device that will cut the objectionable flash from this short barrel, a larger extractor, heavier extractor spring and three-shot burst mechanism should also be added to Colt's Commando. M16 magazines are

the biggest fly in this system's ointment. A black version of Ivan's 30-round, glass-reinforced, polyethylene plastic magazine could be easily designed for both rifles and the SAW. Cut off the M16 carrying handle if you're serious about a scope on this weapon. Both the AKM and Colt Commando should carry flip-up, tritium night sights with no need for rear sight gradations beyond 600 meters.

Sniper rifles should possess the ability to fire again quickly; only semiautomatic actions satisfy this requirement. In its M21 configuration, the M14 rifle served in an exemplary manner during the Vietnam War. It needs only to be fitted with a heavy barrel in caliber .300 Winchester Magnum. Long-range shooting requires a truly long-range cartridge. This fine belted cartridge will do the job at 800 meters and farther, and exhibits less variation in point of impact from round to round than any military rifle cartridge. As snipers generally use special match-grade ammo anyway, we have no cause to fret over introducing another caliber into the logistical pipeline. All that remains is to develop an FMJ (full metal jacket) military bullet.

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tive, this scope requires only a minimum of training time.

My recommendation for an SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) will startle many. I'd like to see Bill Ruger scale down, simplify and lighten a Bren with one of his splendid — and cost effective — investment-cast receivers, re-chambered for the 5.56X45mm NATO SS109 cartridge and using the same magazines as my two assault rifles. We really don't need belt-fed capability at the squad level. With everyone carrying the same magazines, there'll be plenty of firepower to stuff into the magazine well of a machine gun with proven reliability. I would add no heat shield to the barrel, as my soldiers, unlike the U.S. Army, would know the barrel gets hot.

If you simply must have a GPMG (General Purpose Machine Gun), then we'll opt for the Soviet PKM (another Kalashnikov design). However, I'd re-chamber this weapon for a rimless cartridge like the .30-06. Discarding the rimmed 7.62X54mmR cartridge will permit us to use modern, disintegrating, "push-through" links and further simplify the feed mechanism.

Note that I said ".30-06." There are no 7.62X51mm NATO cartridges in my dreams. Neither fish nor fowl, Col. Studler's delight should have remained forever stillborn. All of its full-sized forerunners did a better job in belt-fed machine guns. At the battalion level, there is still some requirement for a medium machine gun capable of sustained fire along fixed lines. We need look no farther than our warehouses filled with Browning M191A1 caliber .30-06 water-cooled MGs. This fine weapon, superior even to the Vickers/Maxim series, rots in cosmoline while we safety-wire the dreadful M60 to prevent it from self-destructing during firefights.

We are already fielding the world's finest heavy machine gun. The Browning caliber .50 M2 HB needs only a quick-change barrel and fixed headspace. Both RAMO and Fabrique Nationale have developed solutions to these small problems.

There you have it. The dream battery. We end up with only the following calibers in inventory: .45 ACP, 9mm Parabellum, 5.56X45mm NATO, .300 Winchester Magnum for our snipers, .30-06 and .50 Browning (ball, tracer and a generous mix of SLAP), and we delete 7.62X51mm NATO.

Will any of this ever come to pass? Hardly. The blue sky rangers who control our procurement of small arms are far too mesmerized by plastic ray guns. They would reject out of hand any attempt to go back to the future. The best still lies within our grasp, but we are forever tracking caseless boondoggles. Beam me up, Scotty. ☒

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P R E S E N T S

The Special Forces Vietnam Commemorative MACV/SOG FIGHTER 1955-1975

The original SOG Knife was carried and used in the Vietnam Conflict by the 5th Special Forces and other elite soldiers throughout South-East Asia. When established, the Studies & Observation/Special Operations Group (SOG) was a joint service outfit drawing on the cream of all four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Some of the toughest, most resolute fighters available were recruited: Navy Seals, Marine Recons, Pilots from the 90th Special Operations Wing and above all, members of the Green Berets. These individuals were specialists in reconnaissance, infiltration and behind lines operations. Very little is actually known of these "OPS" due to the still classified nature and clandestine methods of this "SOG" group.

The mystique of this knife that was carried by the "SOG" trooper, has drawn attention from collectors and military enthusiasts. Engraved with the special Forces Crest (de Oppresso Libre) and 5th Special Forces Group (ABN) Vietnam, these original pieces are rapidly becoming one of the foremost collectables of all military edged weapons. With most being lost in the South-East Asian Jungle, existing pieces are extremely hard to find and will fetch in good condition up to \$1000.00 with prices still increasing.



MANUFACTURED BY THE WORLD REKNOWN FACTORIES OF SEKI, JAPAN, PRODUCERS OF THE ORIGINAL KNIVES. THIS KNIFE IS DEDICATED TO THE SPECIAL FORCES SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT SO BRAVELY, WITH SO LITTLE RECOGNITION.

There were many variations of the SOG Knife produced in Japan and Okinawa between the early 60's & 70's. Started as a presentation piece for the 5th Special Forces touring in Vietnam, the knife was sometimes individualized with a troopers' name; team number; date of service; and the group he served with. It was presented upon transfer or retirement out of the individuals unit. Other SOG Knives were left completely sterile so as to insure secrecy of a mission. Brass, Aluminum, and Iron were used on the pommel and crossguard.

Our SOG-1-F commemorative is no mere souvenir. Engraved like the original, this knife is an investment collectable which has been designed primarily with practical use in mind. We felt that a proper commemorative for the Special Forces would be a working knife rather than just a paper weight sitting on a plaque. We enlisted world famous A.G. Russell and Lloyd Hale, two of the most renowned and talented knifemiths in the country to modernize and improve the original bowie design. They've created for us a legendary blade similar to the original 20 year old design but modernized into a weapon of sophistication.

SOG Specialties is dedicated to creating the highest standard of production fighting cutlery in the world. This commemorative far exceeds original specifications! We have cut no corners and our quality is uncompromised.

Each knife is unique in itself for the blade is completely ground by hand. Cut from extremely thick stock (.280), the 6 1/4 inch high carbon steel blade is hardened to a rockwell 57-58 and then blued for rust-inhibition and stealth. The extremely hollow-ground main edge is complemented with a sharpened false edge on the spine of the knife. The handle is made from a heavy resin-impregnated brown sole leather that seals out moisture in conditions found throughout the world. The blue steel crossguard, pommel & nut are expertly fitted with overall attention given to the balance and feel of the fighting knife. A leather wrist thong is included along with the black leather scabbard, superbly detailed with heavy stitching and the Special Forces Crest. A sharpening stone sits in a pouch that provides more than adequate field dressing capability. A beautiful all-walnut presentation case is available upon request.

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SHORT-RANGE ambushes are terrifying. It is here, I'm sure, that the saying "the quick or the dead" was born. Failure to react quickly and aggressively, either individually or as a group, will get you killed.

And the deafening noise, wild shooting in all directions, yelling and screaming that are characteristic of such encounters, combined with short-range fire, mean that winners and losers will be determined in a matter of seconds.

In close combat situations when reduced range is involved, the soldier needs a quick and accurate method of engaging the enemy *without aiming*. Unquestionably, the finger-pointing method is the best way to apply unsighted fire to close-range targets.

Unsighted firing differs from conventional firing technique in these important ways:

1. Sights are not used.
2. Both eyes are kept open.
3. Eyes are focused on the target — not the front sight.
4. Hold is very tight.
5. Head, body and rifle move as one unit.
6. Trigger is pulled quickly — not squeezed.

Keeping these six points in mind, finger-point shooting can be accomplished from two basic positions: the hip or the shoulder. Let's look at the hip position first.

Finger-point shooting from the hip is the fastest way to apply effective fire to a close-range target. Begin by holding the weapon in a hip firing position, making sure your right arm presses the butt of the rifle tightly against your body — this helps control recoil, especially in full auto.

Next, extend the index finger of the non-firing hand along the weapon's forearm, parallel with the barrel. With your weapon firmly pressed against your hip, and your head and torso moving as a unit, the index finger will naturally follow your eyes and point where they point. This finger is used as a guide for a fast, rough alignment of the barrel with the target. Every time the eye identifies a target, the weapon will automatically be in position to deliver devastating short-range fire.

Keeping the weapon in this same position *is a must* because it allows the finger and eye to coordinate. When you become accustomed to pointing the non-firing finger at what the eye sees, you'll hit your target every time without wasting valuable seconds aligning your sights. After firing the initial burst, observe the fall of shot so you can fine tune your barrel alignment if necessary.

In the assault, when the soldier is advancing quickly, this finger-pointing technique allows him to suppress



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

In Time — On Target



Point shooting from the shoulder is slower than from the hip but easier to learn and, with practice, accurate out to about 75 meters. Important feature of both positions is that non-firing index finger points along weapon forearm parallel to barrel and follows the eyes.

targets instantly within his arc of fire, without the necessity of taking cover.

Believe me, this technique works! It once saved my life in Africa. After a brief firefight lasting only a minute, we were sweeping a dense area of bush near Zambia. I was busy controlling the sweep, keeping the troops on the sweep line and communicating on the radio. Unknowingly, I walked right by a wounded terrorist in thick bush at about five meters on my right flank. After I had passed him just a few short steps, he opened fire with a long burst from a Soviet RPD belt-fed machine gun.

All I remember doing is turning quickly to the right (more than 90 degrees), dropping to one knee and using

the finger-pointing technique; I shot him three times in the chest, killing him instantly, as his rounds whistled just above my head. Thank God *he* didn't use this technique, or I'd be a dead man today.

Firing from the shoulder position is a little slower than from the hip position but affords more accuracy at ranges beyond those for which the hip position is used — that is, beyond 25 meters.

Basically, you point the rifle like a shotgun. Looking *over* the sights, you roughly align the weapon on the target. Here again, you can use the finger-pointing technique to enhance accuracy. This position is especially useful on close, *moving* targets when there is no time to aim. With practice, you can expect to hit targets out to 75 meters.

Firing from the shoulder position is easier to learn and requires less practice than from the hip. It incorporates what I call the concept of the "third eye," where the shooter actually thinks of the muzzle as a third eye. As you focus your two eyes directly on your target, the index finger of the non-firing hand guides the "third eye" (the muzzle) onto the target. This is also an excellent technique to use at night when you can't align the sights, even when you want to.

Mastery of unsighted shooting techniques is vitally important. When you find yourself engaged in close combat, these are often your only viable shooting options. Fast and accurate at the shorter ranges, these two point-shooting positions produce kills. And that's really what it's all about. ☒

NO WEEKEND WARRIOR

Jack Thompson is a long-time contributor to *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. Having studied and used weapons most of his life, Jack's combat experience spans the globe. He served in the USMC in Vietnam, fought in Rhodesia with both the SAS and the Selous Scouts, trained troopers in Central America and provided bodyguard services for diplomatic personnel.

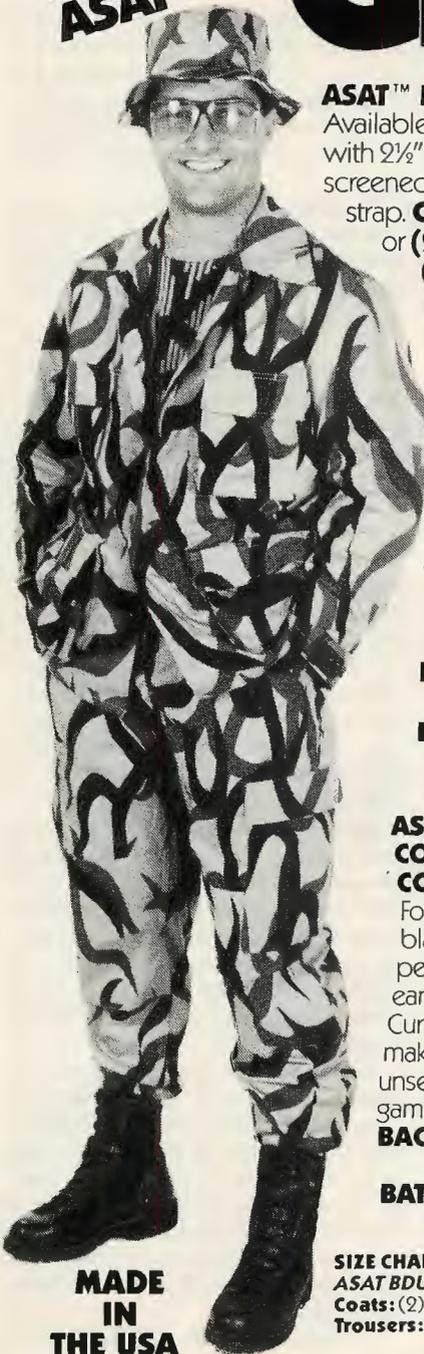


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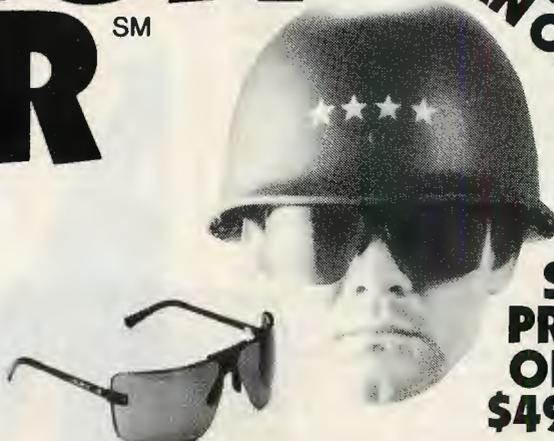
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FINELY crafted art knives have their place in the scheme of things, but they're often not suitable for combat or survival purposes. For me the real proof of the worth of a knife lies in its performance — not its appearance.

Fancy and finely crafted are not the same things in this sense, for a knife that is properly forged, tapered, ground, balanced and weighted can be a superb weapon while looking plain. Likewise, a fancy knife can also be a worthless one.

I must confess to a certain fondness and appreciation for elegant craftsmanship, but *my* knife is first and foremost a tool and a weapon. If the spit, polish and glitter detract from its performance, then out it goes.

I earn my living making quality combat and survival knives, and am keenly aware that there are people who need a good quality working knife and simply can't afford the custom item.

Dependable equipment is often the difference between success and failure — even life and death — and a bad blade can have dire consequences in a combat situation. A quality knife at a bargain price is what this country needs, and presently nobody makes one. If you need a solid knife that you can count on for less than \$70, you just about have to make your own.

Western Cutlery and Case Knife Company both make large, "authentic" Bowie knives which can be converted into serviceable and quite decent *battle blades* with common hand tools and a couple hours of work. If you're short on dollars and long on your need for a good combat or survival knife, the conversion process is relatively simple and involves essentially little change to the base knife.

I chose a Western Bowie for this conversion simply because I had one available, but the basic process would work as well for most other knives of the Bowie type.

Tools you'll need for this job are a hacksaw and a 10-inch mill bastard file. A small vise and bench grinder will speed things up but are not necessary.

The Western Bowie has two factors in its favor — it's big and it's made out of a good piece of steel. With these factors as a foundation, let's see what we need to remodel.

The most obvious change is to the guard. The standard version is not my idea of a good fighting guard, so get your hacksaw and cut the ends of the guard off at the point where the top and bottom bend to make the "S" curve. The original guard is nearly 5 inches in length; it catches clothing and gear when you draw the knife and gouges knuckles when you try to use it.

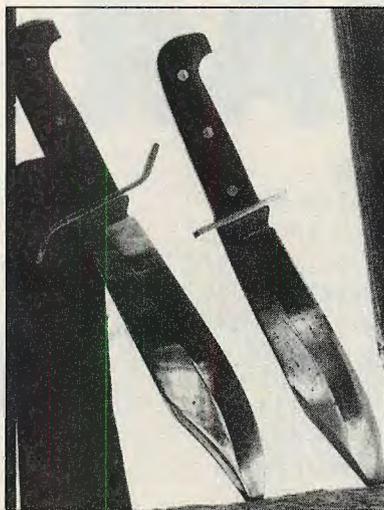
A few minutes with a hacksaw is time well spent here. Spend a few more



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Customize a Bargain Bowie



With a few basic tools and a little bit of time and patience, you can easily convert a standard Western Bowie (left) into a first-rate battle blade.

minutes to file and round the ends off. The finished guard on the SOF sample measured 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches in length.

Next work on the blade. It's too wide where the clip starts. Starting about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch forward of the guard, the blade should be narrowed in a progressive taper until it's 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inches wide at the point where the clip starts across the widest part of the cutting edge. The original width is 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches at this point. This involves removing a good amount of metal. If you're using a file be prepared to spend an hour or so.

A small bench grinder makes this part of the modification a lot easier, but a file and a little patience are all that's necessary. Removal of this metal from the blade will make the knife quicker in your hand while still leaving the blade sufficiently powerful for heavy cuts and chopping strokes.

The point of the Western Bowie is carried too high for serious work. A high point has to cut its way in rather than pierce and is not as effective as a point that lies on the centerline of the axis of thrust. A blade that carries a high point also has a higher center of

gravity than would otherwise be the case, and this compromises chopping ability.

Take your bench grinder or file and lower the point $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. If you use the grinder, be careful not to overheat the metal and turn it blue as you grind it. Keep a small bucket of water handy and dip the blade in it often so it stays cool.

Work slowly and carefully when you use the grinder, because if the point gets hot enough to turn blue it will have softened to the extent that it will bend and stay bent.

The unaltered blade measures 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the front of the guard to the point. Your modified version, narrowed and with the point lowered, should measure exactly 9 inches.

One other important modification must be performed. Off the shelf, the Western Bowie does not have a sharpened clip point, and as such has no backstroke cutting capability. Use your file to sharpen the clip on the back of the blade. This gives you the ability to cut with a backward snap of the wrist without having to rotate your arm or turn your hand over. Backstroke cutting capability is one of the features of a Bowie that is often overlooked but is of real value in a fighting knife.

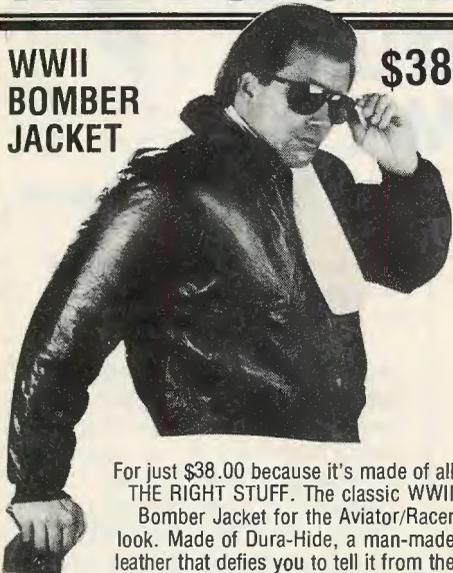
Now that the guard is sensible and functional and the blade is working as it should, let's concentrate on the handle. The handle feels lumpy and clumsy because it's blocky on the sides and far too thick. Every person has his own preference as to how something *should* feel in his hand for it to be comfortable.

Use the file to thin and round the sides and ridges of the handle until they feel comfortable to you. To maintain the integrity of the knife do not remove the handle hook. Otherwise, it's your knife and you should work it until it fits your hand. Don't be afraid to remove material, there's plenty there to play with. Stay with it until the knife feels right.

A suggestion is in order about fol-

Continued on page 98

WWII BOMBER JACKET

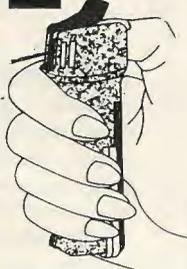


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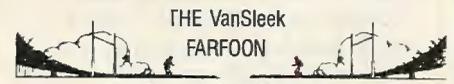
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BULLETPROOF VESTS

With our streets becoming less safe by the minute, a well-dressed man's wardrobe isn't complete these days without some kind of indiscreet body armor.

Body armor, or bulletproof vests as they are commonly called, are rated according to their ability to stop anything from small-caliber handgun rounds to high-powered rifle loads. These various classifications are termed "threat levels," with Threat Level I offering the least protection. Once you've decided which threat level is appropriate for your purposes, then comfort, snug fit and quality of materials are your next considerations when choosing an appropriate vest.

Matthews Police Supply is a good place to turn to for quality and selection in body armor. It offers three models — ranging from the 2-pound K-10 Threat Level I vest on up to the 3½-pound K-22 that meets or exceeds Threat Level II standards. A convenient feature of a Matthews vest is its removable ballistic inserts, which allow you to quickly convert your vest to different threat levels.

Matthews vests have been thoroughly tested by the U.S. Army at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. All are made from Dupont Kevlar, the material recommended by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. The outer shell is lightweight poplin and is machine washable.

Prices range from \$120.00 for the K-10 to \$180.00 for the K-22. Side panels are slightly more. To find a distributor in your area, contact Matthews Police Supply Company, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1754, Matthews, NC 28105.

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by G.B. Crouse

BIANCHI BLADE

Several years ago Bianchi Leather, a company with a well-deserved reputation for quality holsters, decided to try its hand at knife making. Its newest knife is the Nighthawk II, designed especially for military and survival applications.

Unlike most survival knives, which are high on gadgetry and low on quality, Bianchi's first priority was to produce a rugged knife. The extras, and there are many, are just that — extra. The result is a sturdy knife that lives up to its name.

Nighthawk II features a 6-inch non-reflective, serrated, stainless steel blade, a reinforced nylon handle and solid brass hilt and buttcap. Total weight is only 12.5 ounces and length is 10.5 inches. Not surprisingly, coming from Bianchi, one of the knife's strongest features is its sheath, made from padded ballistic fabric. This quality sheath has retainer and leg straps, as well as compartments for holding the knife's survival gear.

The Nighthawk's handle is hollow, with a watertight compartment for small items which is sealed by a solid brass cap with integral compass. A small survival pouch is contained in the sheath. Inside the pouch are a lighter, mirror, sewing

kit, razor and waterproof matches. An optional multipurpose survival tool completes the accessories.

For the money, at only \$109.95 with sheath, and considering the generally poor quality of the competition, you can't go wrong with a Nighthawk II. For more information, contact Bianchi International, Dept. SOF, 100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, CA 92390. Phone: 1-800-854-8545, or for California residents: 1-800-826-8192.



HANDGUN CARRIER

Protection for your handguns when they're not strapped to your waist is a worthwhile investment. When traveling, that usually means some kind of hard, durable case.

MTM Molded Products Company has introduced its new Case-Gard 808 pistol case for just this purpose. Molded from polypropylene with a high-quality foam interior, the 808 will accommodate any pistol with a barrel length of up to 8½ inches. Scoped weapons fit comfortably as well. This rugged case is dirt- and moisture-resistant and is held closed by two Snap-lok latches. For extra security the case's handle consists of two locking halves — one on the top and one on the bottom — to prevent accidental opening.

Available in black only, the case carries a suggested retail price of \$11.95. For more information, contact MTM Molded Products Company, Dept. SOF, 3370 Obco Court, Dayton, OH 45414. Phone: (513) 890-7461.





halves together at the blink of an eye — a No. 4 twist-link chain makes sure the halves *stay* together. When bringing this stick into play, if the quick motion and intimidating “crack” don’t get your suspect’s attention, its sturdy aluminum and case-hardened steel construction definitely will.

A plain or basket weave holster comes with the baton and fits on any belt of up to 3 inches in width.

Another item of interest from Lawrence is its new line of “Parabellum” holsters. The company promises it has a holster for every medium- and large-frame pistol around. Holsters are made from high-quality leather and are available with a brown or black finish in plain or basketweave design. All are fully lined with smooth-grained leather and carry a lifetime guarantee. Available in right- and left-hand models, prices begin at \$41.95.

Lawrence also offers all standard police accessories, including Sam Browne duty belts, cuff cases, belt keepers and much more.

To order, or for a free catalog, contact The George Lawrence Company, Dept. SOF, 1435 N.W. Northrup, Portland, OR 97209. Phone: 1-800-822-1857. ✕

LAW ENFORCEMENT LEATHER

George Lawrence Company, long known for leather holsters, has expanded its product line and is now offering a wide range of equipment for law enforcement professionals. Of the gear pictured above, there are two items of particular interest. Lawrence’s EZ DRAW Nightstick

is an innovative two-piece baton which doesn’t restrict movement in a squad car or when running after fleet-footed miscreants. When not in use, the nightstick folds to 12¾ inches for easy carry on a duty belt. But with the release of a hold-down snap, it explodes to its full length of 24 inches.

A heavy 9-inch compressed spring inside the baton brings the two

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AT approximately 2100 hours on 6 September 1984, the dispatcher, in her usual calm, clear voice, radioed the beat car concerning a complaint of an armed man at a local all-night eatery.

The only description the dispatcher could provide, the only one the people could give, was of a skinny male with a handgun. He had supposedly accosted two older customers in the parking lot.

I was dispatched into the area as a backup unit to help conduct the search.

As I got close to the scene, I saw the shadowy figure of a man walking toward me from an interstate highway ramp.

I pulled over, and as he walked closer my headlights illuminated him. He was a well-built male, looking very little like the suspect description put out by the dispatcher.

I got out of my patrol car and stood behind it. He kept his hands in view as he walked in my direction. He wasn't acting nervous, aggressive or in any of the ways someone who'd just been involved in an altercation with a gun might act.

When he got close enough, I asked him where he was coming from. He told me his car had broken down on the highway and he was walking to the filling station to get some help.

I told him to get his hands on the trunk of my car so I could frisk him. He did exactly like he was told and offered no resistance.

As I began my frisk, I asked him if he had any weapons on him. "Yeah, I've got a knife in my right front pocket," he said, and made a move as if to get it for me.

"Keep your hands on the car, I'll get the knife," I said as I stuck my hand in his right front pocket.

As soon as my hand entered his pocket and was momentarily trapped there, he spun while pulling a small caliber handgun from his waistband.

I was trying to get my hand out of his pocket when I saw the little .22 High Standard Revolver coming up on line with my head.

For a split second all of my attention was directed to the gun. I could see the hammer coming back and the cylinder turning as it continued up, aiming at my head.

He said: "You're dead."

I pushed the gun and turned my head at the same time. "Pop!" I heard the muffled report as the little gun discharged.

It felt like someone had slapped me hard on the head. I knew I'd been shot, but I didn't know how bad. I could still feel, still move and, most importantly — still fight.



I WAS THERE

by Dennis Waler
as Told to Hickory Taylor

"You're Dead, You're Dead"



Police Sergeant Waler and another officer finally overcame a suspect who shot Waler in the head twice with this .22-caliber revolver.

As we stood there struggling, he managed to pull my gun out of its holster. Now I was having to fight for control over two guns. My Model 66 was pointed at my belly and his .22 was pointed at my head.

I can remember trying to point my gun at his chest, and I did get it in that direction. But with only my little finger in the trigger guard and my hand clenched around the cylinder, I couldn't get it to fire.

He kept saying over and over, "You're dead, you're dead." I guess he was trying to convince me, but I wasn't ready to give up yet.

I tried to get my hand on his firing pin, trying to wedge the skin of my hand between the little pin and the cartridge as he kept pulling the trigger.

Again the gun discharged, again striking me on the head. Neither slug penetrated; both glanced off. I guess I owe that to my thick skull.

I couldn't decide what hurt more: my head or the damned firing pin chewing up the web of skin between my thumb and index finger.

During the push-pull struggle for control of the guns I kept trying to throw him down, but he was as strong

as a bull and stood his ground.

Suddenly, I felt myself falling backwards and pulled him with me. I tried to flip him over as I hit the ground, but once again superior strength and weight worked in his favor. He landed on my chest, still hanging on to both handguns.

"I'm going to kill you," he kept telling me while we grappled on the ground. I was starting to wear out and beginning to believe there was a possibility I would not be going home tonight — or ever again.

I'd been able to yell "99" over the radio — our signal for officer in trouble — but I wasn't sure if anyone heard me. It felt as if I had been fighting this guy forever and back-up was a long time in coming.

Just as I was about to lose the little strength I had remaining, I could see my son's face. The vision seemed to restore some of my strength and will to survive. This bastard was not going to keep me from going home to my family. With a surge of adrenaline I struggled on and was able to knee him in the groin.

As we continued fighting, I saw headlights coming closer and heard the crunch of gravel under a car's tires.

I heard someone yell, "Drop the gun!" The guy on my chest looked over toward the voice and said, "You do and this one gets it too."

He raised up a little over me, still

trying to shoot his gun, still trying to gain better control of my gun.

I was yelling, "Shoot him, shoot him," hoping whoever was there would shoot high. I was afraid I'd get hit too. The suspect and I were too close together.

The other officer had taken cover behind his car and was steadying his gun, waiting for exactly the right moment to fire.

I continued struggling, still yelling, "Shoot him, shoot him!"

I heard the loud "crack!" of the assisting officer's .38 Spl. The suspect had been hit; his body jerked from the impact of the .38-caliber Silvertip.

His grip on my Smith & Wesson loosened and I was able to regain control of it. I immediately fired a round at his head.

My slug hit him on the right side of the head. I could see a large chunk of scalp fly off, for a moment seeming to float in the air and then disappearing.

He fell off me, still holding the little .22, still thrashing about, still screaming that he was going to kill me.

I was lying on the ground with just enough strength left to fire another round. He was in a kneeling position, trying to raise his gun again. I fired another round into his chest. He fell over, lying on the asphalt, blood pouring from his wounds. I removed the .22 from his grasp.

He continued to struggle, still telling me he was going to kill me, all the while bleeding to death from the two Silvertips that had entered his chest.

The other officer had been on his way to work and had heard me on his scanner. He stopped to help. As you can imagine, I'm awfully glad he did.

The suspect was a multi-convicted felon. He'd been arrested for everything from shooting a police officer to murder, and had apparently been putting his time in prison to good use by lifting weights.

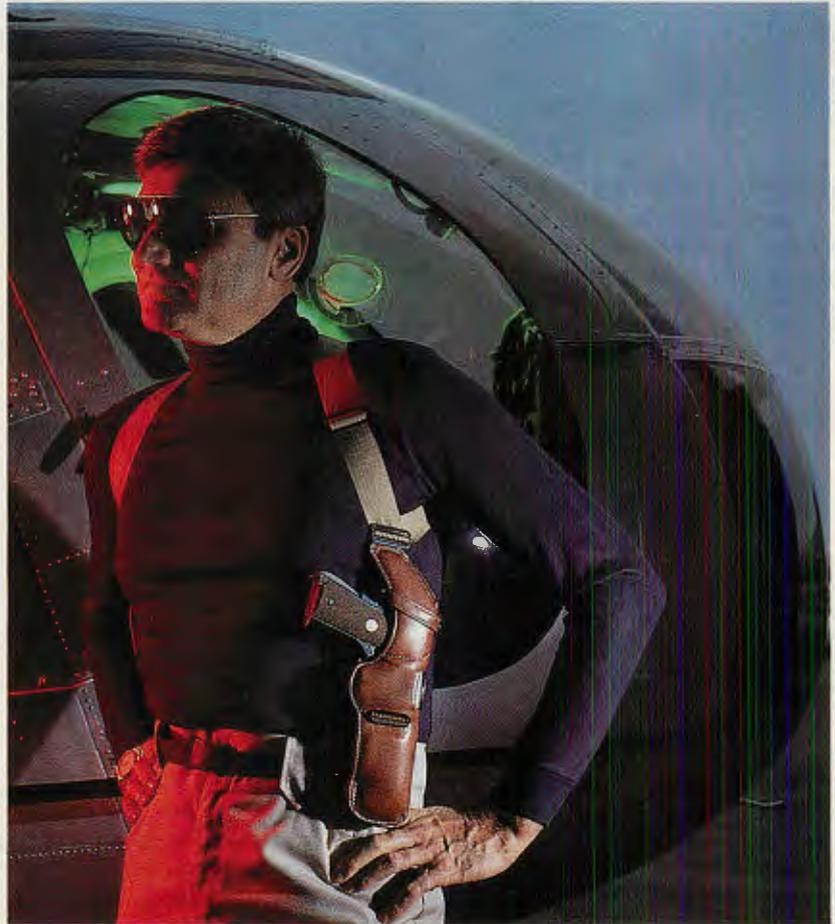
I've been told that convicts practice moves like he'd used on me on each other. They work on these moves, waiting for the day they'll get to use them against someone on the street.

I'm telling my story in the hope that it will help someone. If there is a lesson to be learned, it would have to be don't give up, no matter how tired you are or how hurt you are. *Don't give up.* Getting wounded doesn't mean you're out of the game.

As for the suspect, all I can say is that he won't be able to pull that move on anyone — ever again.

Sergeant Waler received his department's Medal of Valor award for his involvement in the shooting situation. The other officer also received the Medal of Valor and was credited with saving Sgt. Waler's life. ✕

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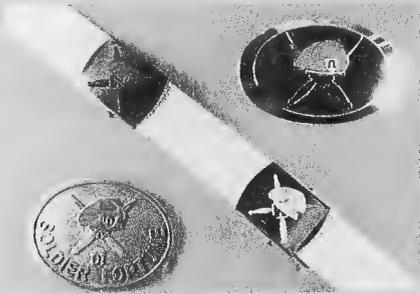


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SOF WANTS YOU!

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your age? _____
2. A) If you are a subscriber, how long have you been a subscriber? _____
B) If you buy SOF one copy at a time, how long have you been reading SOF _____ and how many issues have you bought in the last six months? _____
3. Are you a: veteran _____, active duty military _____, reservist _____, law enforcement officer _____, other (describe)? _____

II. READER SURVEY

1. If you are a subscriber, go to question 2. If you bought this issue at a newsstand, why did you buy it? For example, did you buy it because you liked the cover photo, did one of the story blurbs on the cover make you interested in an article, or did you buy it because of a specific article?

2. A) If you were the editor of SOF and for space reasons had to eliminate articles from the list below, which would you choose? Mark articles you would not run with an "X."

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All-Out Shoot-Out | <input type="checkbox"/> Junk Force Junket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Galil's New Sniper Rifle | <input type="checkbox"/> M16 90-Round Drums |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bounty Hunter | <input type="checkbox"/> Soldiers of Misfortune |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contra Aid | <input type="checkbox"/> "Platoon" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ComBloc Bayonets | <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking SWAPO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Beret's First Blood | <input type="checkbox"/> Tekna's Wilderness Edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guerrilla Theater | |

- B) Why would you eliminate those articles? _____

FIRST FOLD → DOWN

- C) "Soldiers of Misfortune" is the first part of a three-part series. What is your opinion of two- or three-part articles? _____

3. A) Rank the columns from 1 to 4, according to your preference (1 being your favorite).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Battle Blades — Customize a Bargain Bowie | <input type="checkbox"/> Combat Weaponcraft — In Time — On Target |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full Auto — Dream Battery | <input type="checkbox"/> I Was There — "You're Dead, You're Dead" |

- B) What's good about your first choice (well written, like the subject, etc.) and what's bad about your fourth choice? _____

4. A) Rank the departments from 1 to 5, according to your preference (1 being your favorite).

- Adventure Quartermaster
- Bulletin Board
- FLAK
- In Review
- Incoming

- B) What's good about your first choice (well written, like the subject, etc.) and what's bad about your fifth choice? _____

5. A) If you were the editor of SOF, what topics would you give the most space to? List the topics from 1 to 15 (1 being the most important).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Combat Reporting | <input type="checkbox"/> Military Affairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elite Units | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Weapons (Tanks, Planes, Artillery) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firearms | <input type="checkbox"/> Personality Features |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical | <input type="checkbox"/> Political Affairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How Tos | <input type="checkbox"/> Test and Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knives | <input type="checkbox"/> Terrorism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mercenary/Soldier of Fortune | |

SECOND FOLD → UP

- B) Are there any topics you would want articles about that are not listed above? _____

- C) Of the above topics, which would you eliminate and why? _____

6. If you were going to assign a writer to do a "How To" article, what would you want him to write about? _____

7. A) If you were going to send out SOF writers to cover wars, which ones would you cover? Rank them from 1 to 15 (1 being your first choice). If you wouldn't cover them, leave the space blank.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afghanistan | <input type="checkbox"/> Mozambique |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angola | <input type="checkbox"/> Nicaragua |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burma | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Ireland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cambodia | <input type="checkbox"/> Peru |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chad | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eritrea | <input type="checkbox"/> Sudan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iraq-Iran | <input type="checkbox"/> Surinam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon | |

- B) What geographical area would you rate as the most deserving of SOF coverage?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Burma, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Africa (Eritrea, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest Asia (Afghanistan, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Africa (Sudan, Chad, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle East (Lebanon, Iraq, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Africa (Mozambique, Angola, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central America (Nicaragua, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Europe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South America (Peru, Surinam, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

OVER →



8. Do you want to read articles about SOF Special Projects (training teams, parachute jumps, freedom fighter assistance, etc.)? _____
9. A) Rank the following types of covers 1-5, according to your preference (1 being the best).
- ___ Combat
 - ___ Guns
 - ___ "People"
 - ___ Movie or Television Personalities
 - ___ Graphic or "Painted"
- B) What was your favorite SOF cover photo? _____
10. Do you think any of the major articles in this issue are too long? _____
11. A) Is SOF better ____, worse ____, or the same ____ since you started reading the magazine?
 B) If you think it is better or worse, why? _____
12. What would you do to improve SOF? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

*This is a confidential survey — your name is not required. Opinions expressed will provide *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* editors with an insight as to what our readers are most interested in.

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SOLDIERS OF MISFORTUNE

Best-Laid Plans of Mice and Mercs

by Pierre Duvall

In March 1986, eight Americans and nine Argentine merchant sailors were arrested while aboard ship in Guanabara Bay off Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Their 120-foot ocean-going tug, the Panamanian-registered Nobistor, was seized by the Brazilian federal police and six tons of weapons, ammunition and other military gear were confiscated.

The Americans claimed they were Vietnam vets and military trainers hired to guard the Nobistor's cargo, which ostensibly was purchased in Buenos Aires, Argentina by the Defense Ministry of Ghana, a country in west Africa. In reality, these men were on their way to pull off the most audacious coup d'etat in recent history.

What follows, in this first of a three-part series, is a personal account by the American mercenary who organized and planned this operation — and who was later cut out



Loaded with six tons of materiel, eight American mercs and nine Argentine merchant sailors, the 120-foot Nobistor steams toward west African country of Ghana for daring coup attempt to depose Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings.

of it. It's a tale of high-level intrigue involving American mercs and an exiled Ghanaian businessman, Hong Kong banking and gambling interests, the New York City Chinese Mafia, the Israeli Mossad and Argentine arms dealers, the FBI — and the Central Intelligence Agency.

It's also about money and greed, cross and double-cross, and a lot of questions that will probably never be answered. SOF has followed this story from day one of the operation and has interviewed most of the principals in depth. Yet the complete tale of these "dogs of war" and their backers will probably never be known: Each party, when they did talk, had their own version to tell.

As of this writing, four of the Americans were still in confinement, either in Brazil or in Argentina, which had demanded extradition of all eight. Four others escaped from a Brazilian maximum security prison in mid-December 1986. Three made their way to Bolivia, where SOF Senior Editor John Coleman met them; they eventually made it back to the United States on Christmas Day. As we went to press, the fourth merc was still traveling via his own route home.

— The Editors



I'VE been a soldier and a mercenary most of my life. It's what I know and do best, and I make no apologies to anyone for my work. When a job comes up and there's enough money there to make it

Path of American mercs from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Accra, Ghana ended abruptly as Brazilian officials seized their ship en route in Guanabara Bay off Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

worth my while, I take it. That's how I got involved in the plot to overthrow Jerry Rawling's government of Ghana.

It was late 1985 and I was in between work. My last job, protecting some mines in Kentucky during a vicious labor dispute, had been OK in the beginning. The pay was good and we all got along pretty well together, but then it turned into a rake-the-leaves-and-water-the-grass drill. I'd been a *sergent-chef* [chief sergeant] in the French Foreign Legion and just didn't do that shit, so I left.

My money situation was getting tight and I was getting bored when I got a phone call in early November. It was an old friend who was a close associate of Holden Roberto, the Angolan FNLA leader. He knew someone who needed a job done. Was I interested?

"Sure," I told him. "Does he have any money to back it up?"

"\$175,000," Jose answered. "He wants to meet you in Miami. Can you come?"

It only took me a second to decide. Ninety-nine percent of all merc offers promised money when the job was done, none up-front. I accepted.

"OK, but you'll have to pay your way," my friend said. "He'll reimburse you when you arrive." Jose went on to describe the man I'd be meeting at the Miami airport.

But after I'd hung up, I had second thoughts. I could scrape enough money together for the flight but would have nothing left over at all. I'd been through too many of these deals and had been left stranded with nothing to show for it. I just wasn't convinced there was anything to this one, so I let it go.

My phone rang early the next day. "Where were you?" It was a voice I didn't know, the words spoken in English with an unmistakable African accent. "I was waiting."

That call was enough to convince me. There was a change of plan — I would now meet my contact in New York — so I bought a ticket and caught the next Piedmont flight out.

As planned, the man was waiting at the unloading gate. He was African black, short and well-dressed. In his hand was the tip-off — a white envelope — which he held against his chest. I walked up to him and said, "I'm the person you're waiting for."

He nodded and we left the airport without another word being said. The silence continued in the taxi as we headed into the city. My contact was being cautious, checking the traffic behind the cab while we rolled down the Horace Harding Expressway and exited onto Queens Boulevard. Out the window I noticed a tall building with the sign, "Lafrak City," on top. That was our destination.

It was one of those jam-packed, multi-storied and multibuilding complexes in the heart of New York City. It was a clean, low-rent kind of place — and it had security guards. We took our business outside and around the back to a large recreation area. We sat down on a bench and he opened his



Illustration by Darrell D. Mayabb

briefcase, pulling out a map and some other papers.

"My name is Godfrey [Godfrey Osei] and I want you to do work for me," he said, spreading the map open on the seat. It was a Ghana Tourist Board map of Accra, the country's capital. The work Godfrey wanted done was straightforward: organize a mercenary operation to overthrow Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, Ghana's current president, secure the capital and hold it until Godfrey could take control of the country. Simple and difficult as that.

I knew a little about Ghana and Rawlings, enough to know that he was just another African dictator of another backwater country. I didn't care who ran the place, and since the guy sitting across from me had the money to pay me, he'd be as good as any other.

Godfrey told me he wanted 10-30 white mercs in on the job and that he had 150-300 Ghanaians living in exile in Britain and Ghana's neighbor, the Ivory Coast, who would fill out the attack force. I was to organize the whole military side of the operation: work out the plan, buy the aircraft or boats for the landing and all the weapons and gear we'd need.

We worked on the preliminary plan of attack for quite a while. Godfrey wanted half the merc force to storm Rawling's house — "The Castle" it was called on the map, on the southern edge of Accra on the beach — kill him, his family and anyone else hanging around there. The rest of the force would hit the prison about 1½ miles to the west, release and arm the prisoners — mostly influential businessmen and politicians, Godfrey said. The two forces would then link up near the broadcasting station a couple of miles north of the beach, secure it and broadcast a prerecorded tape from Godfrey announcing the coup.

When I told Osei that \$175,000 wouldn't cover the cost of weapons, let alone mercs, he was furious — but not desperate. After some loud phone conversations with unknown sources, he assured me I'd get the money I needed.

In the meantime, some Ghanaian army units would join in the operation and take over Kotoka International Airport and other key points in the city. I don't think they were so much on Godfrey's side as against Rawlings. In other words, business as usual in Africa.

It was pretty obvious that this was going to be a beach landing operation. Rawlings lived there and the prison was only spitting distance away. They were key targets and had to be hit immediately, and a beach assault was the best bet. That meant an ocean-going boat to get us offshore, rubber assault boats to get us on the beach — and a possible run-in with Ghana's navy.

"Don't worry about that," Godfrey said, waving his hand in dismissal. "I've taken care of it. The navy won't bother us."

OK. I'd take his word for that as far as it went, but it was time to see if we were talking business or pipe dreams.

"This will cost you a lot of money . . . for me, the mercs, a boat and all the gear. How much do you have?"

Godfrey didn't hesitate. "\$175,000 now and I can get more. A lot more if we need it."

That was the figure Jose had said on the phone earlier. I wanted to see some of it. "I want \$5,000 for working and expense money up-front," I told him.

"Wait here," the African said, leaving me on the bench with the map while he went up to his apartment. He was back in five minutes.

"\$5,000. Count it."

The plastic bag was two-inches thick and filled with \$20s and \$50s. I counted it and the \$5,000 was all there. We were in business.

Godfrey and I were wrapping up some details — a few code names, contact telephone numbers and the like — when he dropped a clanger on me. He hadn't men-

tioned any time restrictions before and I figured there weren't any. We'd just do the job when we were ready.

"You need to be in Accra by Christmas," he said, tapping the map of the city for emphasis. "Rawlings has sent 400 of his best troops to Cuba for training and they'll be back by then."

He was nodding his head up and down like he was answering for me. "By Christmas," he said again.

That left me little more than six weeks. But hell . . . if he was paying the freight I'd do my damndest to be on the beaches by Christmas Eve. I'd learned in my 17 years with the Legion that nothing was impossible. Sometimes difficult, but never impossible. I told Godfrey we'd be there.

During the meeting and the ride back to the airport, I found myself coming to like this little African from Ghana. He was kind of . . . well, unsettled, but he knew what he wanted, was friendly enough and had the cash to back his plan. He even bought my ticket home at the airport. But I still didn't really trust him. I don't trust anyone in this business. Maybe that's why I'm still around.

My first job was to get the weapons. The easiest and cheapest would be the ComBloc type — AKs, RPGs, light mortars and such — along with enough ammo and grenades to outfit 150 troops. They'd also be the easiest to resupply once we hit Accra.

I had a contact who'd let me know sometime back that he had ready access to what I needed. He'd said he could get PLO AKs, so I gave him a call. I told him I was looking to buy some materials, could he help? His answer was to come on out and we'd discuss it.

Dave's company was located out on the West Coast near Los Angeles. It was a high-tech security firm and I knew they had connects with the FBI and the State Department. They had demonstrated some of their gear to the Los Angeles Police Department for Olympic security and had tried to get State approval to send certain devices to Central America. State turned them down, but they'd slipped some through customs anyway.

Dave and his partner Jeff met me at John Wayne Airport in Orange County. They started pumping me immediately for information on the operation. I managed to put them off until we settled into Dave's plush office in an upper-class L.A. business district.

"OK. Tell me exactly what sort of equipment you're looking for and where you want to employ it," Dave shot at me. Jeff sat in the corner, not saying anything. I had a feeling they were recording all of this, but I knew it wouldn't do them any good to let it out. They'd get stung just as bad as me.

"I need 150 AKs, some light machine guns and RPGs, grenades and ammo. What's your price?" This kind of job only called for the basics. I didn't want any high-tech shit, just trigger-puller gear.

There was a pause and then Jeff an-

Ted (standing) and Osei went straight to the New York Chinese Mafia boss (center) for the money. Once the suitcases loaded with \$750,000 in cash were stowed in the taxi, Osei was ready to cut me out. Illustration by Darrell D. Mayabb



swered. "\$1,500 for each AK."

"Bullshit. No way in hell I'll pay that. I've only got \$175,000 so you have to do better," I told them.

We haggled some more, but Dave and Jeff were more interested in the plan. They pumped and squeezed for information and started guessing that the op was in Africa. I cut them short.

"Look . . . I'll go outside for awhile. You guys come up with a price for the guns we can work with." I left them both in Dave's office and went out to call Godfrey on a pay phone. I told him we'd need a lot more money than his \$175,000 to buy the weapons.

"Don't worry about money," Godfrey said. "I can get whatever we need."

About 20 minutes later I went back into the office. Dave wasn't there.

"Here's what we'll do for you," Jeff said. "The AKs will run \$220 each if you buy in bulk — 1,000 or more. The more you buy, the cheaper they get. We can get you RPG-2s for \$3,500-\$4,000 each. We'll figure out a price for the rest later. Are you interested?"

Fuck no I wasn't interested. They were scamming me and I knew it. Just then Dave came back into the office and immediately started pumping me for more information: Where were we going? When did we need

the weapons? Did we need transportation? Who was involved?

Dave started coming on with the big-buddy act, the we're-all-in-this-together line.

"Hey, we know it's in Africa and we can help you out. Is it Nigeria? We know people there and can set up a staging area for you."

We went back and forth some more, then somehow Dave latched onto Ghana as the target and wouldn't let go. I just didn't say anything and the talk went back to the weapons buy.

"To get the stuff you need we'll have to go to Hong Kong," Dave said. "We can buy a boat there and load the weapons directly. But it's going to cost you an extra 15-20 percent commission."

"Tell you what. We'll carry out the entire operation for \$2.5 million — weapons, transport, recruiting . . . everything that needs to be done. Give us the \$175,000 as a down payment and we'll get it rolling."

I thought about it for a second. "What do I get out of this deal?"

"You'll be in on it. We'll cut you in on the profits," Dave promised.

Sure they would. Then Jeff suggested putting John Early [a veteran of the Vietnam and Rhodesian wars, technical adviser for the movie "Red Dawn" and one-time SOF contributor] in charge of the operation. At



that point I said I had to get back and talk with my contact.

"We can get this thing underway while you're gone," Dave told me. "Leave me \$2,500 as a good faith payment and we'll get moving on it."

I didn't trust either one of them, but I knew where to find them again. They knew that too. I counted out the money, then Jeff drove me to LAX (Los Angeles International Airport). He kept pumping me for information all the way to the ticket counter, then waited while I arranged my flight. He wanted to see where I was going.

New York was my destination, but I bought a ticket to Denver for Jeff's benefit. I told him I'd be in touch. I connected to New York from Stapleton Airport in Denver. The flights were good enough, but I wasn't happy at all about Dave and Jeff in Los Angeles.

I booked a room at the Holiday Inn near LaGuardia Airport in New York and called Godfrey. I didn't tell him anything on the phone but told him to meet me at the hotel. He arrived a little while later, excited to hear what I had to tell him about my trip.

His mood changed soon enough. He bitched about the cost of the trip, the cost of the weapons and the \$2,500 I'd left with Dave. While we were on the subject, I told him that his 175 grand wouldn't even be

close to what we needed. The weapons alone would eat it up and we still needed a boat and a lot more gear. Plus, he'd have to pay the mercs' fee and the cost of their transport.

He wasn't very happy, but told me again that he could raise the cash.

Godfrey started pacing the room, worried that we couldn't get the job done by Christmas. He started going over the plan again, talking more to the room than to me. The more he talked, the more I was convinced that the U.S. government was involved in this deal.

Finally I asked him. "Have you contacted the CIA about this job?"

Godfrey didn't try to cover up anything. "The CIA and FBI flew me to Washington," he said. "I met Casey and McFarlane, and then went to Langley." [William Casey is the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, headquartered at Langley, Virginia. Robert "Bud" McFarlane once headed the National Security Council.]

I wasn't really surprised to hear that. The Agency's involvement with Ghana was no secret.

Godfrey told me that some people at Langley and with the FBI had gone over his plan with him and made some suggestions. They were the ones who said a boat op was the way to go, and had made some markings

on Godfrey's map of Accra. He said he still had contacts with the Agency who would supply him with information.

Then he changed the subject and started talking about why he was doing this job.

"I was a businessman in Accra," he said, still pacing with a worried look. "I owned a trucking company and was well off. Then Rawlings came in. Government changed and was too restrictive and I had to show all my assets. When they saw how much I had, they just took it away and put me in jail. They took all my trucks and property."

He was talking nonstop now, a worried little man trying to overthrow a country.

"Rawlings also put the other rich businessmen in jail too. Especially those who ran the diamond and gold mines.

"I was held at The Castle, where Rawlings lived. My wife smuggled me in a pistol. I escaped and, with some other people, took over the radio station, to tell the people to throw Rawlings out."

He stopped talking and looked at me like I'd just arrived. "I was sentenced to two years for trying to overthrow the government. The Swiss organized my release and the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) let me and my family into the United States.

"I've been working very hard ever since to go back," he finished.

It was interesting, but I didn't really care about his reasons. I was more interested in the job we had to do right now.

"Tell me more about what the government did for you in Washington," I pressed him.

Godfrey sat down on the bed and looked at some of his papers. "Contacts," he answered. "They talked to some people in Hong Kong and the Israelis at the U.N."

It was vague, and he turned his attention back to me. "You've got to get this done before Christmas! His troops will be back from Cuba by then!" He started pacing back and forth again.

"You must neutralize Rawlings, his family, everyone in The Castle — and anyone on the first night who shoots at you. You have full authority to do everything you need to do!"

That was fine with me, but first things came first. We talked about money again. He said he wanted 30 white merc troops, and I said I wanted \$3,000 per man per month, a \$10,000 bonus and round-trip ticket for each. He'd need a lot more money than he had.

"I can get the money from the Chinese Mafia in New York," Godfrey answered. "They represent Hong Kong banking people. They want to move their business to Ghana and work there. So do the gambling casino people. That can only happen when I'm president, so they'll give me the money you need."

I told him I'd keep working on getting the weapons. We talked about a few more things, mainly money, and left it at that.

I made another trip to Los Angeles to see Dave and Jeff. They told me they were

working on the weapons, but they still needed more money — and information. They didn't get either from me.

The next few weeks were spent recruiting mercs and trying to find another source of weapons and gear in case the L.A. connection fell through. I had a lot more luck with the first than the second.

Godfrey wanted American mercs for this job. I wanted Legionnaires. Americans plan too much and want too much equipment. Legionnaires just need a rifle and a place to point it. But I was running out of time, so I ran up a \$600 phone bill bringing Americans in on the job.

I had another meeting with Godfrey in New York around the first part of December and brought him up to date. There was no way we'd make it by Christmas and I told him so. He didn't seem too worried about it. I told him I needed more money. He said he could get it from the Chinese Mafia at 1,000 percent interest. He didn't seem worried about that either. He also said he'd been in contact with the CIA and told them about Dave and Jeff's involvement with the weapons buy.

"They said they didn't know that Dave was in the mercenary arms business," Godfrey said. "They weren't pleased at all!"

By this time I'd talked with Dave a few times on the phone. They were stalling me, trying to take over the operation. They wanted Godfrey to come out to the West Coast and deal with them directly. They really wanted me out of the operation entirely and I knew it.

I'd had enough of their bullshit. I called Dave just before Christmas and told him the deal was off and I wanted my \$2,500 back. He hedged.

"Take it easy," he told me. "We're working on raising the \$2½ million to pull this deal off for you."

"Fuck you. You're out of it and I want

my money back."

"Now you look here," Dave shouted back at me over the long-distance line. "That \$2,500 is expenses for my time! I earned it."

That finally broke my back. "You'd better get me my money right now or I'll kill you. And kill your family." I didn't need to shout. He knew I meant it.

That shut him up fast. Then I added, "The Agency knows you're in this deal and they're pissed off about it. Get my money or . . ." I left the rest unsaid.

"Call me back in two days," Dave said quietly. "I'll have your cash." That was the last contact I ever had with Dave, Jeff or their company. My calls to their office on the Coast went unanswered. So did my calls to Dave's apartment and his hangout in Las Vegas. They just dropped out of sight and so did my \$2,500.

Godfrey was highly pissed off when I gave him the word. He accused me of stealing the money. I hadn't, but I was going through my initial \$5,000 pretty fast without a lot to show for it. I told Godfrey to sit tight, that I had other sources to check for weapons. Since we'd already blown the Christmas deadline, there was no longer any rush. He said to keep in touch.

I wasn't really worried about finding a source for the weapons we'd need to take out Rawlings and his crew. What worried me was the money and the time factor. If I didn't start producing soon, Godfrey might cut me out of the job and find someone else to do it. And I didn't want to miss out on this op. It was the kind of work I was good at, and there hadn't been much of it floating around lately.

I got on the phone to Bob Foti, a fellow I'd worked with on the mine security job in Kentucky. I didn't trust him, but he might have the right connects to buy some weapons.

"I've already been in on this deal before," he told me. "Some friends of Godfrey's in the gold mining business in Ghana hired us to do a feasibility study on taking the place out."

He and four other mercs had been hired for \$25,000 each, Foti said. They'd spent a month in a London hotel working the plan. One guy had flown to Accra to check it out and make contact with the organizers. They submitted their plan but the gold mining people had chickened out. Foti and the others didn't bother to return their unused expense money but had split back to the States instead.

"I can get you the stuff you need from Beirut," Foti said, "but it's going to cost a lot . . . a couple hundred thou at least."

By this stage I didn't know how much money Godfrey had to spend on the operation. He was getting tight with his pocketbook. "Look, we haven't got that kind of cash to spend. Just forget I talked to you," I told him.

But Foti didn't want to let it go that easily. "Wait a second. Sounds like you've got a good deal going here so let's don't blow it. Let's just milk Godfrey for as much as we can get . . . lead him along for as long as we can."

I may be a lot of things, but that shit wasn't my style. Double-cross too many people in this business and pretty soon you're out of it — or dead.

"No way," I told him. "But if you can come up with some money backers or a ship, I'll cut you in on the job."

Foti told me he'd work on it.

I had another meeting with Godfrey in New York in January to discuss progress. I had his 30 mercs lined up, but still no solid line on weapons or transport. I told him I was still checking for sources — maybe Beirut — and financial backers to help pick up costs. Godfrey thought he had some connections in Spain to get the weapons and some people in London who could organize a boat.

We also talked about an incident that helped confirm my feeling that Uncle Sam was involved in all of this. A little while earlier, the FBI had busted three Ghanaians in Newark, New Jersey. It had been a sting operation, a setup. The Ghanaians had tried to buy weapons from an agent posing as an arms dealer, and they had \$200,000 in cash to do it.

The big question was why.

"Rawlings sent an envoy to the White House," Godfrey said. "He told them that the Ghanaian government *knew* the U.S. was letting dissidents use the U.S. to stage a coup, and Rawlings wanted something done about it."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It was a goodwill gesture. It appeased Rawlings. And it got our opposition out of the way," he added, smiling.

"Did the CIA set this thing up to give us a free hand?" I asked him pointblank.

He just shrugged again and said, "It doesn't matter. It doesn't involve us."



Illustration by Darrell D. Maybach

I got back in touch with Foti to see what he'd turned up. He said he'd found some investors and a line on the weapons, and wanted to meet with Godfrey. I set it up. I wasn't there when Foti came to New York and saw Godfrey, but Godfrey said later that he'd paid Foti \$500 to cover his expenses. He didn't say anything else about their meeting.

By this time I knew we couldn't get the weapons in the U.S. It probably wasn't a good idea anyway; too many U.S. laws would be broken, and Godfrey wanted to steer clear of doing that. He also dropped the idea of 30 mercs and asked if I could get 10-15 for \$3,000 each. No problem. He said again that he'd arranged to get more money from the Chinese Mafia — at 1,000 percent interest.

Since I was sure Godfrey was tied in with the Agency on this, I asked him why he didn't get the CIA to set up the weapons and boat.

"I have," he told me. "They will supply all the materials, you just come up with the people!"

I did. But now, Foti was trying to cut himself in in a big way. He wanted \$12,000 up-front and \$12,000 after the job was done for each man, and a bonus. He was talking directly to Godfrey, telling him fuck knows what, but Godfrey seemed interested. I told him he'd be wasting too much money, and to check with the Agency on Foti and his partner, John Early.

A couple of days later he got back to me. He'd talked to his contact at the Agency and they weren't happy at all with Early's involvement. "Too much drugs and alcohol," Godfrey said.

I told Godfrey to cut Foti and Early out of the job. For one thing, Foti wanted too many guarantees. He wanted too much money. He wanted back-ups and back-ups to the back-ups. This was a trigger-puller job, simple as that. We didn't need big guns and high-tech, just guys to hit the beach and do the job — like Legionnaires would have done. That's why I wanted Legionnaires. Americans plan too much and want too much, just like in Vietnam. Foti was trying to make his own deal with Godfrey, and I didn't trust Early or some of his friends. Godfrey didn't talk about them again and I didn't bring the subject up.

Around mid-January, Godfrey flew to Washington for a meeting. He came back and told me the CIA would be sending a handler down who would act as a liaison officer. The guy would go with them to Accra on the boat and would be making arrangements. Godfrey told me his name was Ted and that he had been a CIA contract player/Air America pilot for a long time. As I got some more details later, I found out that Ted had worked with the Vennell Corporation in Iran, flew a lot in Central America and had smuggled TV sets into Mexico on black-painted C-47s. He was currently operating out of a little Texas town called Plano, near Dallas.

My first meeting with Ted was in room



Godfrey Osei (right), mastermind behind coup attempt, meeting in bridge of *Nobistor* with Argentine Naval Intelligence officer Louis Kubet (left) to sign contract for use of ship.

164 of the Best Western Midway Motel in Flushing, New York. He was around five-foot-eight with thinning, sandy hair, and I pegged him at about 150 pounds and 45-50 years old. He did have a Texas drawl — and he knew the whole plan.

He laid out detailed maps of Ghana and Accra, and also some navigational shipping maps, on the bed. All the maps were covered with notes, azimuth plottings and what looked like code numbers of some sort.

We talked for quite a while. Ted was friendly enough and I got the feeling that he was on the level. He told me an Israeli Mossad agent had left just before I arrived. The Israeli had agreed to organize a boat for the job and to set up the arms buy with an Argentine banker in Buenos Aires.

"The Israelis owe us a favor," Ted explained. "The Mossad uses this banker for some things, and he'll rent us a boat and crew for \$1,000 a day.

"This guy *owns* the shipping company, owns a bank in Zurich . . . and owns the arms companies in Argentina where we'll get the weapons — 150 of their version of the FN FAL, rocket launchers, machine guns, pistols, rubber boats, medical stuff . . . everything."

"Godfrey's got the money for this?" I asked him.

"\$750,000 will be here tomorrow. The Israelis are going to do us a favor on that too. We'll make the deposit in a foreign bank here and have it transferred to Buenos Aires. But the records will indicate that the deposit was made *outside* the United States," Ted told me. The banker in Argentina would be getting \$10,000 up-front — also organized by the Israelis — to get the ball rolling.

The job was getting better. Things were finally coming together. We spent some hours working out requirements for the mis-

sion and how much it would cost. The boat and crew would run \$34,000; 150 FNs at \$320 each, including 10 magazines and 1,000 rounds; about \$150,000 for Argentine machine guns, rocket launchers, pistols, light mortars and ammunition, as well as rubber boats, uniforms, medical gear and radios; \$48,000 for round-trip tickets for 30 mercs to Argentina (we'd gone back to the number 30 instead of Godfrey's 10-15, figuring the money'd be there to cover the extra cost); \$120,000 to cover the mercs' one-month fee and \$10,000 bonus at the end; and \$60,000 to pay for 120 Ghanaians living in exile in the Ivory Coast who would be part of the attack force.

It totaled out to around \$650,000, leaving us with \$100,000 for contingency funds.

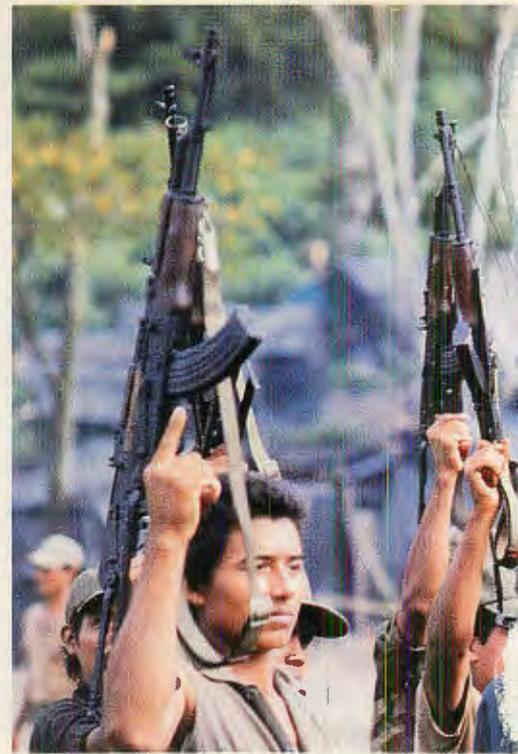
Godfrey had joined us in the room and he and Ted left to get the money. Godfrey had pretty much told me it would be coming through the CIA, but I had the feeling he was still dealing with the New York Chinese Mafia. That turned out to be true.

They came back about an hour later — without the cash and bitching about the Chinese. They had wanted a full accountability from Godfrey on the initial \$225,000 they had loaned him (Godfrey'd told me he had \$175,000 for the job. What he'd done with the other \$50,000 I'll never know.). They thought he was stealing from them and they weren't happy about it. They'd made noises about what would happen to Godfrey and his family if that were true.

Ted and Godfrey had managed to cool them down and were to meet them later and pick up the \$750,000. I went out for some food. When I came back, Ted and Godfrey took me down the street from the motel and into an apartment building. We climbed up two flights of stairs and went into a room.

Three Chinese men were waiting for us. The deal, as I understood it, was for each to put up \$225,000. They were repping for Hong Kong banks and casinos and figured they'd get a hefty return if the plan worked. After some polite small talk, two of the

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SOF CENTRAL AMERICA

CONTRA AID

Sandinistas Never Had It So Bad

by Steve Salisbury

IT was late afternoon on 17 October 1986 and the sun was dropping fast behind the mountains along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. Enrique Bermudez, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force's (FDN) military commander, was determined to bring the good news to as many of his anti-communist *contra* freedom fighters as possible before nightfall.

"The American Congress has just made final passage of our \$100 million aid," shouted the tough, fatigue-clad *comandante* to some 200 guerrillas standing in formation. "Soon we will have the guns, ammunition, boots and supplies to intensify our struggle inside Nicaragua. But we will have to fight hard and score impressive victories in the coming months if we are to count on the Congress to continue supporting us."

After months of political infighting in Washington, the United States was about to resume military aid to the freedom fighters seeking to overthrow the Soviet-backed re-

gime in Managua. For the last two years a congressional ban on U.S. military assistance to the Nicaraguan insurgency had pushed the *contras* close to defeat. Sandinista troops, led by Cuban combat advisers and supported by Soviet-made Mi-24 *Hind* helicopter gunships and heavy artillery, drove most of the ill-equipped *contra* forces into Honduras and Costa Rica. If not for a network of covert and private-sector support, the *contras* would probably have collapsed.

OUR MAN DOWN SOUTH

Steve Salisbury, SOF's Central America correspondent, is well-known to our readers for his firsthand accounts of the guerrilla war in El Salvador and action elsewhere in the region, and for his continuing coverage of the *contra* movement.

Still, this covert and private aid was not enough for the *contras* to take the offensive. Bermudez insists the \$100 million is.

From 17 to 19 October, French author and photographer Jean Louis Clariond and I were the first journalists in months to visit the FDN's border base camps. We asked the freedom fighters about the impact the \$100 million in aid would have on the course of their war.

"Who knows if it is enough to win?" Bermudez said as he relaxed in a peasant's mud hut after finishing his twilight pep talk. "But it's a start. We can now regain the territory we had to abandon over the last couple years because of the cutoff of American military support. We can hurt the communists and destabilize them. But it's a question of American resolve, too. Our job is to show results so that the Americans can continue supporting us." Bermudez's coffee-colored eyes flashed in the dim candlelight and several officers of the FDN's general staff who were seated at the table



ABOVE LEFT: Contra sniper with an antiquated M1-D Garand sniper rifle. Contras fight with any weapons available, making logistics a nightmare. Photo: Ralph Edens

ABOVE: One essential item of the contra arsenal never in short supply — enthusiasm for the cause. Photo: Jean Louis Clariond

ABOVE RIGHT: Young FDN contras become men-at-arms at a contra training camp near the Nicaraguan border. Photo: Jean Louis Clariond

with us nodded in agreement.

"We are going to use classic guerrilla tactics," continued the 54-year-old Bermudez, who attended military engineering school in Brazil, General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and counterinsurgency courses at Fort Gullick, Panama. "We're going to hit the economic targets that feed the communists' war machine. We're going to occasionally mount large raids. We'll ambush the Sandinistas and attack them when we have the advantage, but we'll avoid their heavily defended military installations. With our successes and greater presence our forces will grow. We have 18,000 men now — 16,000 combatants, 2,000 who are administrative, medical, logistical or part of our air force — but we could double that. Then we'll be able to take our war to the cities."

However, as a seasoned professional military man, Bermudez knows better than anyone that the obstacles to victory are great. A guerrilla movement has never toppled a communist dictatorship and the Sandinistas, backed by full support from the Soviet bloc, are determined not to become the first to fall. Over the last few years their

119,000-strong armed forces have dug in and mined the freedom fighters' infiltration routes. An even greater problem for the contras is that the Sandinistas have adopted measures aimed at drying up the proverbial sea where Mao Tse-tung said guerrillas flourish: a sympathetic population.

"The *piricoacos* (a derogatory term for the Sandinistas meaning "yapping dogs") are confiscating the land of the *campesinos* who support us and are relocating them to collective farms tightly controlled by the state," Bermudez said. "Many people want to help us, but they fear Sandinista reprisals. The *piris* have killed, imprisoned and tortured many of our sympathizers. We will have more open support from the people when we are better able to protect our supporters."

But it's a race against time, according to Bermudez. Every day it's getting harder for the people to collaborate with contra forces, as the apparatus of repression and intimidation of the Sandinistas' totalitarian state grows stronger. What particularly worries Bermudez are the Sandinista Defense Com-

Enrique Bermudez, the FDN's highly professional field commander. Photo: Topaz



mittees, known by their Spanish initials CDS.

"The CDS are the watch groups in every community that want to know and control every aspect of someone's life," the commander said. "They have control over where you go, what you do, or if you'll receive food rations. In Nicaragua the government rations everything. In this way, the communists make sure that the people won't have enough to share with us. If someone wants an extra pair of boots or something, the CDS immediately thinks he's going to give it to the contras. The CDS hasn't consolidated throughout the whole country yet, but it's doing so fast. What we need to do is advance militarily and politically before it's too late."

For the contras' campaign to progress they will have to counter the Sandinistas' fleet of Soviet-made helicopters — including the Mi-24 *Hind* gunship. To this end, American defense officials say they can provide Stinger or Redeye shoulder-held, surface-to-air missiles, but the contras may choose to purchase the cheaper Soviet-made SAM-7s on the international arms market.

"The Mi-24s are very dangerous," Comandante Atila, the husky commander of a section of the Jorge Salazar Task Force, said during the second day of my visit with the contras. "But with the missiles we will be able to defend ourselves, hold territory and maybe declare a provisional government."

It would have been good to have an SAM handy that afternoon. The freedom fighters identified a plane flying over our encampment as a Sandinista reconnaissance flight. "They have been flying reconnaissance over us every day," I was told. Comandante

Continued on page 85

BOUNTY HUNTER



Bob Burton and "Papa" Thorson make a pickup. This fugitive proved easy to track down and earned Burton a quick \$2,500. Photo: David Bjorkman/National News Service

Get Your Money Manhuntin' and Your Kicks for Free

by Sandy Sandfort

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE. You don't see that kind of poster plastered on post office walls much anymore. Nowadays, criminals on the loose are simply "wanted" by the law, and the judicial system (occasionally) does the rest.

But who brings 'em back alive? The feds go after heavy-duty law breakers, and local law enforcement agencies work their own back alleys for the scum on the run. But how about your garden variety bail bond jumper?

PRACTICED HAND

Sandy Sandfort's interests run the gamut from law to medicine (he's practiced both). He's written on a wide range of subjects from flying to international business, and has been featured in *Reason Magazine* and *Investigate Newsletter*, among numerous other publications.

Or a missing person case? Or a debtor who decides that skipping town is easier than making payments? Bounty hunting is alive and well, all right. In fact, with hundreds of thousands of dollars in reward money just waiting to be claimed, business is booming. And as long as people keep breaking the law, bounty hunting will continue to be a growth industry — for the right kind of hunter.

Technically, "bounty" is the appropriate

Ten thousand dollars in gold from *Soldier of Fortune* still awaits the "bounty hunter" who captures Idi Amin alive and transports him to proper authorities for trial in Uganda.

term where the services or action of many persons are desired and each who acts upon the offer may entitle himself to the promised gratuity. "Reward" is the more proper term in the case of a single service, which can only be performed once and will be earned only by one person. Therefore, offers to all persons who kill coyotes are bounties. A reward is offered only to the person who succeeds in performing a given task.

Nevertheless, the term "bounty hunter" is commonly used for persons who seek general rewards and operate under contract for the return of specific persons or property. And apprehending people obviously requires special knowledge and skills. Bounty hunting is not something that comes naturally or can be learned overnight.

Knowledge is usually easier to obtain than the skills. Important information on skip tracing, records research, surveillance and the laws of arrest and of carrying concealed weapons is only as far away as your library. Learn about these subjects and cultivate contacts in, or associated with, the criminal community. This will prove invaluable when hunting someone down. Remember that most criminals are brought to justice on the basis of informants' tips, not sophisticated police techniques and equipment.

Skills can only be acquired through diligent practice and on-the-job training. Since bounty hunting involves considerable risk, you want to be sure of your abilities *before* you're faced with a life-threatening situation.

Bounty hunters sooner or later have to rely on force, so all of the martial arts skills are helpful; hand-to-hand techniques like choke holds, take-downs and come-a-longs are often necessary during the apprehension process. Learning how to use clubs, black-jacks and other impact weapons, as well as the proper use of firearms, is vital.

Another important area of expertise revolves around professional driving skills: high-speed pursuit, evasion, defensive driving and tailing procedures.

Once you have the skills and knowledge it's time to look for a paying job. Reward opportunities can be found on local, national and international levels. Individuals, private organizations and governments are continually offering rewards open to anyone who can do the job. Though no central source for reward offers exists, a little homework is all it takes to find them.

Your best bet is to look close to home, as those jobs provide the easiest access. But national and international opportunities, though they may seem unattainable, shouldn't be overlooked — if you're serious about the work.

WANTED



IDI AMIN

FOR NUMEROUS CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

\$10,000.00 REWARD IN GOLD

For Information Leading to the Capture Alive by Proper
Authorities and Delivery to Uganda For Trial

Reward Offered By

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
Magazine

Members of Soldier of Fortune Magazine staff and employees are not eligible for this reward.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE Magazine is the sole judge of any dispute arising over this reward and of any person or persons entitled to share therein and its decision on any point or matter connected with the reward shall be final and conclusive.

LOCAL

Wherever there are criminal courts, there are bail bondsmen. To ensure that someone appears for a court date, a judge can either keep the accused in custody or release him for a certain amount of bail money. The idea of bail is to make it too expensive for someone to forfeit the bond by failing to show up. Free enterprise has seen to it that even the less wealthy can take advantage of this system. For a fee, usually 10 percent of the bond, a bail bondsman will accept the economic risk of forfeiture.

However, a bail bondsman who gets stiffed by a client is not without recourse. He doesn't have to pay the court if he can produce the accused. Some bail bondsmen will go after the "bail jumper" themselves, but most will contract the job out to an agent — a professional bounty hunter.

Preliminary information is available to anyone who takes the time to call area bail bondsmen. Because some may be reluctant to discuss the bounty hunting aspect of their business, you have to be persistent. The reason for the bondsman's reluctance is easily explained — acting as a bail bondsman's agent is one of the most wide-open areas of the law. Unlike other aspects of modern life which are certified, licensed, taxed, regulated and often prohibited, bounty hunting is almost unaddressed by the law.

It is the legal "gray area" of the profession that makes bail bondsmen nervous.

In the final analysis, bondsmen *need* someone to act for them in bringing back bail jumpers. If you can offer the brains, the moxie and muscle, the bail bondsmen may commission you for the job.

Bounty hunters are independent contractors who get paid a negotiated percentage of the original bond. Typically, bail bondsmen will pay 20 percent of the bond they stand to lose. However, a higher percentage can often be negotiated if the time limit before forfeiture is short, if the trail is very cold, or if the bounty hunter has to go into Canada, Mexico or some other unsympathetic jurisdiction.

Just as bail bondsmen want their bail jumpers back, creditors want to find their skipped debtors. Large retail establishments, landlords, car dealers and credit institutions are all interested in hiring good "skip tracers." Tracking debtors doesn't usually entail the physical apprehension of a subject, but similar techniques are required to find them. As with bail bondsmen, payment is usually made on a commission basis, contingent upon successfully locating the subject.

Recently, finding missing persons has become a big category for bounty hunters. Sadly, this category usually involves miss-



Patience is a virtue in the bounty hunting business. Here Bob Burton stakes out a New Mexico location with pistol cocked and ready (safety is on).

ing children. While some children are taken by strangers (and will almost certainly never be seen again), most missing children are either runaways or have been taken by non-custodial parents. In those cases, prospects for successful location and recovery are quite good. Well-known bounty hunter Ralph "Papa" Thorson has largely ceased doing bail bond work in favor of looking for missing kids. [See "Wanted," SOF, September '85.]

In almost every city there are organizations created to help parents find their missing children. In many cases, these organizations have posted rewards for information leading to the return of children. Listings can be found under "Social Service Organizations" or others of that type in the Yellow Pages.

Certain crimes almost always generate rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the criminal. Even when a reward is not specifically mentioned, it's a good bet that one exists in cases of murder (especially of a policeman, child or merchant), armed robbery (especially where the victim was seriously injured), rape, arson, malicious sabotage or large robberies (banks or armored cars).

Even if a crime does not fall within these likely categories, call the news organization which reported the crime, the police, the victimized business or civic or social organizations associated with the crime's victim,

BOB BURTON: BOUNTY HUNTER

Bob Burton is a full-time bounty hunter working primarily in California. With over 600 arrests to his credit, Burton knows the field as well as anyone. And he's written a book on the subject — Bounty Hunter, published by Paladin Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO 80306. Burton himself can be contacted at Intercept, P.O. Box 22801, Santa Barbara, CA 93121.

SOF: As a bounty hunter, what do you do?

BURTON: I solicit contracts in the bail bond industry to pick up bail fugitives who have failed to make an appearance in court and are now in jeopardy of forfeiting the posted bail amount that the bondsman had to post.

SOF: How do you go about your business?

BURTON: I make periodic calls on bail bondsmen in Los Angeles and ask if they have any business. It's as easy as that. Sometimes, maybe three times a year, I mail letters to bail bondsmen in large cities like Fort Worth, Dallas, Miami, New Orleans and Albuquerque and ask if they have any bail fugitives who have fled to the West Coast. If so, I'll be glad to pick them up. There are many bad fugitives in my area. They didn't originate here, but came from other cities.

SOF: Is this dangerous work?

BURTON: Yes. The danger isn't always a fatal gunshot wound. It's punches to the face, it's violent confrontations. It can be the danger of eating many meals of cheap food, car accidents, falling down steps, as well as being shot or knifed. However, those things occur in only about 10-20 percent of the cases.

SOF: Do you get paid well for these risks?

BURTON: No, unless you get a really big case. Most of the cases are in the \$400 to \$800 range. If you work two to three cases a week, you can live well.

SOF: What is a big case?

BURTON: A big case would be if someone like DeLorean had jumped his \$5 million bail. You could probably have commanded a premium of \$100,000 to \$300,000 if you brought him back.

SOF: Would you say that bounty hunting can be done on a less than full-time basis?

BURTON: Yes, any one of your readers could do this on a part-time basis very easily.

SOF: How would someone go about doing that?

BURTON: He would introduce himself to local bail bondsmen in his area and to bail bondsmen in his state, via a letter, letting them know that he's available for work. Let's say the man lives in San Francisco. He should write to all the bondsmen in areas like San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles. When a fugitive flees, he goes to other areas. So in addition to having that percentage that will stay in an area, the bounty hunter can also work cases for bondsmen in L.A., from where a fugitive has fled to San Francisco.

SOF: What credentials should someone have who is just starting out, and how much should he charge?

BURTON: He shouldn't have to give any credentials. He just has to come up with fairly good pricing — how much he charges for a bail skip. Let's say he charges 20 percent of the bail for any bail skip in his state. He would charge 50 percent of the bail if he had to go into Canada. He might charge 60 percent if he has to chase the fugitive into Mexico. He might charge 40-50 percent if he has to go into other states.

SOF: Is it more difficult to apprehend a criminal out of state?

BURTON: No. It's the time warranted and the expenses of travel. For instance, I'll chase a man through San Francisco for a thousand bucks, or 20 percent, which is a standard fee. But I won't necessarily go up to Montana for a thousand. Maybe I'll charge 40 percent, to make it a little more worthwhile.

SOF: This sounds like a "take it or leave it" situation for the bondsmen.

BURTON: Well, they have a choice of either paying you the percentage you come up with or paying the state 100 percent when the time is up to capture the guy. In California, when a man jumps bail the bondsman has 181 days to capture him. If he doesn't capture him in 181 days — six months — he must pay, in cash, the posted amount that he made with his promissory note. So, faced with paying 100 percent to the state or 40 percent to a bounty hunter, he'll make a deal.

SOF: Is 181 days typical for most states?

BURTON: It does vary a lot. In Texas, for instance, you can almost go on forever. I've heard of cases that went on for three or four years and the bondsman got his money back. In California, the bondsmen are trying to work a situation where if the man is caught, say, in eight months, the bondsman will get a certain percentage of his money back. As it stands right now, he doesn't get a dime back after the 181st day. In my book [Bounty Hunter] there is a listing for every state in the Union.

SOF: Legally, what can you do and not do?

BURTON: The key word is "reason-

able." If you have a "take no prisoners" mentality, you're in the wrong business. You have to use judicious restraint in bringing these people back or you're going to have a lawsuit filed against you. For instance, in California, when you arrest a man you have 48 hours to bring him back to the jail of the jurisdiction from which he fled. If I'm arresting a bail bond skip from Orange County and I pick him up in San Francisco, I've got to bring him back to Orange County.

SOF: What if he skipped from another state?

BURTON: That's okay. I'll just bring him back to the other state. The 1872 law we work under — a Supreme Court decision, rather than a law — states that we may break and enter without previous notice, we may carry defendants across state line without process of extradition and we may work without search warrant, even on the Sabbath.

SOF: What about weapons? Do bounty hunters get permits to carry concealed weapons?

BURTON: No. We would like to, but we can't. I don't have to carry a concealed weapon. The section of the California Penal Code that deals with loaded guns says, "This section does not preclude any citizen from making a lawful arrest while using a loaded gun." That's the section we work under. If a cop arrives on the scene while I'm making an arrest, the gun is exposed and I'm quite legal. Most police, however, know nothing about a bounty hunter's rights, and they assume I can carry a concealed weapon.

SOF: Is the document under which you work an arrest warrant?

BURTON: It's not really an arrest warrant. It's called a "Certificate of Authority to Arrest" and it's issued by the bail bonding company. In essence, the bondsman assigns to me, as his agent, a power of attorney to make the arrest. Because the bail jumper is considered chattel [i.e., personal property of the bondsman], I may pick him up anywhere. The Supreme Court ruling of 1872 likens his arrest by a bounty hunter to a sheriff arresting an escaping prisoner.

SOF: What sort of special knowledge must a bounty hunter have?

BURTON: A smart bounty hunter must be able to go into court and make motions. Say a Texas bail jumper has been picked up by a California police officer. The bail bondsman in Texas has, say, eight days to get the man back or the bail is forfeit. However, the man is languishing in a California jail. A bounty hunter must be able to go in front of a judge and present bail motions to get that man released into his custody, so he may transport the prisoner back to Texas. Under most bail laws the clock doesn't

stop ticking if the man is held in another state. He must be returned to the state from which he fled. There are about 30 or 40 bail motions a bounty hunter has to know to get a prisoner released to his custody. Motions aren't always successful, but that's part of the job.

SOF: What about your experiences with police officers?

BURTON: Most of the time you go in, you tell them what you're doing and they are more than happy to give you a mug shot. That's the only thing I really need the police for. I haven't had many confrontations with police, though their interference has on occasion cost me a fee. SOF: They never look at you as the competition?

BURTON: The street cops do. I've been forced to spread-eagle on the street by many a beat patrolman, until the watch commander comes along and says, "Hey, let the guy go, he's a bounty hunter, it's all legal." The younger cops don't like it that I can carry loaded guns in the city, that I dress the way I do, that I can have arrest powers, that I can kick in doors. They just don't like it at all.

SOF: Is there any connection between bounty hunting and private investigation?

BURTON: No. A private investigator wouldn't do half the stuff I do because he's afraid of losing his license. I have no license to lose. I work under the 1872 law. I might be sued, I have to watch out for false arrest and things like that. So far I've never gotten a bail bondsman sued and I've never been sued myself.

SOF: How often do you work alone and how often with others?

BURTON: I do most of the homework and tracking down by myself, and then I'll pull in a buddy to help me make the arrest. I never make an arrest by myself unless it's an immediate situation where the guy is walking across the street in front of me and I have no choice but to grab him right then and there, which sometimes I've had to do. If the man is a bookkeeper type, 5'11" and he's jumped bail for child support, I'll pick him up by myself. However, I do bring superior firepower — not in the way of guns, but body weight — when I pick up someone. The less adventure I have, the more I like the job. Take the guy to jail and book him, and get the hell out and go and collect my check. The biggest problem of the whole operation is getting your money from a bail bondsman. They don't try to steal from you, but they postpone giving you the money. If you're an out-of-town bounty hunter, they've got you over a fence because you're just in town for the pickup. You want to get your money and get the hell back home. I tell them all, "cash." I don't want to leave town without cash in my hand.

to see if a reward exists.

NATIONAL

Rewards at the national level are usually higher and the criminals more difficult, and more dangerous, to apprehend.

A good example is the "Mountain Man" case involving convicted murderer Claude Dallas Jr. His escape from the Idaho State Penitentiary touched off a nationwide manhunt in late March 1986. Though no governmental rewards have been offered for Dallas, the families of the two men he murdered have offered \$25,000 for his capture. He's considered extremely dangerous.

When a nationally marketed product is the target of extortion or other domestic terrorism, a huge reward offer is almost certain. In the Contac poisoning case of early 1986, the person arrested was found, in part, through the efforts of an alert stock trader on the Pacific Exchange. His reward could be all or part of the \$900,000 posted in the case by the Proprietary Association, an industry group representing drug manufacturing companies.



This "bail skip" failed to appear in court on drug-dealing charges and became game for bounty hunters. He tried to make a break for it out the back door but Burton and Co. were waiting for him. Photo: Dave Brucker

The U.S. Postal Service always has a number of outstanding reward offers. Rewards begin at \$1,000 for information on persons destroying or obstructing the mail and go as high as \$25,000 in cases involving the murder of postal employees. In many cases, other agencies or individuals offer additional rewards beyond those offered by the postal service. Occasionally, the postal service will "up the ante" and offer bonus rewards.

Information about these postal service rewards is no farther away than your local post office, where wanted posters are on display. Unfortunately, postal service policy forbids the release of reward posters to anyone except law enforcement or postal officials. For more information, write the Chief Postal Inspector, Criminal Investigations, 475

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STALKING SWAPO

Koevoet Pries Loose Terrorist Grip

Text & Photos by Jim Hooper



THE column of four Casspirs and one Blesbok had broken from the heavy bush into an open pan spotted with trees and drooping thickets, a water hole at the center, when it came.

"CONTACT!" Boesman's voice crackled over the radio. My eyes snapped to Du Rand, sitting across from me. It was one of those half-seconds that seemed to last forever before Jim spat "CONTACT!" and grabbed for his weapon.

Following a week-long tour of the South West Africa/Namibia operational area, I stepped off the C-130 back at Ondangwa Air Force Base. The lieutenant meeting me looked as though he were attending a funeral. "Authorization finally came through an hour ago," he intoned, shaking his head. "You leave tomorrow for a week in the bush with Koevoet." It was the best birthday present I could have received.

Koevoet — pronounced "Koofert" — is the old and now unofficial name for the South West Africa Police Counterinsurgency Division. Little known outside the operational area, this predominantly black unit has accounted for almost one-third of the estimated 10,000 losses suffered by the Soviet-backed SWAPO terrorists infiltrating across the border from Angola. SWAPO's tactics give conventional military commanders the shudders, but the figures speak for themselves. Since its shaky beginning eight years ago, SWAPOLCOIN has killed over 2,900 armed terrorists. Its own losses have been less than 90.

"I was sent up here in '78 to see what role the police could play against terrorism," Brigadier J. G. Dreyer, commanding officer of SWAPOLCOIN, told me. Drawing on experience gained in the Rhodesian bush war, Dreyer at first envisioned a Selous Scout-type unit, employing blacks in the counterinsurgency role. "I learned in Rhodesia that you must use the local people because of their knowledge of the language, customs and terrain. An all-white force would be totally ineffective in this kind of war," he emphasized.

Dreyer approached a senior Ovambo headman (the Ovambo people comprise half the population of SWA/Namibia) and discussed his ideas. The headman was convinced, and at Dreyer's request recruited 60 Ovambos skilled in tracking and weapons handling. Koevoet, Afrikaans for crowbar, was formed, and never was a unit more aptly dubbed.

"We operated on a shoestring budget back then," Dreyer recalled. "I was allowed to bring four officers with me and recruit two more here. We were given two *bakkies* (pickup trucks) and two sedans. That we never hit a landmine is a miracle."

Viewed with much skepticism and not a little suspicion by higher HQ, the first few months of Ops K's existence were spent on training, developing tactics and scrounging

Dead SWAPO member never had a chance against expert Koevoet trackers.



equipment wherever it could be found. Senior commanders were not ready to spend money on what seemed a harebrained idea.

"Our first major success came during the '79 SWAPO infiltration, when 12 terts managed to reach the white farming area southeast of the Etosha Game Reserve," Dreyer explained. "On one farm they killed an old man; on another, a grandmother and her two grandchildren, two and four years old. They were bayoneted to death.

"The army had moved into the area, but weren't having much luck. I finally convinced them to give us a try." Twenty-three Ovambo trackers and one white were flown to the scene. They picked up the spoor and followed it for the next seven days. Everyone was amazed "except us," Dreyer said. In the ensuing contact, the SWAPO detachment commander was killed. So, unfortunately, was the leader of the Ops K team.

However disappointing the give-and-take of the contact, Dreyer's concept of using skilled trackers to chase the enemy and bring him to bay had worked. "I knew then I had something golden. Soon, we were killing 50-80 terts a month — the equivalent of a SWAPO company."

In spite of its growing success rate, Ops K remained the bastard stepchild of the operational area. They still worked on foot with outdated equipment, minimal support and little recognition. ("Of course, we did manage to 'borrow' a few things from the army now and then," one old hand acknowledged with a rueful grin.)

With statistics in hand, Dreyer flew to Pretoria to argue his case. He was rather coolly received, not least for his attitude. ("I was pretty aggressive," he admitted, "but I knew what I was talking about and they didn't.") Dreyer and his numbers were

"Kill 'em all. Let God sort 'em out." Skilled Ovambo trackers take five before starting patrol. This police unit is recognized as one of the most effective special warfare units in the world.

impressive enough to convince his department that Ops K should be expanded. Money and equipment were soon on their way, including three Hippo APCs, the forerunner of the Casspir.

The Brigadier shook his head. "Would you believe when we got those cars, no one wanted to use them? I actually had to order the group leaders to take them." The first contact involving the Hippos netted 18 dead terrorists. "And that was with only two cars . . . after that everyone wanted them." Koevoet's course was charted.

Dreyer had already backed away from the Selous Scout idea, deciding that highly mobile hunter-killer teams were the best way of dealing with terrorists in the thick bush. Each heavily armed group was organized into 40 Ovambo trackers, four whites and four Casspirs. Added to each group was one Blesbok supply vehicle.

Living up to his reputation for contrariness, Dreyer began butting heads with the army over defined areas of operation. He wanted — and demanded — unlimited freedom of movement throughout the oper-

ational area. Dropping a hot spoor because it crossed into an army unit's AO was unacceptable. As usual, he got his way. ("We've got a good boss," one group leader said proudly. "He lets us go where we want.")

Men, tactics, equipment and a maverick in the driver's seat have made Ops K one of the world's most spectacularly successful special warfare units. Nonetheless, all its people cling to the line that they are still policemen. "We're just stopping criminals and preventing crimes," they say. (Maybe. But they're the damndest bunch of cops I ever ran across.)

Reporting to SWAPOLCOIN headquarters, I walked into Captain Bernie Ley's office. He got down to business. "Blood group?" he asked. "Next of kin? Your group leader will issue you with a weapon. Ever fired an R5?" Any thoughts that this might be some kind of Boy Scout camp in the woods quickly evaporated. I asked if I needed to take any identification. Captain Maritz — who has the reputation of carrying around more shrapnel than the rest of Ops K combined — walked in as I asked. He smirked. "I don't think any terts gonna be too impressed with your press cards."

"Right," I agreed, sheepishly shoving all my worldly goods into a wall locker already filled with AK-47s, an RPG-7 and SAM-7, a couple Tokarevs, POMZ mines, RPG rockets and boosters, loaded magazines and a wealth of other goodies. (Just the sort of things one naturally expects to find in someone's office locker.)

Outside, the Casspirs and Blesboks pulling out that morning were being loaded. The cars' guns, which had been taken down when the groups had returned a week before, were being remounted. Depending on

BUSH MAN

U.K.-based American Jim Hooper is a widely traveled freelance journalist who has spent much of his time studying the situation in southern Africa. We welcome his first SOF contribution.



the personal preferences of the group leaders, the cars carried a combination of two Browning thirties or 7.62 GPMGs, or Browning fifties with two of the lighter guns. At one time, a number of Casspirs carried Russian 14.5mm guns, but this ended when supplies of captured ammunition ran out.

Looking into the cars, I saw a bewildering array of foreign and domestic hardware. In addition to each man's R5 with 50-round magazine, there were 60mm mortars, RPDs, PKMs, RPG-7s, single and six-shot 40mm grenade launchers, bipod-mounted LMGs, an occasional R1 and enough belted and boxed ammunition to keep things hot for quite a spell.

"Maximum firepower," said a voice. I looked around. It was Warrant Officer Marius Brade. I would be spending the next week with Brade and his group, Zulu Alpha. Brade was tall, lanky and moved with the loose-jointed swagger of a Western gunslinger. "In a contact, you gotta overwhelm the terts, break them up and kill 'em now-now. Especially in an ambush . . . you drive straight into them with maximum fire-

Koevoet — unofficial name for South West Africa Police Counterinsurgency Division (SWAPOLCOIN) — recruits undergo basic training in preparation for battling Soviet-backed SWAPO terrorists. After eight years, this predominantly black unit has accounted for almost one-third of the estimated 10,000-plus losses suffered by SWAPO insurgents.

power." He smiled, but the eyes stayed as cold as the snake's on Zulu Alpha's group insignia.

Once on the road Brade said, "We're killing them faster than they can be replaced. The terts are having to kidnap recruits and train them against their will." (A document taken from a terrorist killed in 1985 includes the statement: "*Large numbers of children, if possible a whole village or school, must be captured to rebuild our organization. Only the sick must be left behind.*")

Later in the week, I would follow the progress of a group tracking three SWAPO terrorists who had kidnapped 10 people. The radioed reports lasted two days before

they were rescued; the kidnapers never made it across the border, either.

Once in the bush, every civilian becomes a possible source of information. At each kraal (African village), the trackers dismounted and questioned the local population. To my surprise, the trackers came back with reports that three terrorists had been seen or heard about in the last two days. My surprise must have been evident.

"I can promise you, there are 10-15 terts within 10 klicks of here," volunteered Marius, answering my unasked question. "The bad thing is that if they hear we're in the area they sit tight or get the hell out. They're really scared of us."

Working the area until late afternoon, it was obvious these three were keeping a very low profile. With the sun low on the horizon, we joined up with Dean Viljoen, who was temporarily ramrodding Zulu Mike's new Wolf Turbo APCs. Just before sunset, a suitable location for a "temporary base" was found. With the Casspirs and Wolf Turbos set around the TB, guns facing outward, food and bedding were unloaded. A dozen cooking fires were soon going.

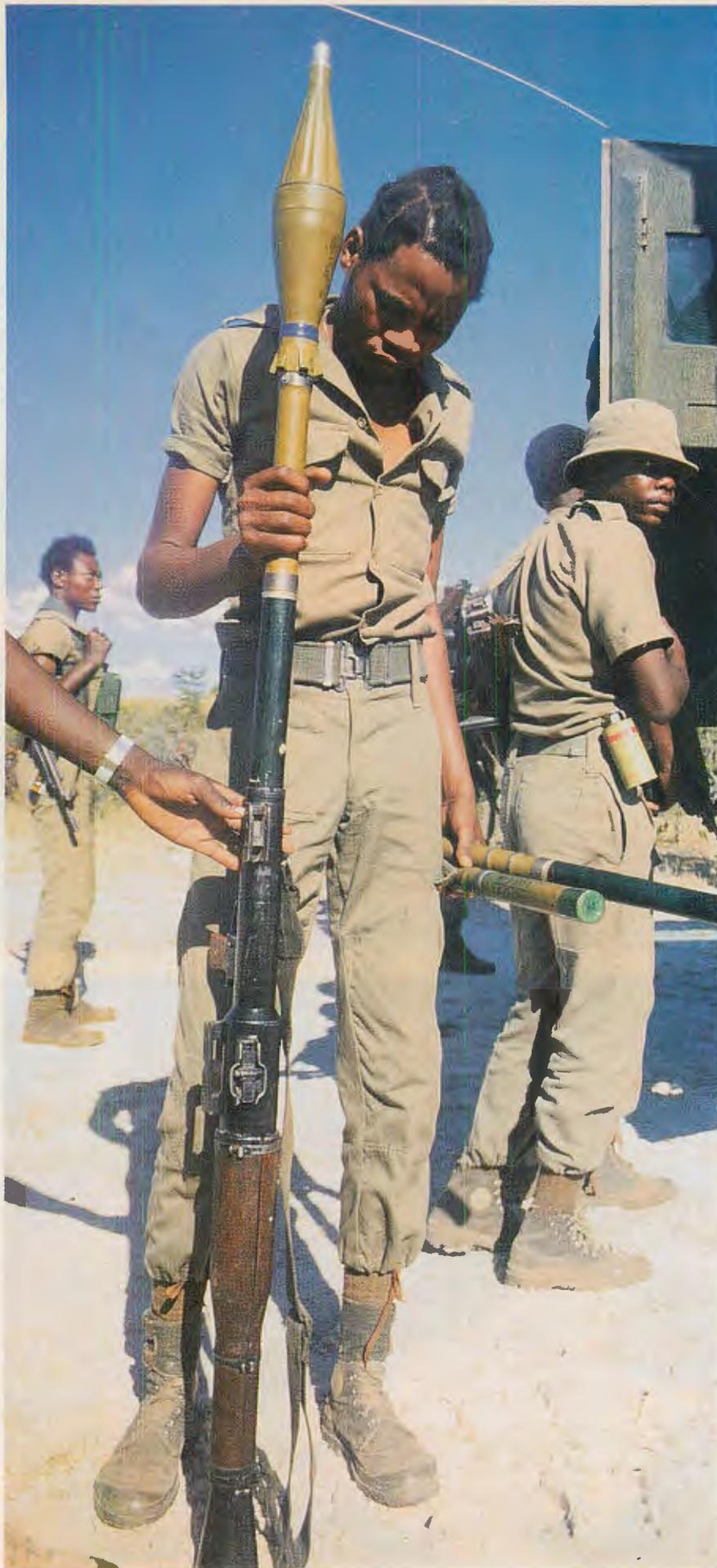


Being in the middle of Indian country with fires blazing seemed a touch unorthodox, I thought, but the guys explained that SWAPO was too frightened of Koevoet to even think about hitting us. Worse luck. But if they did, then by God they'd leave spoor we could follow in the morning and get some *kills*. It was at that point I decided these guys were all wonderfully mad.

Late one afternoon a few days later, we were barrelling down the dirt road to the army base at Eenhana. On either side was thick, heavy cover; more than a couple groups had been hit along this stretch. Special Warrant Officer Otto Shivute, senior Ovambo of Zulu Alpha, was looking through an Oshivambo-Afrikaans-English dictionary. Finding the words he wanted, he turned to me with a smile. "If we lucky, ambush!" I started wondering if this was



Relying largely on intelligence gleaned from local population regarding SWAPO movements in Ovamboland, Koevoet commander aboard APC organizes small-unit search and destroy mission.



really the crowd I should be hanging out with.

From sunup to sundown, the radios in the cars were constantly in use. Groups operated from Opuwa in the west to Rundu in the east, keeping Zulu Base and each other advised of their progress and situations. Marius would keep me abreast of the Afrikaans transmissions, especially when a group was on a follow-up — chasing spoor. Everyone was particularly attentive to the radio when a group reported closing on a hot spoor, finally calling for gunships when contact was imminent. Sometimes the attention-grabbing “Contact!” would come through unexpectedly, leaving everyone hanging till the outcome was relayed. The worst were calls for a casevac (casualty evacuation) chopper to take out their own wounded. Ops K is a close, tightly knit family — blacks and whites together — and a call for a casevac would keep everyone holding their breath until the extent of the injuries was known.

The first good spoor the trackers found was soon lost on hard ground, then found again and lost, then finally found again. Side by side with Zulu Mike, we followed it most of the day. Although it had been described to me time and again, I was amazed at the aggressiveness the trackers showed when they had the spoor. Cars flanking them, they would move at a dead run, often outstripping the Casspirs, which couldn't keep pace through the thick bush. They would go until winded, drop back to their cars, and their places taken by others who would drop off the sides of the rolling cars and take the spoor.

On hard ground, where the spoor became indistinct, the cars would stop and everyone debus, fanning out in an attempt to pick it up farther on. What they could tell from an imprint I could barely see was incredible. “This one old man — short steps,” or “this woman and child,” or “this one SWAPO — soldier with gun walks proud.”

On the fifth morning, we received word that a small army base near the border had been mortared in the middle of the night. Saddling up, we headed for the scene of the crime. When we pulled up an hour later, three other groups were already there. I noted that half the mortar rounds had failed to detonate. The aim wasn't too good, either. All had impacted at least 150 meters short of the intended target.

Spoor of 30-40 terrorists was found and all the groups fanned out, racing off in a cloud of dust to pick up the spoor farther ahead. The dust came to an abrupt end as they encountered 'shonas, low marshy areas with a foot or more of water. The cars slowed to a crawl.

Struggling through the 'shonas, it was accepted the terrors had probably already made it across the border to safety, but no

Koevoet constable-tracker prepares for dismounted search and destroy operation against SWAPO.



one was ready to give up the chase. If we could just nail 'em before they crossed the border. . . .

By early afternoon, and a hundred meters short of the border, it was obvious Koevoet had lost this round. Not only that, but we were stuck fast in the middle of a particularly soft-bottomed 'shona. Branches were cut and jammed into the mud under the tires. We all put shoulders to the cars. The wheels spun and settled a little deeper.

Zulu Base radioed to say intelligence sources indicated 58 SWAPO terrors had crossed the border (we were stuck on top of their spoor), heading for the FAPLA (Angolan army) base at Namakunde, a few kilometers north of us. This was in direct contravention of agreements between Angola and SWA security forces that FAPLA would in no way support SWAPO. Marius fumed. It was academic, in any case: The terrors had crossed to safety. SWAPOLCOIN's only operational limit is the Angolan border.

As sunset approached, the trackers started unloading bedrolls and weapons, wading to an island in the middle of the 'shona. As they began setting up mortars it finally started to dawn on me that we were there for the night. It also struck me that maybe we weren't exactly in the best of situations. We were stuck. It was getting dark. No other group was near enough to get to us that night and render assistance. Not all that far away were 58 SWAPO holed up in a FAPLA base. And with another FAPLA border post less than five clicks to the east, they had to know where we were.

Trying to be nonchalant, I mentioned these minor points, wondering, you know, what the plan was if these 58 dudes slipped on down tonight and laid into us with some serious pyrotechnics. A few mortars.

Wolf Turbo APC loaded with Ovambo trackers wades through *oshona* (marshy plain) while on COIN patrol east of Oshakati, South West Africa/Namibia.

Maybe a rocket or two. Not that I was worried, or anything like that. Noooo, uh-uh. Just *curious* is all. I mean, I reckoned ol' Marius had everything worked out. Some brilliant piece of police work that would handle any eventuality. He eyed me for a moment and slapped at a mosquito. "Fuck 'em. They can't hit shit anyway."

Oh. Well, then, I thought, zipping up the sleeping bag he tossed at me and trying to fluff up a loaded ammo vest for a pillow, if ya can't trust a cop, just who can you trust?

Late the next morning, Dean Viljoen and the Wolf Turbos roared in and dragged us out.

The last morning with Zulu Alpha, we responded to the scene of another mortaring. Again, spoor was found, this time eight of them, but lost on hard ground, found again — just as before. At least this time we had no 'shonas to wade through.

In the middle of a field of rumbling cars, Marius asked if I'd like to ride with the "Brig," who had come out for the hunt. He pointed to a Wolf Turbo. Grabbing my camera bag, I hopped out and ran to the Wolf. Climbing through the rear doors that hissed open for me, I thought maybe I had the wrong car. There was no sign of Brigadier Dreyer. Then I caught sight of a familiar figure in the driver's seat. "If he has time, you can't keep him out of the field," one of his staff volunteered with a barely suppressed grin.

The week with Zulu Alpha came to an end. SWAPO, through fortune or skill, had managed to keep out of our way. Groups working other areas of Ovamboland's

33,000 square miles found what they were looking for. Seven more notches were added to Koevoet's guns.

Limping into headquarters in my diesel-, dirt- and sweat-stained clothes, my face and arms looking like I'd tangled with a couple of bobcats and been dragged backward through a briar patch, I asked if I could sign on for another week. "Sure," they said. (Oh, shit, I thought.)

The following morning, I climbed aboard the number two car of Group Zulu November. At the last minute, Sergeant Jim Du Rand had been assigned to ride with me. I felt guilty as hell when he explained this was his last week with Ops K, but since my car commander spoke no English, they wanted someone with me who could translate.

After six years with Koevoet, over 120 contacts and 300+ kills, Du Rand was heading back to South Africa to take up somewhat quieter police duties. When he mentioned that it seemed guys always got hurt or killed just when they were ready to leave, I started feeling pretty rotten.

"No, no, it's okay," he assured me. "If I wasn't doing this, I'd be out setting up night ambushes anyway."

The group leader of Zulu November is stocky, barrel-chested Boesman. (First name? No one calls him anything but Boesman.) Zulu November is a top scorer. In 1985, Boesman's group sent an even 50 terrorists to wherever dead terrorists go. In February 1986, Zulu November hit a 40-man SWAPO detachment, killing 35 in a 12½-minute contact. It was a record for Ops K. As we rolled out of Zulu Base, Boesman's score for the first four months of 1986 already stood at 47.

My car commander for this second week with Koevoet was Special Warrant Officer Lukas Kilino, who had started soldiering at

SOWETO

Commandant (Lieutenant Colonel) Geoffrey Holland-Muter is a man running on autopilot. In spite of the crispness of his uniform and his words, it's the eyes that give him away. Fatigue, tension and incalculable frustration have been etched and bulldozed around them.

Geoff Holland-Muter is the executive officer of Group 18, a small army unit composed mainly of army reservists doing their annual 30 days active service. Group 18 is tasked with the military security of industrial key-points in and around Johannesburg. It also provides support to the South African police in the surrounding areas. In part of that surrounding area lies the sprawling 45 square miles of South-Western Township. Soweto.

Soweto: an internationally recognized symbol of the disenfranchised of South Africa. Images. We have sat before the television stage and seethed with the injustice of what we are shown.

It's 0930 and radio calls are coming into the operations room of Group 18. The calls are from the police, requesting help in stopping a faction fight between two high schools. A baby-faced lieutenant hands Holland-Muter an initial report. "Go back, get the names of the schools and the grid coordinates," he tells the lieutenant patiently, "and ask them why they can't handle it themselves." But he already knows the answer.

He runs both hands over a red beard before clasping and staring down at them atop his desk. I imagine a mental tape being rewound for the standard briefing. He looks up at me, ready. A fixed, sardonic smile has been pulled from somewhere and glued to his face. The smile says: "Nothing I tell you will make the slightest difference." Holland-Muter has been around the block once or twice in his time. And he has had his fill of journalists.

"I have a faction fight going on out there between two schools, with 1,000 kids involved; I have some *generals* (the tone is that of a man already up to his ass in alligators) arriving for a scheduled briefing, and somewhere else out there some more kids are stoning a bread truck." It is left politely unsaid how much he needs me cluttering up his ops room.

"Know what that faction fight is about?" he asks suddenly, and then goes on without waiting for a reply. "One school wants to write its exams and the other doesn't." He stops and stares at me.

My obvious lack of comprehension only sets the forced smile more firmly in place. Before I can parrot the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee slogan, "Lib-



eration before Education," he explains.

"Some kids know that the few job opportunities will go to those with the education. But the other — radical — element thinks that as soon as the blacks are totally in charge of the country, then all the job opportunities they want will become available. This is a typical communist approach. The schools are being used as political platforms for the minority radical elements.

"What is tragic about it is that 10 blokes, 15 to 16 years old, 10 of them, will walk into a school containing 1,000 children and take over the entire school." His knuckles rap the desk.

"You know why? Because if any single one of the teachers resists, or any single child resists, he's immediately marked and tonight his parents' house is burned," rap, "down to the ground." Rap.

"Our intelligence system's working. I know who the culprits are. But I go out and get the damned culprit and I can't get anyone to come stand in the courtroom and make a statement. Because the moment he stands up and says, 'That's the man,' he's the next to burn. And that's that."

(This is a page from the Brazilian revolutionary Marighella, who wrote: "Since our struggle takes place among the masses and depends on their sympathy . . . the informers, spies, traitors and the police come to be enemies of the people, without supporters, denounced to the urban guerrillas and, in many cases, properly punished.")

I remember the confiscated video shot by a Western television crew, which showed a young black woman being slowly incinerated and then beaten to pieces. What made the scene even more

"Smoke 'em if ya got 'em." Apie, car commander of Group Zulu Alpha, taking a cigarette break in Ovamboland bush country, South West Africa/Namibia.

horrifying were the laughing, grinning faces of the murderers, teenagers, posing for the camera as they kicked and clubbed her. Her crime? Being friendly with a black member of the South African police.

"What you're actually experiencing now is a typical incident where the police ask for help from the army, due to their lack of manpower. The world calls South Africa a police state. They think everyone walking around is a policeman. Know how many police are on duty at any given time in Soweto? In an area with two and a half million people, we have about one policeman for every ten thousand people. You work it out.

"We have 100 passenger trains transporting 750,000 people each morning and afternoon to and from the surrounding areas. Buses take another 100,000 and taxi vans at least that number again. We and the police have to protect them. One bread company alone sends 45 five-ton truckloads of bread a day into Soweto and they're burned like hell. We have to protect those as well. Police ride on the backs of beer trucks, Coca Cola trucks, meat, flour trucks — just so it all gets to the shops so the people can live. Garbage trucks have to be guarded or they're burned. The municipalities in Soweto can't mow the playing fields because the tractors are burned. Because they're part of the system."

(Marighella again: "Street tactics have revealed a new type of urban guerrilla . . . This is the type we designate the urban guerrilla demonstrator, who joins the ranks and participates in popu-

lar marches with specific and definite aims. These aims consist in hurling stones and projectiles of every type, using gasoline to start fires, using police as a target for their firearms.")

Holland-Muter is off and running again. . . "and there are 40,000 homes waiting for telephones in Soweto, but the post office can't install them because the new underground cables still need to be spliced. But when a technician goes down the manhole to splice the wires, someone comes along and chucks a petrol bomb down the manhole, pushes the lid over the top, weights it down with stones and walks off. So I have to detail 20 of my men to go with the trucks and protect them while they work!"

I have the distinct feeling Holland-Muter wants to grab me by the shoulders and shake some understanding into me. His frustration and anger become almost palpable — before being grabbed, wadded up and shoved behind the smile again.

In between all the horror stories, he hammers at the fact that 90 percent of the population wants nothing more than to get on with their normal, everyday lives, but that they are intimidated into quiescence. After almost two hours of briefing, I am given a four-hour tour of Soweto. Holland-Muter's intelligence officer drives the nondescript van. Four heavily armed security men ride in the back. A Datsun pickup truck with two more armed men follows us closely. Portable fire extinguishers lie under each seat in the event of our being hit with a petrol bomb. Portable radios keep us in touch with the operations room.

I am allowed to pick any direction of travel, to stop at any time for photographs. One of the security men follows whenever I leave the van, a Browning 9mm tucked discreetly under a flapping shirttail. The understanding, however, is that in the event of trouble I am to follow their instructions to the letter, whether to put away my cameras or sit quietly while we exit the area.

The faction fight had been quelled by the time we left the operations room. The rest of this day in Soweto was calm, as we drove past mile after mile of neat, though generally small, brick bungalows. The very worst areas I saw were superior to some of the poorer, self-imposed black areas I have seen in rural southern America. And certainly, on the whole, better than much of the council housing in England. The best, on the other hand, would have fitted into most upper-class neighborhoods around the world. One eight-bedroom home, owned by a doctor who practiced in Johannesburg, included two Rolls Royces.

But the ugly, distasteful fact remains

that, until the Group Areas Act is repealed, the residents of Soweto may not freely choose where they want to live. The script written in the 1940s and early '50s by an entrenched society of God-fearing Calvinists determined that each race must live within its own designated area. There was no appeal. Not even to God.

Yet, however much our sensibilities are outraged — as well they should be — a sense of perspective must at the same time enter into the emotional equation. The situation is certainly not unique in Africa. Other African countries — notably Chad, Niger, Sudan and Ethiopia — herd starving nomadic tribes into "refugee camps" to prevent their flowing into the few centers of population. Without the help of American and European relief agencies, many of these people would simply die.

The concern of the African governments involved is minimal. In India, 40 million "untouchables" are effectively precluded from living outside their own areas. Neither Indira Gandhi nor heir Rajiv has been able to overcome the cultural mindsets of a millenium. And it was, after all, barely a generation ago that equal housing opportunities were guaranteed by law to American blacks. If 38 years of institutionalized segregation has made South Africa a unique moral evil in the eyes of the world, then South Africa should be seen as equally unique in today's world for recognizing the inequities of the past and moving positively to redress them.

Continued indictments of the past will not, cannot remove the blights of history; they do, however, foster increasing violence, horror and suffering for the innocent who become tools and victims of those seeking to overthrow the system.

But, oh Soweto. Images: the residue of violence: burned out schools, a truck charred and still smoldering, a shattered community center where donkeys find comfort in the shadowed halls, a playground with "VIVA LANDMINES" scrawled across the side of a childrens' rocking boat, a little girl holding a white doll who waves and smiles timidly as we drive past her home. It all lends a surrealistic air of tragic theater to the symbol that has been made of Soweto. And so to South Africa.

Those images stood that day as Kafkaesque props on one of the world's stages. Where one set of old actors with a new script is racing against time toward hope. Where another set races against reason toward anarchy, firmly astride the four mounts of an African apocalypse.

You, the audience, must decide whom to applaud.

age 14 with Holden Roberto's FNLA in Angola. Later, he had attended officer's school in Kenya and then spent two years in Red China where, he said, a number of blacks had died during the insurgency training. When the Soviet-backed MPLA seized power in Angola, Kilino made his way south and joined South Africa's little-publicized 32 Battalion. Later, he moved to Ops K. It was not difficult to spot him as a pro.

Boesman's sixth sense took us into an area where the trackers picked up fresh spoor almost immediately. At one point, they figured the spoor no more than two hours old and Boesman radioed the air force, putting the gunships on standby. Within a minute, the air force called back to advise they could be overhead 12 minutes after getting word to scramble.

The relationship between SWAPOLCOIN and the South African Air Force is first-rate; both think highly of the other. As Brade told me the week before, "They know we won't scramble them unless we're on a hot spoor and they have a good chance to get kills." When Koevoet describes the gunship pilots, they shake their heads and say, "Those guys are *really* crazy." High praise, indeed, coming from them.

Although a contact appeared imminent, this particular group of terr bombshelled, each taking off in a separate direction and anti-tracking, backing up on their own spoor, staying on hard ground wherever possible and moving carefully from one tuft of tough grass to another. Anything and everything to make their tracks indistinguishable. The trackers admitted these were some "old SWAPO" who knew how to survive.

Setting up a TB that night, I listened to an inexhaustible repertoire of contact stories. Du Rand told of the time he found himself face-to-face with a terr holding an RPG-7. Jim leveled his gun, only to discover it had jammed. The terrorist looked down at the RPG in his hands, looked up at the 20mm pointing at him and dropped the rocket launcher like a hot potato, raising his hands. Actually, I had heard the story a week earlier from someone who added, "And *then* the crazy bastard casually told him to pick it up and bring it to the car!"

Lukas sat down next to Boesman and talked of his days with the FNLA and his time in China. There was an intimacy between these two men of the kind brought about by great mutual respect and sharing extreme danger. Later in the week, Boesman told me Lukas was as much a brother to him as anyone could be. So much for the white racist pigs of South Africa.

Lukas asked me about America, and especially about the blacks in America. Before going to sleep, Lukas pointed at me and spoke earnestly to Boesman in Afrikaans. "He wants me to tell you," Boesman translated, "that the communists are no friends of black Africans. He says the communists think all blacks are stupid and use them for

their own purposes. He wants to make sure you understand that." I motioned I understood. Kilino nodded and without another word went to sleep.

Mornings at a TB start before dawn, when the first sleepy risers stir last night's coals into life, sending sparks into the cold dark. There is the lonely sound of a cough here and there, along with the small ruby glow of a first cigarette. Sweaters are pulled on against the chill and dark figures begin to cluster round the fire, palms toward the

warmth. As thin light begins to filter through the bush, more figures slip from brown sleeping bags. Before the sun has made its appearance, there is the smell of coffee in the crisp air. Sleeping bags are rolled up and everything loaded on the Blesbok. Boesman, deeply religious and private, unwraps a small Bible and sits alone, reading a passage. I wonder which one it might be.

When the sun is full-born on the horizon, we move out, another long and dusty day

ahead of us. On this morning, a full moon still hangs in the western sky.

This morning follows the pattern of all the others: stopping at kraals and questioning the locals, moving through the bush, everyone scanning the ground for spoor.

We are sitting under a mopane tree during a noontime coffee break when without preamble comes that attention-grabbing word over the radio: "CONTACT!" Behind the word, gunfire is heard. Coffee cups stop at lips, are slowly lowered as ears strain

CHURCH-SUPPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Evidence of serious human rights violations by the United Nations-recognized South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) continues to mount. Funded by the United Nations and international church organizations, SWAPO is finding itself on the firing line not only with South West Africa security forces, but with international human rights groups as well.

Allegations against SWAPO include the imprisonment of Namibians in concentration camps in Angola and Zambia, the torture and execution of Namibians accused as South African spies and the establishment of "breeding camps" where women are forced to bear children for future ranks of SWAPO. While the same stories have been told since 1969, only now does any outside group seem to be taking them seriously.

These allegations have recently been published by the West German-based International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) in a booklet entitled *Namibia: Human Rights in Conflict*. Based on testimony by ex-SWAPO members, the booklet has stirred a wave of controversy, not least because of SWAPO's funding by and close association with the United Nations, World Council of Churches and anti-apartheid movements.

In Windhoek, capital of South West Africa/Namibia, a group calling itself the Committee of Parents has begun investigating SWAPO's alleged human rights violations. Mrs. Erika Beukes, a dedicated SWAPO activist for many years, is a founding member of the Committee.

"For the past year," she said, "we've been meeting with Namibian refugees, and they told us stories so terrible we could hardly believe it." A letter from a Namibian living in Zambia reads, in part: "The (SWAPO) leadership should tell or bring about the group of young Namibians who were forcefully rounded up from the Boroma concentration camp in Kabwe . . . amongst those killed are: Jackson Hamupembe, Teodor Shongo-

la, Halleluya Ambunde, Limpumbu Shongola, Vilho Komemaya . . . and many, many others . . . it has been rumored that Shilonga Ilya Shilonga was seen in one of the prison camps in Zambia, especially in Kabwe, and had one eye . . ."

The Committee of Parents wrote to the United Nations, SWAPO and the presidents of Angola, Zambia and Cuba asking for help in locating people said to have disappeared into the SWAPO gulag. According to a statement issued by the Committee in February 1986, "the opportunist responses we got, the apparent complicity of the U.N.O. and the irresponsibility of that body and the latest clichéd press release of the SWAPO leadership force(d)" the Committee to go public with its enquiries.

The Committee of Parents went to the Council of Churches of Namibia, where Beukes worked as a secretary. "It soon became clear," she says, "that the CCN had no intention of investigating the allegations." According to Beukes, the president of the CCN, Anglican Bishop James Kauluma, refused to act on "rumors." (The General Secretary of the CCN, Dr. Abisai Sheyavali, declined to comment on alleged SWAPO atrocities when reached by telephone. He did admit that "we have not asked officially about the situation.") Beukes was subsequently fired from her job, charged with using the CCN to support the Committee's investigations.

Another broadside leveled against SWAPO is its alleged policy of kidnapping children in Namibia and taking them into Angola and Zambia to be trained as soldiers or used as breeding stock. Pro-SWAPO groups deny the accusation, saying it is a South African plot to discredit SWAPO. A document taken from a SWAPO insurgent in September 1985 includes the statement, "*Large numbers of children, if possible a whole village or school, must be captured to rebuild our organization. Only the sick must be left behind.*" During my visit to the border area of SWA/Namibia, I followed the radioed reports of a police unit pursuing two SWAPO insurgents who had kidnapped 10 young Namibians. Before reaching the Ango-

lan border, the kidnapers were intercepted and the youngsters rescued. The SWA Police claim to have documented over 1,600 successful kidnappings. SWAPO's supporters maintain such abductions never occur.

Evidence of atrocities notwithstanding, liberal organizations continue to pour money into the hands of SWAPO. Aid from the United Nations amounts to millions of dollars a year. Finland, Holland, Norway and Sweden are among the most generous friends of the revolution, donating millions more a year. The World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the United Church of Canada are only a few of the religious organizations contributing directly or indirectly to SWAPO. Many church groups give to the Council of Churches of Namibia, which, according to British MP Nicholas Winterton, "is the church arm of SWAPO," serving as a conduit to SWAPO. All for the purpose of "liberating" Namibia, where the degree of personal freedom is greater than in any other country in Africa.

"Many of these groups have long been aware of SWAPO's brutality against its own people, but still refuse to be critical," admits one ex-SWAPO member. "The incredible moral bankruptcy of the entire anti-apartheid movement surfaces in the demands it makes of others while ignoring atrocities committed by the so-called liberation movements it supports."

"If you are black and Marxist," a black South African told me, "you are welcome in liberal white drawing rooms around the world, regardless of the blood stains on your hands. But if you are black and against violence, you have no credibility among the white champions of black liberation. Those people have never shrunk from encouraging black Africans to suffer in the pursuit of their own white liberal ideals."

As the evidence mounts and investigations by human rights groups continue, the position of SWAPO's paymasters appears predictable. "These people have known for years what SWAPO's been doing," a Namibian said, "so why should they change now?" Why, indeed.

to pull more from the air. Then the call comes for a casevac chopper. Silent looks pass between the men sitting cross-legged on the ground. Pierre goes to stand nearer the car, as though that will force more from the radio. Finally the story crackles through the speaker. A group has hit an ambush. Three terts have been killed, but one car commander has been seriously wounded. Nothing more is heard.

Flicking what is left of the coffee aside, we climb into the Casspirs. The mood is camouflaged with thin jokes. Diesels rumble, clutches are engaged and we move out, the routine continues.

Later, with two hours of daylight left, we turn west toward Ohangwena. Du Rand and I are sitting inside, opposite each other. The interior of the Casspir brightens as we crash out of the thick bush into the open. It was then Boesman saw them. . . .

“CONTACT!” and me coming back from wherever I was, my eyes meeting Jim’s for one of those interminable half-seconds and Du Rand spitting “CONTACT!,” snatching his R5 from its vertical rack; engine powering up and ahead I hear guns of at least one car already going and our car is veering hard left, the car ahead braking right and everyone grabbing weapons, the arrhythmic ripple of shh-klacks as bolts come back and fall on chambered rounds, the firepower of a Koevoet group exploding like a bursting water main. Perhaps only the lead car has a positive target, but no one knows where the main force might be and everyone lays down maximum suppressive fire. High-pitched chatters of R5s mingle with the deep-throated thudthudthud-thudthud of the fifties and everyone in the car is shouting, firing, looking left-right for targets, some standing and firing over the edge of the Casspir, others through the spring-loaded gunports below the windows. Everyone’s shouting; the shouting drowned by the firing, hot brass on bare skin, the hollow whunk! of a 40mm grenade launcher to my left, and the man to my right jamming the short muzzle of his R5 through the gunport just as the 10-ton Casspir bounces hard over a bump and the R5 comes back inside on full automatic, spraying the inside with hot splinters of 5.56 rounds. I jerk my legs away with a sharply expelled “jeezus!” and then I’m trampled over by Eme, who’s run out of ammunition and is diving for the rear of the Casspir for more. He bowls me over a second time as he comes back through the throng of unsteady legs, everyone trying to hold on and keep his balance and fire from

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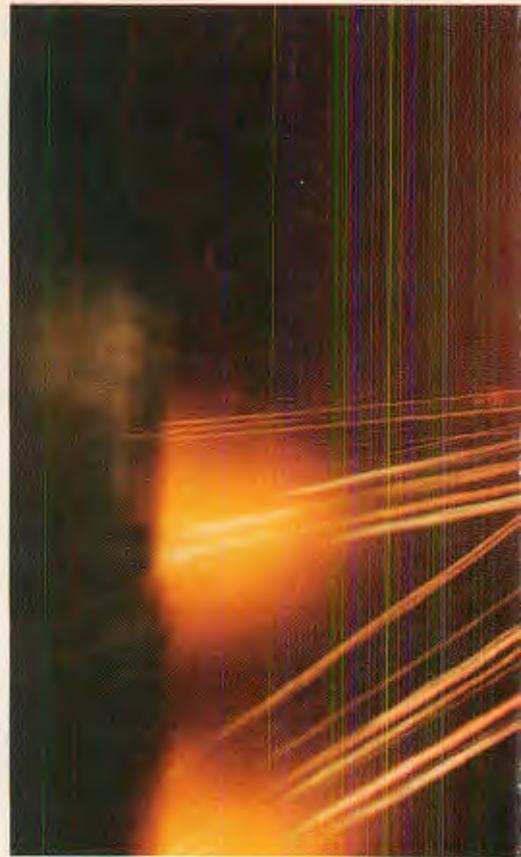
At Wenela, near Katima Mulilo, HQ for Sector 70 of Eastern Caprivi, 140mm gun crew practices live-fire drills. Though gun crews maintain high state of readiness, last ANC mortar and rocket attack from Zambia across the Zambezi occurred in August 1978.



ALL-OUT SHOOT OUT

Knob Creek's Full-Auto Reunion

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



ABOVE: Rare first Model German World War II FG-42 (Fallschirmjäger Gewehr, 1942), caliber 7.92mm, with original mount and ZF-4 scope. This LMG/assault rifle was used by German airborne troops. **RIGHT:** French Model 1914 Hotchkiss machine gun, caliber 8mm Lebel. **BELOW:** Close-up of feed mechanism, which uses single trays or a series of articulated trays.



AT least 50 machine guns are on the line, ablazing away at close to their respective cyclic rates. They attack all the senses. Eyes sting and water from swirling clouds of gun smoke and exploding dynamite. Nostrils clog and burn from acrid cordite. You can taste the burnt gunpowder on your tongue as it grinds between your teeth. And, of course, the noise — it's deafening even with ear protection. Exciting, but my psyche remains strangely unaffected. The basic feverish ingredient of a firefight is missing — incoming rounds.

All these sensual stimuli are being generated by a most innocuous group. This is "The Machine Gun Shoot," held twice a year at the Knob Creek Range in West Point, Kentucky, about 20 miles south of Louisville. Machine-gun enthusiasts and collectors from across the country gather at this former World War II U.S. Navy test range to bust as many caps as they can in two days. Wheel-lock and Walker Dragoon collectors never more than stare with glazed eyes at their prizes, protected from all harm in glass display cases. But, no matter how rare and unique, automatic weapons collectors invariably want to shoot their rattle guns, straining them until they redline. If spare parts are not available, they will machine them.

Machine gunners flippantly refer to their gigs as "shoots." The Knob Creek party is, without doubt, the world's largest civilian assemblage of legally owned machine guns. By any standards, the inventory at last October's shoot was impressive. The participants hauled more than 130 full-auto weapons onto the firing line.



ABOVE: Twelve-year-old SOF reader Nick Pelhan fires Franklin Arsenal Model M9 9mm Parabellum SMG with Swedish Aimpoint optical sight. **BELOW:** Czech ZB vz/26 LMG, caliber 7.92mm, with German World War II Waffenamt markings. Still in service in Afghanistan.



ABOVE: Tracers float downrange from all four barrels of the Quad .50. **LEFT:** Modern full-scale firing reproduction of .45-70 M1875 Gatling Gun with 100-round Accles drum and field carriage. **RIGHT:** G.E. minigun, caliber 7.62X51mm NATO, with spade grips — mounted on M2 tripod. **BELOW:** Full-size reproduction of Gatling "Camel Gun" chambered for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge with 18-round strip feed.



BELOW: Downrange targets were numerous and often spectacular.



RIGHT: M1A1 Thompson blazes away. **LEFT:** Awesome Quad .50 with towed carriage. It was employed in Vietnam, where the mount was placed in the bed of 2½-ton trucks.





There was an assortment of more than two dozen assault/battle rifles. Almost half of these were either M16s in one form or another (including an unusual belt-fed variant) or FAL derivatives. The others included Ruger AC556s, StG(MP)-44s, Kalashnikovs, M-14 E2s, an HK33, HK51 (short-barreled 7.62X51mm NATO), FN CAL (unsuccessful predecessor to the FNC, complete with three-shot burst control) and a rare first model FG-42 (Fallschirmjäger Gewehr, 1942). Unfortunately, the FG-42 broke its firing pin before I could lay back on the trigger.

There were almost three dozen sub-machine guns. Although Thompsons (8), Stens (4), UZIs (3) and MP-40s (3) dominated, there were also four of that despicable Doper's Delight — the MAC10. Others included one each of the following: Walther MPK; Reising Model 50; Sterling; Lanchester; MP-28, II Schmeisser; Soviet PPSH-41; S&W Model 76; American 180 (.22 LR); Madsen Model 50; Franklin Arsenal Model 9 (9mm SMG in M16 clothes) and Yugoslavian M61(j) Skorpian.



ABOVE: Model 1909 Argentine Maxim, caliber 7.65mm, with solid brass water jacket and brass fixtures. **LEFT:** Colt Model 1904 water-cooled Maxim with brass fixtures, originally chambered for the .30-03 cartridge, had been modified to fire .30-06 ball ammo. **RIGHT:** Colt Commercial Browning M38B .30-caliber machine gun with spade grips and wooden ammo box.



RIGHT: Extremely rare Portuguese Vickers, caliber .303 British. **BELOW:** FN CAL, caliber 5.56X45mm NATO, was the unsuccessful predecessor to the current FNC assault rifle.



RIGHT: The aftermath: crew of .30-caliber AN/M2 aircraft Browning MG sort through more than 9,000 empty cases fired from their tired gun.



ABOVE: WWII Japanese Type 99 LMG, caliber 7.7mm Jap. **RIGHT:** Two old World War I enemies meet on the same side of line. BSA Lewis Gun, caliber .303 British, in foreground and German '08/15, caliber 7.92mm, fire together.



But machine-gun shoots belong to the belt guns and their magazine-fed corollaries. There were no less than 72. Richard Jordan Gatling invented and produced the first successful rapid-fire guns. Two full-scale reproductions of his famous series were rolled into action: the Model 1875 .45-70 Gatling, complete with Accles 100-round drum and field carriage, and a Model 1876 Camel Gun with tripod, chambered for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge. Both were manufactured by Thunder Valley Machine Co. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 192, Clinton, OH 44216). They are exact replicas in every detail, cost a great deal, but operate flawlessly. The Model 1875 with field carriage will extract \$12,750 out of your savings account.

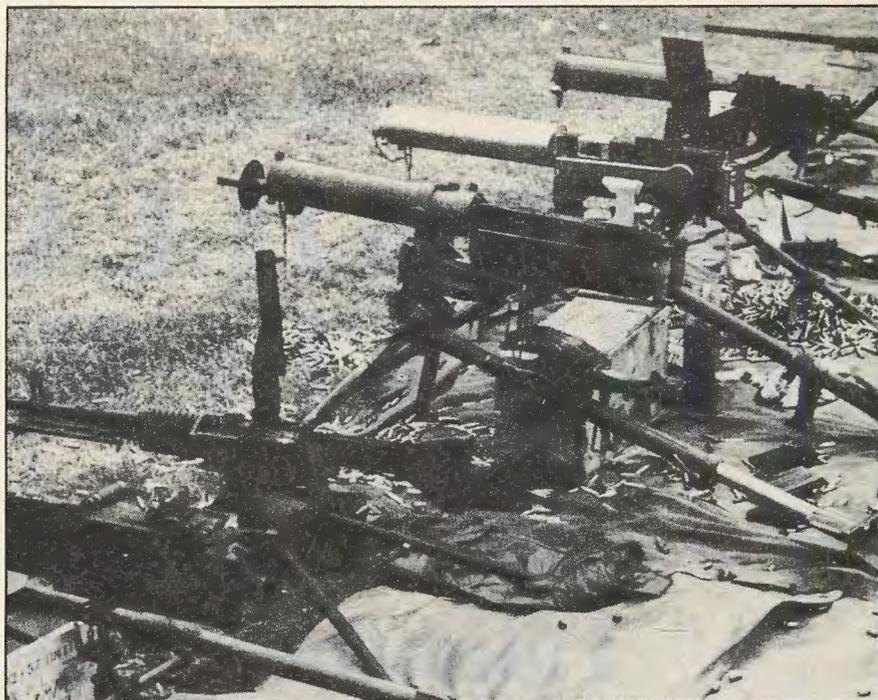
Moving closer to World War I, there was an intriguing array of rare pieces which included the French Model 1914 Hotchkiss (8mm Lebel); Model 1904 Colt Maxim (.30-03); Model 1909 Argentine Maxim (a Model 1898 in caliber 7.65mm Argentine) with solid brass water jacket, feed block, fusee cover, spade grips and other fixtures; BSA Lewis Gun; and German Maxims in both the sled-mounted '08 and bipod-mounted '08/15 configurations.

The inter-war period was represented by a rare Portuguese Vickers (caliber .303 British); Colt Monitor (compact, but unsuccessful, version of the BAR); two Colt Commercial Model 38B, .30-caliber, water-cooled Browning machine guns with spade grips; and three Czech ZB Vz26 light machine guns (from which the famed Bren Gun was derived). Many ZB Vz26s served in the German army during WWII and one of the specimens carried Waffenamts stempels.

Man-portable anti-tank rifles were popular until the middle of WWII, when tank armor improved to the extent that it could no longer be penetrated by such weapons. Two 20mm semiautomatic anti-tank rifles from this era, an S18/1000 Solothurn and Finnish Lahti Model 1939, were also present. Once not subject to Federal registration, these guns sold in the 1950s and early 1960s for \$189.50 and \$99.95 respectively. Their value has increased twentyfold.

Most abundant at the Knob Creek Shoot were the machine guns of World War II. The .30-caliber Browning series was represented by four M1917/A1 water-cooled MGs, three AN-M2 aircraft guns (fitted with spade grips and attached to M2 tripods) and seven M1919A4/A6 or M37 LMGs. There were both a BAR and FN Model D version.

King of any machine-gun mountain is the .50-caliber Browning. Ten were on the line the entire weekend, although four were attached to a completely restored Quad .50 towed mount. Placed in deuce-and-a-half trucks in Vietnam, these Quad .50s rained certain death on Charlie when employed in airfield perimeter defense. I fired a belt of 50 through each gun, and watching 200 of these 700-grain pills dump their energy 400 yards downrange would make any 97-pound weakling feel omnipotent.



Right flank of the firing line.

One of Ma Deuce's keepers fired 2,200 rounds after sunset through an already shot-out barrel, stopping only to load belts. At 800 rounds the barrel commenced to glow. After the entire 2,200-round sequence, the barrel was cherry-red from muzzle to barrel extension and hot enough to boil C-rats.

A Russian 12.7mm Degtyarev heavy machine gun proved bush league to Ma Deuce's line-up, as did the interesting JAP Type 96 (caliber 6.5mm Arisaka) and Type 99 (caliber 7.7mm rimless) light machine guns. Hitler's zippers were also present in great strength: nine MG-42s and six MG-34s. When you run nickel ammo through tired guns, the result is inevitable. Most of these German wonders were down at one time or another during the weekend and one MG-42 blew off its bipod, excavating a four-foot trench in front of the muzzle. These guys won't blink an eyelash when they have to cough up \$3,500 to \$5,000 for an MG-42 or MG-34, but ask them to pay more than five cents a round for ammo and they cry crocodile tears. You can expect up to a 40 percent dud rate on 50-year-old ball. Firing with a cyclic rate of 1,800 rpm per barrel was a German WWII MG-81Z twin-barreled aircraft gun. Produced by Mauser in caliber 7.92mm, it has one common receiver and trigger. Operating in a manner similar to the MG-34, by means of gas-assisted short recoil, some of these guns were re-chambered after the war to 7.62X51mm NATO for use in helicopters.

There were but nine postwar machine guns: three M60s, two L4A3 Bren Guns (caliber 7.62X51mm NATO), two FN Minimis (M249 SAW), a G.E. 7.62mm minigun sitting on a Browning M2 tripod and an HK21. Firing a belt through the HK21 reinforced my impressions from El

Salvador that this painful pile driver belongs in no army's inventory.

Firepower like this goes begging for pyrotechnic targets and Knob Creek Range provides some dramatic devices. Dynamite (as much as 40 sticks) is attached to cars, trucks, refrigerators, water heaters, bathtubs, pyramids of tires and barrels with an alcohol, sawdust and oil mixture. The results are often spectacular (especially at night) and sometimes amusing. With 50 or more belt guns raining destruction on the targets no one can be sure he hit anything, so of course everyone assumes he hit everything.

There's a great deal to interest both those with a historical and technical penchant at the Knob Creek shoot. You can learn far more about a particular weapon's salient features from watching it operate than you can in the musty confines of a museum. But don't come looking to see examples of fire discipline. These buckos are blasters. Bursts are limited only by the length of a belt or the capacity of a magazine. What you'll see at Knob Creek is nothing more or less than a weekend of innocent, albeit awesome, fun by the most law-abiding group of gun owners in the world. In the 53-year history of machine-gun control under the National Firearms Act of 1934, no more than one or two felonies have been committed with registered automatic weapons.

Knob Creek's next shoot will be held 4-5 April 1987. Shooters pay only \$50 for both days or \$30 for one day. Spectators are invited and it costs \$5 for one day or \$8 for both days to gawk your eyeballs out. For further information contact either Kenny or Holly Sumner at Knob Creek Range (Dept. SOF, Route 1, P.O. Box 85-C, West Point, KY 40177. Phone: (502) 922-4457). I'll see you there. My FN MAG 58 and I will be holding down the right flank of the line. ☒

SOF AFGHANISTAN

GUERRILLA THEATER

Holy Warriors Take the Stage

Text & Photos by Mike Winchester

OVER the past two years the Soviets have been piling on the pressure in Afghanistan. Their military build-up has been systematic — increased bombardment of mujahideen-dominated rural areas, frequent use of elite commando units (*Spetsnaz*) and improved air mobility of conventional troops.

Consequences of this strategy have been twofold: first, a growing death toll among civilians, including refugees fleeing for Pakistan; second, a mujahideen resistance that by force of circumstances has become increasingly organized and professional. This improvement in mujahideen guerrilla tactics and coordination is now actually keeping pace with the Soviets' introduction of heavier and more sophisticated weaponry. Today the Afghan rebels have a realistic, sophisticated understanding of what it means to fight a ruthless superpower.

Such sophistication was not always a hallmark of the mujahideen. In the summer and autumn of 1981 I spent several months looking at what was then a new war in the northern provinces of Afghanistan along the Soviet border. In those days, mujahideen

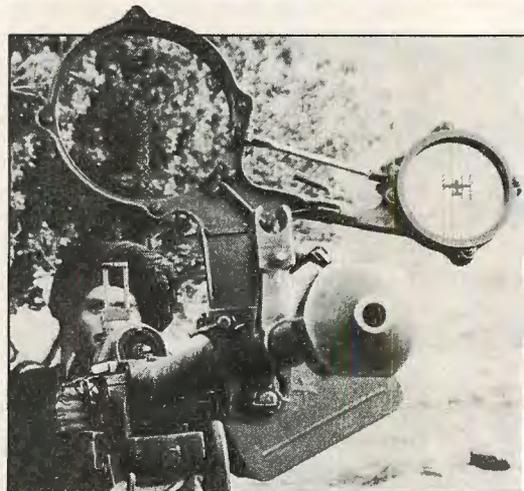
ABOVE RIGHT: Soviet Mi-24 *Hind*, or "flying tank" — most feared weapon in Soviet arsenal.

RIGHT: Antiaircraft weaponry for the mujahideen is largely limited to Soviet-designed DShK 38 12.7mm heavy machine guns.

organization — if you could call it that — was of a decidedly homegrown variety. In fact, it was often a toss-up as to who was more dangerous to journalistic life and limb — the Soviets or the friendly mujahideen hosts.

Not that the mujahideen didn't have their hearts in the struggle. Then, perhaps more than at any other time, Afghan resistance was a spontaneous outpouring of popular outrage, as the whole country rose against not only the godless regime in Kabul but also against the foreign invader. The snag was simply that there were too many independent players in the game. From Badakhshan in the far northeast to Herat in the west, every village had its own exclusive band of holy warriors and a self-appointed commander who was convinced that he alone would lead the liberation of the USSR's Muslim Republics before the year was out.

Also at that time, most Afghan rebels were straight off the farm. Some were in their sixties, others were young teenagers. Few could operate automatic weapons, let alone shoot straight. And as for a standing militia, there was none. The rebels fought when they had the will *and* the time to fight. When a particular skirmish was over, most rebels shouldered their weapons and returned home. But these liabilities did not



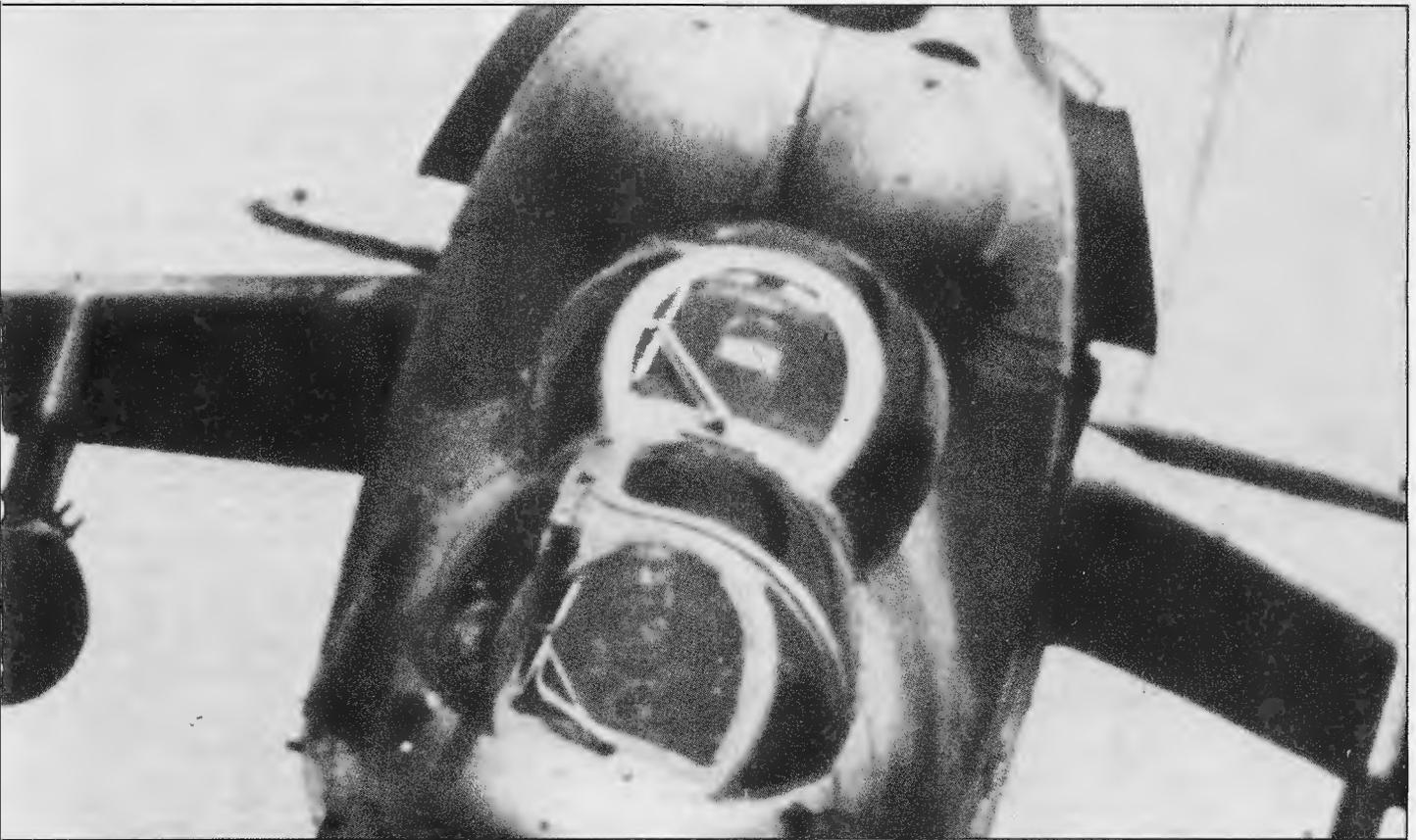
LIBERTY OR DEATH

Jihad — the mujahideen's holy war in Afghanistan — began in response to the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Claiming that their military occupation of the country was necessary to "normalize" social and political conditions in Afghanistan, Soviet intentions in that region have been clear since Lenin proclaimed that "the road to the Persian Gulf passes through Afghanistan."

When the Soviets sent troops into the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Marxist Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin was executed and a puppet regime led by Babrak Karmal was installed under close supervision of the KGB. The Afghan resistance movement rose in re-

WHERE THE WARS ARE

Mike Winchester is a widely traveled freelance writer based in Bangkok, Thailand. His past articles in *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* have covered communist resistance groups in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan.



sponse to attempts by the new regime to impose its rule and a variety of Marxist-style "reforms" that run counter to the deeply rooted traditions of the Afghan people.

Now in its eighth year, mujahideen resistance continues to deny the Soviets the fruits of their attempted conquest. Despite improved counterinsurgency tactics and the presence of 116,000-230,000 combat troops, the Soviets have failed to establish the authority of the puppet government in Kabul. In May 1986 Karmal was replaced by former Afghan secret police chief Najibullah. The intraparty dissension this has produced is the latest example of the Soviet Union's inability to establish a stable client regime.

Of all the anti-communist wars in the world today, the one in Afghanistan is unique — it is the only place where oppressed, partisan guerrillas are fighting directly with Soviet troops, not satellites or surrogates. While Afghan army forces do much of the fighting and dying for the Soviets, it is still Ivan's war against Afghanistan, not a civil war or revolution.

What we have today in Afghanistan is the largest national uprising of the 20th century. As Soviet military and Afghanisthan specialist David Isby points out, "The Afghan rebels [mujahideen] are not an army in the true sense of the word, but rather a people in arms. Each Afghan has *his* god and *his* gun. They'll chal-

lenge and fight anyone who dares meddle with their faith or firearms."

The Soviets pursued their Afghanistan policy with renewed vigor in 1986, trying new tactics both on the battlefield and in their efforts to gain legitimacy for the puppet regime. In July 1986, General Secretary Gorbachev announced plans to withdraw six regiments from Afghanistan. Concluded in October, the withdrawal turned out to be a sham; it had no effect on Soviet combat effectiveness inasmuch as most of the regiments withdrawn were either antiaircraft or armored units, which are of little use in this guerrilla war. Also, the Soviets had introduced two new motorized rifle regiments and several dozen tanks following Gorbachev's statement, for the sole purpose of withdrawing them in October.

At the same time, the Soviets and the Kabul regime have escalated cross-border sabotage and penetrations of Pakistani territory that were calculated in part to increase public unease in Pakistan. Through October 1986, there have been about 650 violations of Pakistani territory — a 150-percent increase over the total for 1985.

Political upheaval in Pakistan (where 3.2 million of Afghanistan's eight-plus million refugees now live) has, along with famine, the greatest potential for crippling the Afghans' efforts within the next five years. Pakistan has substantial problems of its own, with strong separa-

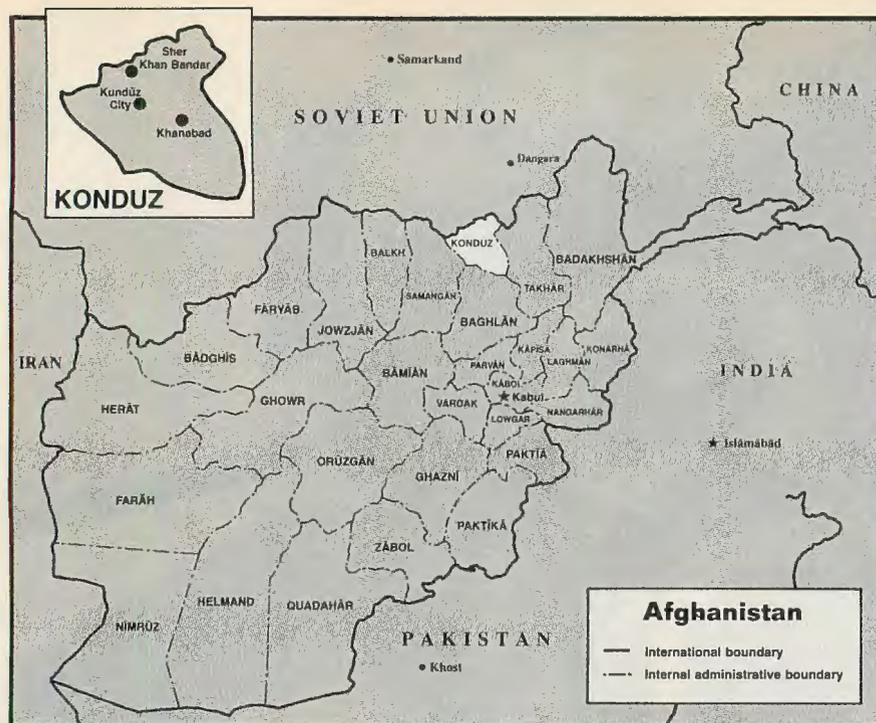
tist factions attempting to make a transition from military to parliamentary government. The opposition is already well armed by the Soviets and Afghan army. The Soviets could also try to re-ignite the insurgency in Baluchistan. Pakistan is sympathetic to the Afghan rebels but remains vulnerable to a combination of external aggression and internal pressure.

Afghanistan, which even in peacetime is one of the 20 poorest countries on earth, is engaged in a prolonged war of attrition with the Soviets. And *no one* has ever won a war of attrition with Russia. But when the Afghans say they are going to fight on, regardless of what the rest of the world might do or say, they mean it with a passion barely comprehensible to many Westerners.

No one can doubt the bravery and commitment of the Afghans, but 10 years of unequal struggle would take a terrible toll. They are only likely to achieve their aim — an Afghanistan without Soviet combat troops — if the West helps them raise the cost of this war to the Soviets.

It is not too late for the Afghans. The Vietnamese fought for 30 bloody years. The Afghans, fighting for their homes and way of life, are certainly no less dedicated. To the mujahideen, it is only a matter of time and lives until the Soviet invader is expelled and Afghanistan is free again.

—Tom Bates



We took position in the late morning and spent an hour or more digging in and then settled down to wait. By 1430 nothing had happened. By 1500 the tension and impatience were building to a fever pitch, with anxious glances being cast back along the highway.

Silence was broken abruptly about three clicks up the road by a couple of RPG blasts followed by sustained heavy machine-gun fire. There was a good deal of cursing and grumbling, and Ibrahim dispatched a runner back toward the town to confirm what by now was quite obvious. We then packed up and hustled back to find the action — a full-scale battle in progress, with three Mi-24 *Hind* helicopter gunships circling back and forth over the beleaguered convoy. En route we came across the other groups from different parties also moving out of prepared ambush positions and also unamused to find that “their” convoy had been attacked by someone else.

What was even more galling for us and the other mujahideen groups was that the convoy had been hit by a group of Harakat guerrillas who had been lounging around in a tea shop, had heard the noise of vehicles approaching and, having nothing else to do, succeeded in upstaging the other mujahideen who had *planned* their ambush. The Harakat group was commanded by a former Soviet trooper, a Kazakh who had joined the mujahideen the year before, after defecting from the army base at Kunduz airport. He was renamed “Taj Mahmud” by his fellow rebels.

After being pinned down by circling choppers, we finally joined the fighting. By the time we arrived, Taj Mahmud’s men had taken out one T-62 tank and damaged another. The rest of the convoy had effectively extricated itself and pulled back toward Kunduz under cover of low-flying *Hinds*.

After this fiasco, I was convinced that mujahideen coordination around Khanabad was practically nonexistent. I decided to leave Khanabad as soon as possible.

I told Ibrahim I wanted to take a look at the resistance in Kunduz. An accommodating host, Ibrahim agreed to help me join up with one of the *Jamiat* groups in Kunduz. We left the following afternoon in two municipal buses. The mujahideen all piled aboard and we set off down the highway into a beautiful late summer sunset.

Khanabad is about 25 clicks from Kunduz. About halfway into the journey we pulled over for evening prayers and finally arrived on the outskirts of Kunduz shortly after dark. Unlike Khanabad, Kunduz was well garrisoned by both the Soviets and the regime. The main Soviet base was at the airport outside the city, while in the city the Afghan army held certain key buildings. In daytime Kunduz was in regime hands. But after dark it was a very different story.

Fighting generally didn’t begin until after 2000 hours. So in the early evening Ibrahim and I paid a few social visits and had dinner at the house of a local merchant. After dinner we had tea and listened to the radio.

faze the mujahideen. They were all committed to ridding their country of the invaders from the north — one way or another.

In those early days of the war, Afghan rebels could afford to fight in a sporadic way. Kabul’s ragtag army, decimated by desertions and defections, was still struggling to stay together. The Soviets who, in theory, had arrived to secure the cities and highways in order to allow the Afghan army to go after the resistance were still settling in and not much liking what they found, particularly their Afghan army allies.

As a result, the Soviets tended to confine themselves to their bases. When they ventured out it was with plenty of armor and textbooks on how to win wars in central Europe and northern China. Because of this Soviet timidity the mujahideen maintained the initiative through default, in spite of their chronic disorganization. In fact, there always seemed to be more attackers than available targets, with zealous mujahideen falling over each other to get in on the action. Given that the whole country was up in arms and the communists were hard pressed to hold onto the cities, this was not especially surprising. But it often made for trouble — usually *within* the ranks of the mujahideen.

One such instance occurred in September 1981, when I was in the town of Khanabad, a medium-sized ville in Kunduz province controlled by the mujahideen. Situated on the main highway between Kunduz city and the northeast of the country, Khanabad served as an ideal staging area for mujahideen ambushers along the well-traveled highway.

In and around the town three major Peshawar-based parties were operating, each fielding several fighting groups. I attached myself to a section of the *Jamiat-i-Islami* (Islamic Society) commanded by an

Author spent much of 1981 with mujahideen in northern provinces of Afghanistan along Soviet border.

ex-army officer, Ibrahim Sarsefid, who had parted company with his former employers after the Soviet invasion. The group was around 30 to 50 strong, depending on who was free at the time, who was minding his shop, back on his farm, etc.

Shortly after my arrival in Khanabad, the first Soviet convoy passed by on its way to an Afghan garrison just outside the town. Ibrahim was already ahead of the game: He had good advance intelligence about the convoy, given him from contacts inside the Afghan army garrison itself. This token force within the garrison felt no allegiance to the Russians but relied heavily on the mujahideen in town to deliver meat and vegetables. So long as the army remained within the walls, a friendly arrangement remained intact: as food passed in, intelligence and ammunition passed out.

We got word about the Soviet convoy in the early morning. It was coming from Kunduz and, after stopping at the Afghan garrison, was headed for neighboring Takhar province. We could expect it on the highway outside Khanabad by early afternoon.

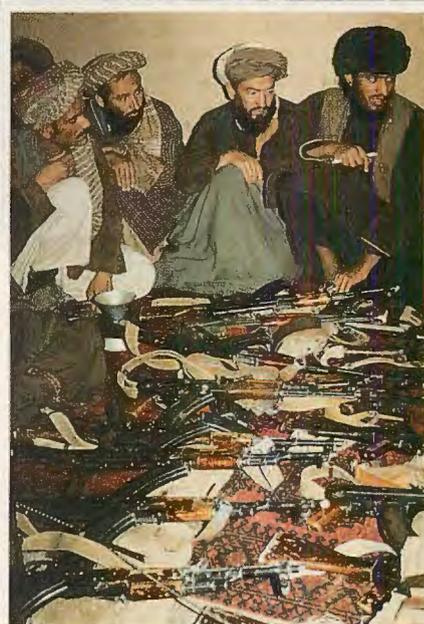
Ibrahim set up an ambush about four clicks outside of Khanabad. The spot was a good one. A deep irrigation ditch located about 100 meters from the road provided perfect cover, while an open field between the ditch and the road left a wide, flat expanse which denied the Soviets any place to hide. There was also a farmhouse near the ditch. From its roof the road could be brought under fire from an unobstructed angle. The cover provided by this house and the one next to it offered a clear line of retreat had our group — about 25 strong — bitten off more than it could chew.



ABOVE: Type 56 AK-47 shows Chinese help for resistance groups.

RIGHT: Mountainous Afghan terrain inhibits Soviet troop mobility and provides ideal cover for mujahideen ambushes.

BELOW RIGHT: Captured weapons make up bulk of mujahideen armory. Commanders typically distribute best weapons to fiercest fighters. Here Zabiullah (far right), commander of *Jamiat-i-Islami* forces in Balkh province, conducts ceremony awarding weapons to best warriors.



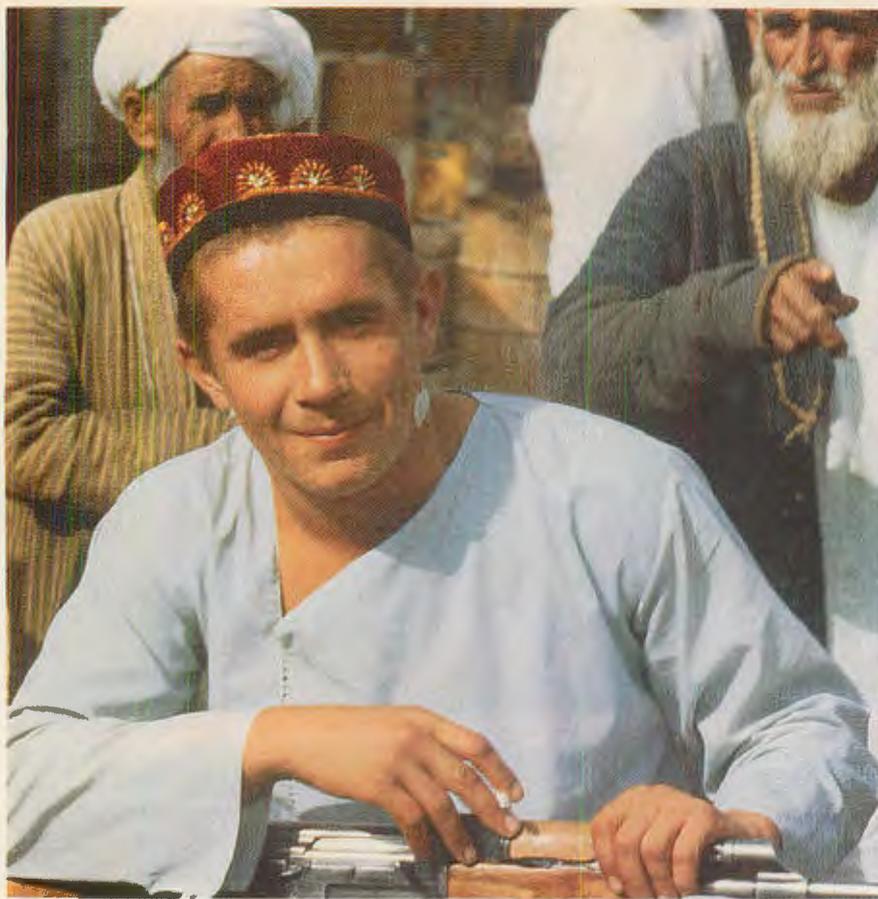
Around 2130 it was time to get moving.

Our target was the local *Khad* (secret police headquarters), which was well guarded and had a couple of Soviet tanks inside the compound. The first plan was to lure the armor out onto the street, where we could hit it with RPGs. But the Soviets weren't stupid and had no intention of driving around narrow, dark streets playing hide-and-seek with rocket-toting guerrillas. Even so, our group took position a few hundred meters from the *Khad* and opened up with automatic weapons fire, trying to get the Soviets' attention. Though most of the shooting was generally in the right direction, with tracer bullets making elaborate crisscross patterns in the night, the Soviets wisely refused to emerge from the compound.

Around 0100 things died down and we regrouped at a mosque near the outskirts of town and took a head count. Then it was back onto the buses and home to Khanabad. I remember the ride well — the mood was lighthearted, as smoke from mazar hashish hung in the air. There were no mujahideen casualties, everybody had shot off a lot of ammunition (always a good morale booster) and the assumption was that the enemy had taken heavy casualties.

This party atmosphere was silenced as AK rounds ripped into our bus from both sides. Sitting just a few seats behind the driver, I had a grandstand view of what was happening — we were sitting ducks. In a scene forever frozen in my mind, I can see the pencil-dot lines of tracer bullets rising from the darkness on the left like sparks spewing out of a volcano.

As the windows disintegrated in a blinding shower of glass and metal splinters, I dove for the floor, covering my face. In the bedlam of cries and gunfire, I can remember thinking: "There's an RPG round coming,



RIGHT: Scanning for Soviet *Hind* helicopters, cliff-top DShk HMGs provide mujahideen with AA cover.

BELOW RIGHT: Mohammad Kareem, mujahideen camp commander and former brigadier in Afghan army, brandishes captured Soviet AKS-74 assault rifle in caliber 5.45x39mm ComBloc.

there has to be an RPG out there. This is it, no way to fight back, no place to run. End of story."

Miraculously the attackers missed our driver who, to his eternal credit, kept control of the vehicle and accelerated on through the ambush and stopped several hundred meters down the road when we were out of danger. There was then a panic-stricken rush for the door, with those not wounded trampling their less fortunate comrades.

Some of the mujahideen broke and scattered across the fields on the right of the highway. My heart doing about 600 beats per minute, I hit the roadside ditch and started trying to find out where all the blood on my back was coming from. Others led by Ibrahim fanned out and, weapons at the ready, were working their way back up toward the ambush party, which had fallen curiously silent. An exchange of shouts confirmed what was beginning to dawn on even the slowest of us — we had been ambushed by other mujahideen!

These zealous warriors had not been informed that two bus loads of heavily-armed men would be heading back down the highway at 0130 and assumed that for once the communists — who were not above dressing up as mujahideen — were pulling a few surprises of their own.

It remains a towering tribute to Islamic solidarity among the rebels that another round of hostilities didn't explode on the spot. But it came very, very close. The next half-hour was consumed in a hysterical exchange of insults,

Taj Mahmad, a former Soviet trooper who defected in 1980, commands mujahideen guerrilla group *Harakat* near Khanabad.

threats and recriminations, while the wounded — there were three — lay groaning stoically on the bus. One seriously wounded mujahid remarked to me, with what I thought was commendable philosophy: "It could have been a lot worse."

The fact that a mere three days later things very nearly got "a lot worse" is further indication of the way the war was being fought. It also helps to explain why, by the time I decided to head south, my nerves were terminally frayed at the edges.

After extracting the larger shards of glass from my back, I said farewell to Ibrahim and headed out of Khanabad to join a *Jamiat* group based west of Kunduz. Ibrahim had been a good friend, and with a fatalistic grin he apologized about the "ambush." I traveled by day with a large group of mujahideen in three trucks. The route they planned seemed simple enough: move across country along village lanes to a point north of Kunduz where we would join the main highway, drive down the highway to a point just outside the city, then cut west again across country to the village where the *Jamiat* provincial commander was temporarily based. But this trek turned out to be anything but simple.

After a couple of torturous, kidney-pounding hours on country lanes, we reached the highway. I should mention parenthetically that this highway was not

just any stretch of tarmac. This was the main highway between Kunduz city and the town of Sher Khan Bandar on the Oxus River — which forms the Soviet border. Built by the Soviets in the 1960s, it is an excellent all-weather road and, since the invasion, one of the busiest lines of military communication and resupply in the country.

A few inquiries established that we were at a point about 15 clicks north of Kunduz. We would follow the highway to a turnoff about three clicks outside the city. It occurred to me at the time that driving around on this sort of road in broad daylight with truckloads of heavily armed men hadn't been in any book on guerrilla warfare I'd ever read, so I raised the point with the man in charge. He was a marginally intelligent loudmouth who, in the presence of the foreign press, namely me, was determined to show the dauntless courage of the mujahideen, even if it meant taking senseless risks. "The *Shuravi* [Soviets]," he told me, "don't dare use these roads after four o'clock." Since by now it was around 1630 there was clearly nothing more to be said. We got back on board the truck, lurched up the embankment onto the highway and swung south.

As an honored guest I was allowed to sit up in the cab of the lead truck. It was a pleasant summer afternoon with a few peasants still working in the cotton and wheat fields on either side of the road. It seemed like the war was a million miles away; here we were cruising along one of the Sovs' main communication arteries like we owned the place, a mere 60 clicks from the USSR.

An interesting experience under any circumstances, the ride became doubly memorable when six or seven minutes later another column of military vehicles approached from the other direction, about 200 meters distant and closing. Upon inspection my worst fears came true. The approaching vehicles were Soviet — a GAZ-65 truck followed by the squat shapes of BTR-60s! Our driver yelled, "Qatar!" (convoy) in a panic-stricken shriek and stood on the brakes, throwing me face-first into the windshield. Before I could recover, the entire truck had emptied. Dazed, I grabbed my camera bag, stumbled out of the truck and crawled into a roadside irrigation ditch.

There followed a wild stampede for the only available cover — a mud-walled farmhouse set back maybe 100 meters from the road. Unfortunately, between the ditch and the farmhouse lay at least 100 meters of flat field punctuated by tangled bunches of knee-high cotton plants. Thrashing through



STICKS AND STONES TO BREAK IVAN'S BONES

Afghan guerrillas are lightly armed, fighting the Soviet army and air force with only infantry weapons. Lack of adequate modern weapons and ammunition has limited the number of fighting men the Afghans can put into the field.

Afghans use a wide variety of rifles. While these range from percussion *jezails* and single-shot Martini-Henrys

captured at Maiwand in 1880, the two most common weapons are .303 Lee Enfields and 7.62mm Kalashnikov assault rifles. Other infantry weapons include SKS 7.62mm rifles (Soviet- and Chinese-made), M1891 7.62mm Moisin-Nagants (supplied on Lenin's orders in 1919), 7.62mm G3s (ex-Iranian), 9mm Sten guns (often locally made) and a variety of light machine guns, although all are limited in numbers. The 7.62mm RPD and RPK are most common, although the 7.62mm PKM and older Czech-made ZB 36s of the pre-war army are also used.

To counter Soviet armor the Afghans must rely on RPG-7 anti-tank rocket launchers and anti-tank mines. However, because the guerrillas control most of the countryside, mine use is limited to prevent civilian casualties.

Ask any Afghan resistance fighter over the age of six what you can do to help their plight, and the answer will always be: "Get us weapons to destroy the helicopters!" The most common anti-aircraft weapons are the Soviet-designed DShK 12.7mm and 14.5mm KPV heavy machine guns — "Dashka" and "Ziqriat" respectively to the Afghans. These weapons are of limited effectiveness against jet aircraft and heavily armored *Hinds*, although they

have a surprisingly high number of kills and considerable deterrent value.

The most effective air defense weapon is the heat-seeking SA-7 *Grail* surface-to-air missile. Small numbers have been in use since 1980: The Afghan army had SA-7s pre-war, but these valuable weapons remain few and far between. In early 1986, there were press reports that the Afghan freedom fighters were to receive U.S.-made General Dynamics *Stinger* surface-to-air missiles, which are similar to the SA-7 but more effective against targets using flares and countermeasures. Such missiles will have to be supplied in mass quantity, though, to affect the course of the war. (SOF sources inside Afghanistan state that *Stingers* are now in operation).

Other than homemade incendiary devices and fragmentation bombs, *this is all* the mujahideen have to fight the Soviet invaders. This dismal imbalance of power is further illustrated when tallying the number of Afghans killed in the conflict. Estimates range from 500,000 to 1,000,000 dead, not including those who died in refugee camps in neighboring Pakistan.

With such odds, it's amazing that the mujahideen resistance has been as successful as it has to date.

— The Editors

the vegetation at top speed I tripped repeatedly, landing spread-eagled in the dirt. At those humbling moments I can recall thinking, "Do I go to ground or keep going?" After looking back at the approaching convoy, the choice was obvious. I had to keep moving if this story was ever to be told.

My mujahideen companions — at least 40 strong — had spread out across the field in a frantic, floundering rout, encouraged by scattered bursts of automatic fire from a few Soviets who were sitting atop the BTR-60s. As I stumbled and went down for the third or fourth time I could see a few of the mujahideen kneeling and returning fire, and for a brief moment it seemed like one of the first orderly retreats in the annals of Afghan military history was in the making. An orderly retreat never materialized, however, because the *raket-wallah* (RPG man) had dutifully dragged his launcher with him but had forgotten to bring along any rockets. When we discovered this it became an every-man-for-himself sprint for the farmhouse.

About three other mujahideen and I made the cover of the farmhouse wall in a flying leap. We slithered across the hard earthen pathway beneath the wall and then doubled over gasping for breath, our throats parched from the heat and dust. Hardly able to breathe, we began laughing uncontrollably at our hopeless predicament and our joy just to be alive.

It says a lot about the state of the Afghan war in those days that the Sovs did not halt and give chase. Had they done so, the farmhouse would have been leveled and our

corpses left to rot in the sun. Instead, they contented themselves with filling our abandoned transport with holes and speeding on, blasting their machine guns into the middle distance on both sides of the highway.

My guess is that the Sovs were disconcerted by what must have looked like some elaborately staged trap, or at the very least an ambush that had somehow misfired. Certainly for the lead driver, with RPGs on his mind, it must have looked a pretty improbable, not to say very weird, scene. And Soviet military textbooks do not deal with either the improbable or the weird.

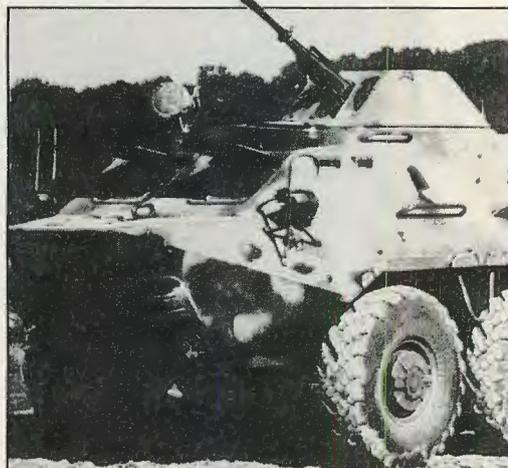
Casualties from this inglorious operation amounted to one farmer and one horse killed, two mujahideen wounded and one journalist suffering severe nervous exhaustion. It goes without saying that the mujahideen — and our loudmouth commander in particular — were at pains to interpret the whole encounter as another victory for the forces of national liberation and proof — if proof were needed — of the spineless character of the invader.

But as I said, those days are long gone. The Sovs have learned from past errors — so too, thank God, have the mujahideen. ✕

ABOVE RIGHT: Khanabad mujahideen outside tea shop with captured Soviet DP 7.62mm light machine gun.

RIGHT: Soviet wheeled, amphibious BTR-60PB APC.

BELOW: Mujahideen motorized patrol near Khanabad.



IVAN'S TOOLS OF THE TRADE IN AFGHANISTAN

FIXED-WING AIR OPERATIONS

Soviet fixed-wing airpower is mainly used to attack villages which could serve as guerrilla bases. Close air support — attacking guerrillas in battle with communist ground troops — is limited, and almost always performed by helicopters rather than fighter-bombers.

Soviet fighters totalled, in 1985, about eight to ten squadrons comprising 12-15 aircraft each in Afghanistan, with an equal number based in the Soviet Union for supporting operations. Military aircraft used against Afghanistan include:

MiG-23 and MiG-27 *Flogger* — two or three squadrons.

MiG-21 *Fishbed* — one or two squadrons.

SU-17 *Fitter-D* swing-wing fighters — two squadrons.

SU-25 *Frogfoot* — two squadrons.

Tu-16 *Badger* medium bombers — based in Soviet Union.



SU-24 *Fencer* attack aircraft — based in Soviet Union.

An-12 *Cub* transports — based in Soviet Union, used as bombers by rolling bombs down rear ramp.

An-12 *Cub* — sensor equipped, used as “master bombers” and for reconnaissance.

An-26 *Curl* — sensor equipped, used as “master bombers” and for reconnaissance.

Il-76 *Mainstay* — radar equipped, used as airborne command posts.

HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

Helicopters are the single most important Soviet weapon used in Afghanistan. The Afghans hate and fear helicopters — especially the Mi-24 *Hind* attack helicopter — more than any other weapon in the Soviet arsenal. *Hinds*, which represent about a quarter of the Soviets’ helicopter strength in Afghanistan, are used for close air support, bombing villages, convoy escort and patrolling and destroying whatever they find moving in most of Afghanistan. Flying by day and night, *Hinds* use their under-nose 12.7mm machine gun; 57mm rocket pods; HE, white phosphorous and incendiary bombs; air-dropped minelet pods; “liquid fire” delayed-action incendiary pods; cluster bomb units or chemical canisters. Often called “flying tanks,” *Hinds* are heavily armed and nearly impossible to down without ground-to-air missiles. Other Soviet helicopters used in Afghanistan are:

Mi-8/Mi-17 *Hip* series — standard transport helicopter.

Mi-6 *Hook* and Mi-26 *Halo* — provide heavy lift capabilities.

Soviet helicopters total at least seven regiments, each of 30 to 50 aircraft, and several independent flights and squad-

rons, with 350-plus helicopters based in Afghanistan and half again as many in the Soviet Union.

SOVIET AND AFGHAN ARMY GROUND FORCES EQUIPMENT

Main Battle Tanks: T-34/35, T-54, T-55, T-62, T-72.

Armored Personnel Carriers: BTR-152, BTR-60PB, BTR-70.

Airborne Assault Gun: ASU-85.

Infantry Fighting Vehicles: BMP-1, BMP-2, BMD.

Wheeled Fighting Vehicles: BRDM-2 scout car, gun trucks.

122mm howitzers: M-30 (M-1938), D-30 (M-1963), 2S1 SP (M-1974).

152mm howitzers: 2S3 SP (M-1973), 2S5 SP (M-1977).

130mm guns: M-46 (M-1954).

MRLs: 132mm BM-13, 122mm Grad-P and BM-21, 220mm BM-27.

Rockets: Frog-7.

Mortars: 82mm M-1937 (incl. SP and BMD), 82mm Vasilek (towed and SP), 120mm M-1943, 240mm SP M-1977.

Surface-to-air (SAM) missiles: SA-2, SA-4, SA-7, SA-9, SA-13, SA-6 or SA-8.

Antiaircraft artillery: 23mm ZSU-23-4 SP, 23mm ZU-23-2, 14.5mm ZPU-1, -2, -4, and 12.7mm DShKM AAA.

Anti-tank weapons (used to destroy stone homes): RPG-7 and RPG-16 rocket launcher; SPG-9 73mm AT gun; Sagger ATGM, 100mm T-12 AT gun; 66mm RPG-18 single-shot rocket launcher; 85mm SD-44 AT gun.

Infantry weapons: 5.45mm weapons (AKS, AK-74, AKD, AKSU assault rifles and RPK-74 LMG); 7.62mm weapons (AKM, AKMS, AK-47 assault rifles, RPK, RPD, RP-46, DTM, LMGs, PKMS GPMG, SKS carbine, PPSH SMG, 7.7mm ZB-36 LMG); gre-

nade launchers (30mm AGS-17, 40mm BG-15); mines (PFM-1 air-dispersed, PMN anti-personnel and others).

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

These include older gases such as phogene, CS and CN, as well as standard nerve agents and new high-technology agents such as mycotoxins — the deadly “Yellow Rain,” an incapacitant — and “the Flash,” a fast-acting and highly lethal nerve gas. There have been no confirmed reports of these newer gases being used since 1982, but the older types remained in use at least until 1984. Delivery is usually by canister dropped from helicopters or fighter-bombers.

OTHER ARMED FORCES

In addition to the army and air force, the Soviets have reportedly committed units from the KGB Border Guards, MVD Ministry of the Interior Internal Security Troops and KGB Special Troops, or *Spetsnaz*, who were used in the 1979 invasion and who also guard high-priority objectives.

TOTAL SOVIET TROOP STRENGTH

115,000 army troops in Afghanistan.
40,000 army troops fighting in Afghanistan, based in USSR.

10,000 air force personnel in Afghanistan and USSR.

50,000 support troops in USSR.

2,000 advisers to Kabul regime.

Estimated 5,000 MVD and KGB forces, plus several thousand civilian advisers.

There are persistent though unconfirmed reports of Cuban, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, South Yemeni and Syrian troops serving with Soviet forces.

—The Editors

JUNK FORCE JUNKET

Press Priorities Leave Wounded in a Slow Boat

Text & Photos by John C. Foster

LANDING in our LZ, the helicopter wop-wop-wops and clack-clack-clatters in a tight circle as it flares out and sets down in a cloud of dead grass. Flying dust and stinging little pieces of Vietnam splatter everywhere. This flight is of particular interest to us because it is unscheduled. Normally we might get one flight a month. None come just to visit. That's understandable. This little Junk base on the Ham Luong River isn't much to see. Just a leftover little triangle of mud walls out in the Mekong Delta.

Surprise again. Three civilians run toward us, crouching and clutching hats and bags against the swirling grit. The helicopter barely pauses, then accelerates its wop-wopping and scoots off with its nose to the ground, skimming across the gaggle of grass huts north of the base.

Extending his hand, one of the three speaks.

"Hello. Jack Klepper, NBC News. This is Don Bell and that's our cameraman, Bill Kelley." He looks and sounds like a TV newsman. Khaki jacket, fatigue pants, suntan.

"Welcome to Junk Division 34. I'm Lieutenant John Foster, and this is our commanding officer, Dai Uy (Captain) Da." I pump his hand and run through the usual mindless courtesies, wondering to myself what the hell they're doing here, trying to size up our guests. With six months in-country as an adviser to the South Vietnamese navy, I had heard good and bad tales about journalists. Generally they were friendly and sometimes famous, always in an air of glamor. Never had heard of anybody benefiting from having them around, though. Or having a choice.

I help Jack carry his gear over to our place. Over a couple of luke-cool Tiger beers, I answer the basic questions and fill him in on what we're doing.

"This is Junk Division 34. Across the canal is Junk Division 37. It used to be way

down below 36, which is on the Bassac, but it kept getting overrun. They finally just gave up and moved it up here with us. Except for us and a few Ruff-Puff outposts, the VC own Kien Hoa province outside Ben

Tre city limits. But they haven't made any serious effort to wipe us out yet. Just harassment.

"There are generally two officers and two enlisted advisers at each base," I explain. "This is George Wilcox, my number two, and Petty Officer First Class MacDonough. We're short one enlisted. You'll meet the folks across the canal later."

Don Bell speaks for the first time. "We just finished up an operation with the 173rd, and are set up to do something on the Swift Boats on Phuoc Quoc Island. The head shed suggested a look at you."

Don looks around the hooch. "Pretty primitive."

"Actually, it's a hell of a lot better than we found it," George tells him. "The last guys started out in a dirt-floor grass hut. They started building this out of dunnage from cargo ships they managed to cumshaw up in Vung Tau. We took up where they left off. Hell, there's four wooden walls, a cement floor and a tin roof. What more could a lean, hard jungle fighter ask for? Besides, it's as good as the junkies and their dependents have."

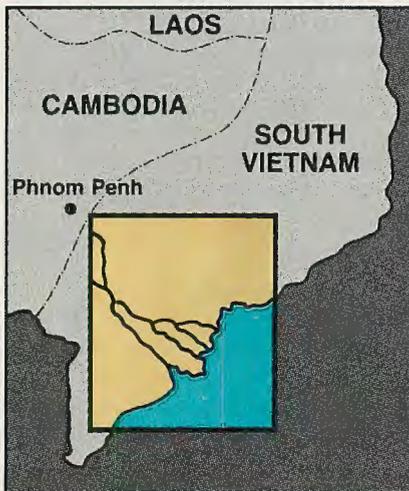
Out comes a notebook. "So you don't get much support," Jack Klepper says. "Who is your supporting command?"

"We're sort of orphans," I tell him. "The Navy advisers are part of MACV, which is an Army command. The Navy commands, like Swifties and PBRs, know that, so they don't offer much. The Army is hard to get hold of and rarely has the stuff we need. Hell, they barely know where we are or what we're doing."

"Bill, can you get set up and get this?" Klepper says to his camera guy, more of an order than a question. Jack is all commentator, straightening his khaki jacket, brushing down his hair.

"I want you to run through all of that again on camera, John," he tells me while positioning me beside him. Bill is unpacking and assembling cameras, lights and

Lower map details AO of Junk Force advised by Lieutenant John Foster.



power packs.

"No thanks. Hold it. *Hey!*" I finally break into their little preparation ritual. "I'm not going to do an interview bitching and moaning about support."

End of rapport. End of camaraderie. The whole news team packs up and moves to 37.

"What was that all about?" asks Mac. He and I had come down here together. He is a good, solid mechanic.

"Probably just being paranoid, Mac. I just thought maybe they're looking to do one of these stories where an American shows up on TV talking about how screwed up the war, the Vietnamese, the Navy, the government, or everybody but NBC is. It pisses me off and I don't want to accidentally wind up in it."

"Well, Mr. Foster, if they're looking to do a story on things that are screwed up over here, they can do it without you, and without too much trouble."

"That's no shit," Wilcox throws in. "Wait till they try to send their story out. I haven't been able to talk to Ben Tre since we were up there last month. Better yet, wait till they try to get out of here."

"I wonder how long they plan to stay?" Mac asks, wondering but not really caring.

I leave on a three-day patrol with Dai Uy Da. The Junk Force, or Coastal Force, as it was renamed (modernization through change in terminology), patrols the coasts, canals and coastal rivers of South Vietnam to prevent or hinder movement of troops or supplies by the Viet Cong. Down here in the Delta, where almost everything is water, this covers a lot of territory. We visit hamlets and stop fishermen. We were surprised and amused when we first started because several fishermen told me that I was the first Frenchman they had seen in some time. We're talking major league backwater.

This is a pretty uneventful patrol. We take a little fire on the Ba Lai River, so we land and destroy the hamlet where it came from. One junky is slightly wounded in the arm, but not seriously enough to require special care. We bandage him up and hope for the best.

As the boat leaves the Ba Lai, I remember tales from Saigon of "goddamn unmotivated shitbirds who wouldn't fight to save their sisters." I look around at the grinning junkies who had just charged an enemy position ashore just because they were pissed off at getting fired at.

Of course, Dai Uy Da makes a big difference when it comes to going hey-diddle-diddle, right up the middle. He *leads*. Three-day patrols give a lot of time to talk, and we know each other about as well as two men from as different cultures as ours can expect. He watches advisers come in for a year and go home, and he keeps on fighting. He never leaves the field for a desk jockey job in some place like Saigon or Vung Tau. His whole career, about eight years, has been in River Assault Groups and Junk Divisions. This kills his chances for promotion. No prestigious Sea Force duty. The Sea Force is the Vietnamese navy's assort-



ABOVE: Room with a view: looking from Junk Division 34 across the canal to 37's camp.



LEFT: Ha Si Loc, right, whose wife died from mortar shrapnel wounds because the only available helicopter was evacuating some uninvited members of the press.



LOWER LEFT: The author as a young Navy lieutenant serving as an adviser in a forgotten Delta base.

ment of old U.S. landing ships, patrol craft and auxiliaries that patrol way offshore where nothing is happening. Probably officers like Da are left on the line because they get the job done.

We drift to a stop off some fish stakes at the mouth of the Ham Luong and grenade some fish for supper. Ha Si (Corporal) Loc serves them up, smiling. He always smiles at me at mealtime.

On my first patrol, I rode with Ha Si Loc. At supper, we all crouched in the cabin of the junk as he handed me a platter of five crabs. I ate them. They were delicious. As I sucked at the last piece of shell, I noticed the crew and Ha Si Loc staring at me in amazement. I had eaten everybody's supper! From then on, I was an exhibition at each hamlet and a source of shared amusement with Ha Si Loc at each meal.

We pull back up our canal to 34 the next morning. The newsmen are still living at 37 and had done interviews with Jimmy Williams, the enlisted Boatswain's Mate at 37, and with George Wilcox. No problems and no blatantly controversial material. Bill, the photographer, had even joined the junkies on a night ambush set up. Proved uneventful, but I was impressed with his spirit.

George and I sit up late that night catching up on what had gone on with each of us during the day. We talk under a weak fluorescent lamp wired into two PRC-25

NAVAL ADVISER

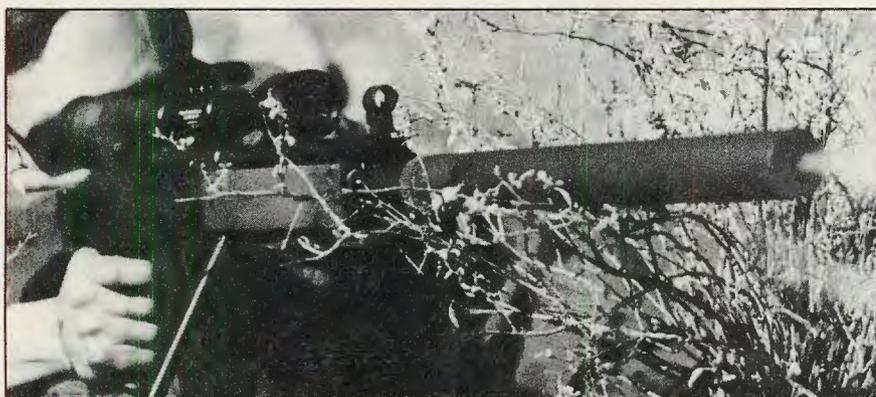
Navy Captain John C. Foster served as an American adviser to the South Vietnamese Navy "Junk Force" in the Mekong Delta during 1965-66. Since then his assignments included command of Special Boat Unit 22 in New Orleans, command of Special Boat Squadron Two in Little Creek, Virginia and chief of the U.S. Naval Mission to Colombia. He retired in 1984 after 23 years of service. This is Foster's first article for SOF. The editors are happy to have him aboard.

Continued on page 86

GALIL'S NEW SNIPER RIFLE

Israelis Take After Sovs and Design Mass-Produced Sniper System

Text and Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



THROUGHOUT history snipers and their equipment have held the military's interest only during periods of armed conflict. Between wars they languish in a limbo buried under higher priorities. But Israel's state of siege never ends, so it stands to reason that sniping would occupy no small role in Israel Defense Forces (IDF) tactics. Yet until recently their snipers have made do with little more than exhausted M14s — junkyard remnants of American military hopes left rotting in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

Working in close support with the army, an Israel Military Industries (IMI) weapons division team commenced development of an indigenous sniping system in 1980. Taking note of Russia's success at mass producing the Dragunov, large-scale series production without serious compromise of the accuracy potential was a key objective. The resulting rifle, while not totally satisfactory in my opinion, is, nonetheless, a sincere effort to comply with the user's requirements.

Starting with the Galil rifle, itself an extensive modification of the Kalashnikov system (early prototypes were in fact assembled with Finnish Valmet M62 receivers), IMI's response to the infantry's need to strike at multiple targets both quickly and accurately checks in at 18.3 pounds, com-

Firing new Galil Sniper Rifle equipped with Nimrod scope and Ciener sound suppressor. Recently adopted by Israel Defense Forces (IDF), this Galil is a high-accuracy-potential rifle that can be mass produced.

plete with scope, bipod and loaded magazine. While Israeli soldiers are well-known for their ability to hump with awesome loads, this is still far too heavy. Overall length with the stock unfolded and the muzzle brake installed is approximately 43 inches.

Built around the Galil's heavy forged receiver, chambering is for the 7.62X51mm NATO cartridge. Since snipers will employ match-grade ammunition, adding in essence a different cartridge to the pipeline, the belted .300 Winchester Magnum would have been a superior choice, as it provides less variation in point of impact at long ranges.

Firing from the closed-bolt position, the Galil is gas-operated without an adjustable regulator. When the trigger is pulled, the hammer drives the firing pin forward to strike the primer. The bolt has been fitted with a strong firing pin spring to prevent premature ignition of more sensitive commercial primers — an especially important feature as the auto safety sear has been elim-

inated from this semiautomatic rifle.

After ignition of the primer, a portion of the propellant gases passes through the barrel vent into the gas block pinned to the barrel. Gas enters the cylinder (to which a small spring has been attached to secure its retention during reassembly) and drives the piston rearward. The piston is hard-chrome plated for ease of maintenance. A notched ring in back of the piston head provides a reduced bearing surface and permits excess gas blow-by, which is vented into the atmosphere out six ports in the gas cylinder. The bolt carrier is permanently attached to the piston. After a short amount of free travel, during which time the gas pressure drops to a safe level, the carrier's cam slot engages the bolt's cam pin and the bolt is rotated and unlocked as the carrier moves rearward.

Primary extraction occurs as the bolt is rotated. Empty-case ejection is typically violent. Cases are severely dented by the ejector (milled into the left receiver rail) and thrown to the right and front as much as 40 feet (an undesirable characteristic with regard to position disclosure). At this time, the recoil spring is compressed and its return energy drives the carrier forward to strip another round from the magazine and chamber it.

The Galil's hammer spring is made of multi-strand cable. Both the trigger and sear springs are fabricated from conventional single-strand wire. The two-stage trigger on SOF's test specimen breaks cleanly at 3.25 pounds. But the right-side selector lever is the same stamped sheet-metal bar common to all Kalashnikovs and every bit as noisy. Something should be done about this.

The top position, marked "S," is safe and blocks upward rotation of the trigger bar. In this position, the bolt can be retracted only far enough to inspect for a chambered round. There is also a thumb-operated selector switch on the left side. By means of a two-piece hinged bar inside the receiver, the rearmost position of this selector is safe, and pushing forward with the thumb will place the weapon in the firing mode, marked "F."

Taken from the Hungarian AKM/AMD-65 series, the Galil's gray-plastic pistol grip exhibits excellent human engineering. Of more than adequate length, with a sharp bottom flare to prevent the hand from slipping, the grip has been attached to the receiver at precisely the correct grip-to-frame angle.

Protected by the front of the trigger guard, the spring-loaded, flapper-type magazine latch must be inserted from the front and rolled back to engage the latch. Two tough, all-steel, ribbed 25-round magazines are issued with each rifle. Both the magazines and the receiver are finished with black baked enamel over phosphate. All other steel components (except the piston) are phosphate finished.

Carrying handle and bayonet stud on the ARM have been deleted. The retracting handle remains attached to the bolt carrier

and bent upright to permit cocking with either hand — a useful feature.

No small portion of this rifle's horrendous weight is consumed by the 20-inch, heavy, stepped barrel. Its four grooves twist to the right with a turn of 1:12 inches. A faster 1:10 inch twist would have offered greater bullet stabilization at ranges approaching 1,000 meters.

A large 4-inch muzzle brake has been

Galil Sniper Rifle field stripped and shown with Ciener sound suppressor, scope and all accessories.



threaded to the barrel. It has three rows of exhaust ports of five holes each positioned to the rear of four transverse compensator cuts arranged two abreast. It can be rotated offset to the right or left to accommodate right- or left-handed shooters (unfortunately, to no avail). It's quite effective but retained by an allen-head set screw which will surely loosen and disappear in the field.

Two-piece wooden handguards, without the ARM's longitudinal grooves, are attached to the barrel and receiver by screws through a hole at the rear of the gas block and into the bottom, front portion of the receiver. The bipod, attached to the gas



Nimrod 6X40mm scope attached to Galil Sniper Rifle with a quick-release side-rail mount features an excellent Dragunov/RPG-7-type reticle range finder.

block on the ARM, has been moved 9.5 inches to the rear and mounted to the end of the forearm assembly to avoid interference with the barrel's vibration pattern. While this location enhances the operator's ability to quickly engage targets on the flanks without lifting the rifle off the ground, it has an unfavorable effect on accuracy. Stored under the handguards, this sturdy, supposedly adjustable bipod, unlike that of the ARM, cannot be used to cut wire or open beer bottles. That's of small consequence, but one of the legs on our test specimen refused to retract. Command height can be varied from approximately eight up to 10 inches, with two intermediate positions.

The buttstock can be folded to the right for transport, reducing the rifle's length of 33.6 inches. Although this feature would usually be undesirable when accuracy potential must be maximized, the Galil's rugged stock latch is every bit as rigid as a fixed stock. The clumsy-looking wooden buttstock has an adjustable spring-loaded cheekpiece. Locked by a slotted screw on the right side which slowly backs off during firing sequences, the operator soon finds his eye well above the scope's ocular. The rubber recoil pad can also be adjusted for height.

The rear end of the Galil's recoil-spring guide rod, which serves as a retainer for the sheet-metal receiver cover, is extended to ease disassembly and lock the cover more securely to the receiver body. This is especially important as the rear sight has been mounted on the receiver cover. While this does not provide the rigidity offered by the receiver-mounted rear sight of the Kalashnikov series, the trade-off is a longer sight radius of 19 inches.

The rear sight is a flip-up peep style with 300- and 500-meter apertures. The hooded front-sight post is adjustable for windage and elevation zero. Elevation adjustments are by means of the UZI front-sight tool. Windage adjustments are made by loosening and tightening the two opposing screws which move the entire front-sight assembly in its dovetail on the gas block. The front sight hood forms an additional aiming circle just within the rear-sight aperture to further assist sight alignment and speed target acquisition.

Galil's tritium (betalight) night sights set

GALIL SNIPER RIFLE SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	7.62X51mm NATO
Operation	Gas with no regulator and conventional Kalashnikov piston and extension attached to bolt carrier. Locking by means of rotary two-lug bolt. Fire from the closed-bolt position. Semiautomatic fire only. No auto safety sear.
Feed Mechanism:	25-round staggered box-type detachable magazine
Weight:	18.3 pounds, complete with scope, bipod, sling and loaded magazine
Length, stock unfolded:	43 inches
Length, stock folded: ..	33.6 inches
Barrel:	Four-groove with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches
Sights:	Round, post-type front with protective hood; adjustable for windage and elevation zero. Flip-type rear with protective ears; 300- and 500-meter peep apertures. Also has flip-up tritium night sights: vertical bar front and double-dot rear.
Optics:	Nimrod 6X40mm scope, side-rail mounted with steel rings and mount (quick detachable). Ocular diameter of 32mm with eye relief of approximately 3 inches. Double cross-hair pattern with reticle range finder of Dragunov/RPG type. Range drum calibrated from 200 to 800 meters in 50-meter increments. Windage drum with 5 mils of adjustment right or left in 1/2-mil increments.
Accessories:	Complete with foam-lined, fitted drop case; four-piece cleaning rod; cleaning kit; sling; two magazines and Nimrod scope with rubber eye cup, protective caps, amber and neutral density ocular filters.
Manufacturer:	Israel Military Industries, P.O. Box 1044, Ramat Ha Sharon, Israel
U.S. Distributor:	Action Arms, Ltd., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124
Price:	Suggested retail: \$3,995, complete. Limited production and availability.
Status:	Recently adopted by Israel Defense Forces

Continued on page 92

GREEN BERET'S FIRST BLOOD

RT Viper Strikes North

by James Pruitt

I was no different from other young soldiers who attended the Special Forces Course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1967. After braving the long, grueling weeks of training in unconventional warfare, our minds were possessed by one thought: "Who was going to Vietnam and who wasn't?"

Our feelings about that question were a lot different from most civilians, and especially most draftees. We were actually envious of those who were ordered into Vietnam — in our book they were the lucky ones. They'd have a chance to put the months of arduous training to use, while those left behind would battle anxious boredom stateside.

I was a lucky one. With that hurdle behind me, the next question was more practical: "Would I freeze under fire or would I live up to the proud tradition of that green beret I had just earned?" This question was answered sooner than I expected.

Of my graduating class, 33 were assigned to the Fifth Special Forces Group, Nha Trang, South Vietnam. We started clearing Fort Bragg the next morning. We expected our out-processing to be another "hurry up and wait" paper-shuffling ordeal. But we found out early that when the clerks saw a Special Forces man walk in with his clearance papers for Vietnam they suddenly got

real polite and processed his paperwork faster than the soldiers heading for other parts of the world. Though some of the straight-leg guys gave a show of indignation at our preferential treatment, they got real quiet when we'd ask whether they'd like to trade places.

From Fort Bragg we made one stop in Washington state at Fort Lewis, our point of departure for Vietnam. Before leaving the states our numbers were trimmed to 30: One of the guys had been killed in a car accident, another was stabbed in a bar fight and the third requested a hardship assignment because of some marital problems.

On our way across the big pond en route to Vietnam, the Special Forces guys sat in one section of the plane and talked about the possible assignments we'd get when we got to Nha Trang. Every man there wanted an "A" Team, but we knew that would never happen. Maybe half would get A Team assignments, but the B and C teams needed people, too. The single most talked-about unit was MACV SOG (Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Special Operations Group) and its Command and Control operations (CCN [North], CCC [Central] and CCS [South]).

The stories about SOG ran from amazing to totally unrealistic. The problem was that of the 30 of us on that plane not a soul knew



a damned thing about SOG. But it sounded interesting enough, so we all agreed if we couldn't get on an A Team, we'd go for SOG.

We landed in Cam Ranh Bay in the middle of the afternoon. My heart was skipping a beat as we taxied back up the runway and I peered out the window for my first view of Vietnam. My God, here we were; it was real. This was the place I had seen on television night after night while I was home on leave. I expected mortar rounds to start tearing up the runway at any minute, followed by screaming hordes of black pajama-clad Viet Cong charging the plane with their AK-47s blazing. I looked around my section of the plane at the faces of the other guys and found comfort in the fact that I wasn't the only one with a vivid imagination.



We off-loaded and were met by the liaison NCO, a Special Forces sergeant from Nha Trang. He led us to a barracks where we could store our gear and then took us on a short tour of the base, pointing out the mess hall, the PX and a club where we could buy a few beers. We had to exchange our money for military chit books that could be used just like money while we were there. He said we would only be in Cam Ranh Bay for 48 hours; then we'd be flown to Nha Trang to process in and receive our assignments.

I don't think any of us slept that night. We sat out on bunkered rooftops, watching illumination rounds turn darkness into daylight. The firing was coming from an outpost farther up the coast. Every now and then we could hear rifle and machine-gun fire from a far distance. We were finally

Recon team members scramble for extraction chopper after successful mission. Air support from jet fighters and Cobras helped keep enemies' heads down during exfiltration. Author's AO in CC North, Da Nang, was a hotbed of NVA activity. Volunteers for service here rarely made it home in one piece, if at all. Photo: Department of Defense

here — and my nerves were as tight as a bowstring!

Every soldier has one or two special buddies that they hang around with more than others. Mine were Linwood G. Patterson from Bangor, Maine and Greg Magsman from Fall River, Texas. We had agreed that no matter what, we'd try to stay together the whole tour and watch out for each other. We were filled with optimism.

Our third morning in-country, we left for Nha Trang and Fifth Group Headquarters. That afternoon we received a briefing from the sergeant major and were asked to fill out a form stating what kind of assignments we wanted.

The sergeant major ended his briefing by saying, "Now, I know you're all gonna put down that you want an assignment with an A Team. Well, you can ask for it, but we're looking pretty good in that area right now. And there won't be any slots opening up anytime soon. So think about that before you write it in there."

He explained the different areas open to us — B Team, C Team, Security Forces, Mike Forces. Finally, he got around to SOG. He didn't elaborate on that one except to say, "If you're looking for fun, adventure and plenty of action, they always have

vacancies for new people.”

I stood up and asked the sergeant major, “Where does SOG need the most help?”

He didn’t hesitate. “CC North, Da Nang. They’ve lost 18 people in the last 90 days!”

To this day I don’t know why, but right after he said that, I automatically wrote “CC North” on the form. Patterson and Magsman looked at me like I was nuts, then erased their forms and wrote in “CC North.”

Of the 30 who arrived that day, seven volunteered for CCN, 13 for CC South in Ban Me Thuot, six for CC Central, located in Kontum, and the rest were scattered out among the B and C teams. Nobody got an A team.

My other CC North buddies and I arrived at the Da Nang airport around noon. Thick, humid air engulfed us as we stepped off the tailgate of a C-123 onto the hot runway. As we were dragging our gear off the plane, a

young specialist fourth class waved for an old blue bus parked by the terminal to come out onto the strip and pick us up.

I was busy adjusting some gear in my flight bag when Patterson dropped his duffle bag and said, “Holy shit!” I looked up to see what had prompted the remark. As the bus came closer to the plane, I understood completely.

The bus looked like it had been used for range practice. There were no fewer than 10 bullet holes through the windshield and at least 20 to 30 more through the windows along the sides. We were told that the bus had been in the compound on the night that a bunch of NVA sappers infiltrated CCN in

Despite heroic efforts of SF counterinsurgency operations, it was too little too late. Communist control of South Vietnam was significant by late 1960s.

August. Since this was only September, the sight of this bullet-riddled bus didn’t exactly inspire confidence in our new home.

Once settled at the CCN compound, Sergeant Major Charlie Vickers came by to welcome us to the unit. This man fit my image of a Special Forces sergeant major perfectly — he was a short, stocky man built like a brick shithouse with a leathery, weathered face that showed more than its share of combat. He told us that we’d receive a briefing from the CCN commander the next day; but for now, the club was open and he was buying the first drink.

It was at the club that night that my understanding of the C&C concept began. Team leaders were called one-zero. These were the guys with combat experience and who had been around the longest. Next came the one-one, the assistant team leader. He had some experience but was still unprepared to move into a one-zero slot. This would be the man who would take over the team when the team leader left for the States. The last American on the team was the one-two — the cherry boy — the new guy who didn’t know anything. His training would be strictly OJT.

Pat, Mags and I were the new boys, but we were more than willing to start learning. We all three had one goal in mind: to one day have our own teams.

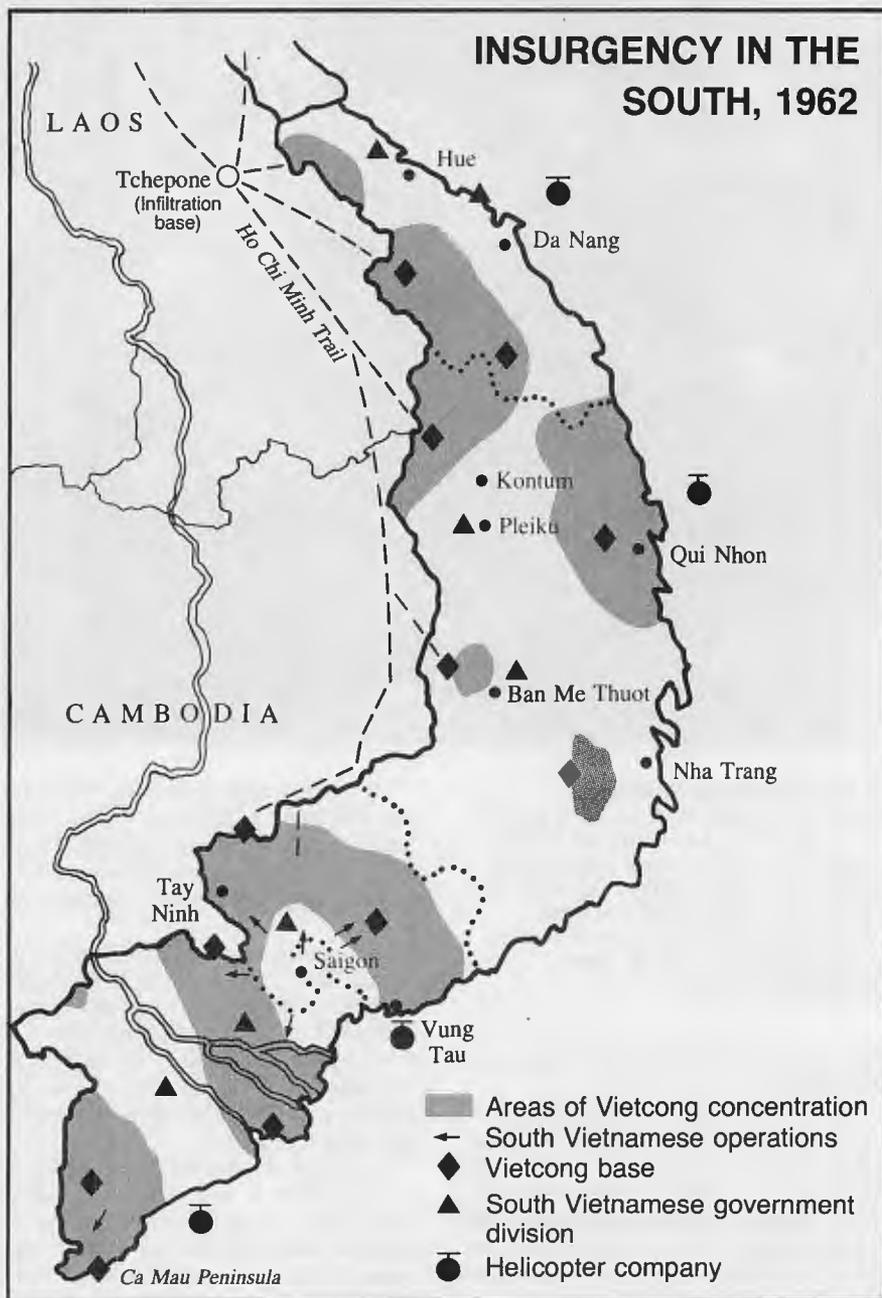
The following morning we met Colonel Jack Warren, the CCN commander. He didn’t mince words when explaining the realities of our position: “CCN runs high-risk missions across the borders and has the highest casualty rate of any unit its size in Vietnam. There’ll come a day when you will find that you can’t make your fingers let go of that doorway in the chopper. Your feet will be on the skid and you’ll want to go, but you won’t be able to make yourself do it. The day that happens, you come and see me. That’ll be an early warning that it’s time for you to get out of the recon business. Nobody will say anything about it. It’s just one of the things that comes with the territory.”

By the time I left the colonel’s office, I knew exactly what was expected of me at CCN and had lost any illusions about the “glory” of battle.

My next stop was the recon commander’s office for an interview with Captain Richard (Dick) Meadows. This man was destined to work side by side with Colonel Bull Simons in a daring raid into Son Tay, North Vietnam to rescue American POWs. Years later, Meadows would once again have a chance to rescue POWs — he would be the inside man on the ill-fated 1980 Iran raid.

During my interview with Capt. Meadows, we talked about the different types of missions that the teams ran: POW snatches, bomb damage assessments for the Air Force, photo reconnaissance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and anything else that MACV asked for — CCN did it all.

I was assigned to RT (recon team) Viper. Team leader was Staff Sergeant John Dodds, who looked more like a college pro-



fessor than a recon team leader. John told me right away about the night in August when the sappers had infiltrated the compound. They had come out of a pair of small mountains that sat at the edge of CCN's perimeter. They had help from other NVA who were already in the camp. They had taken over the mess hall, killing the cook, his wife and their children. The attack, coming after midnight, inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese and Montagnards, while eight Special Forces people were killed and 16 wounded. Dodds had been shot in the right leg with an M1 rifle. He later found out that he had been shot by one of the new lieutenants who had just come in that afternoon.

John still got hot thinking about the "friendly fire," so I changed the subject and asked about the team. There was Sang, the interpreter, who spoke four languages other than English, and Dai who, at 43, was the oldest member of the team. Dai had led a squad of Viet Minh at the battle of Dien Bien Phu and, according to Dodds, was one of the best trackers and point men in the camp. There were two brothers, called "Sing A" and "Sing B," who had been with Dodds since the day he arrived at camp and were always playing practical jokes on the American team leaders. Additionally, we had 12 Chinese on the team. They were easily the most superstitious people I'd ever met. For example, they refused to run operations with an odd number of team members. If we were on a mission and had to medevac one of the team, we had to send another guy with him to keep the numbers even.

I was in the fourth week of training with this team when RT Viper drew a mission. It was a POW snatch. The area of operation was just north of the DMZ about five miles. Saigon had received reports of the 325th NVA Division on the move and heading for the DMZ. All we had to do was capture an NVA for interrogation. Dodds told me that this was one of the toughest types of missions that we could get — not welcome news to a greenhorn like me.

Next morning, after puking up my breakfast from sheer nervousness, word came down from the team leader: "Game time! Let's hit it!" It's at times like this when the monotony of your past training serves its purpose. Your body automatically responds to the order despite fear or apprehension and without waiting for your brain to give the go-ahead. I grabbed my gear and headed out on my first combat mission as if I had done it a hundred times before.

Choppers picked us up at the CCN pad and flew us to the Quang Tri launch site, where we made last-minute coordination with the support elements. As the launch site commander gave us the thumbs up when we lifted off, the choppers dropped their noses down and roared across the compound and out over the rice paddies below.

The door gunner pressed his hand to his helmet, then tapped Dodds on the shoulder, pointing out to the hills, then to the jungle



TOP: UH-1D helicopters provided rapid insertion of forces for quick-strike operations. MACV-SOG needed such mobility for POW snatches, reconnaissance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, cross-border ops and any other mission requiring stealth for mission success. Photo: Department of Defense

ABOVE: Ten-foot-high elephant grass concealed a ubiquitous enemy and hampered small-unit effectiveness. Downdraft from ascending choppers provided brief opportunity for visual contact among unit members. Photo: Department of Defense

below. We were two minutes out from the primary LZ. We were going in.

After doing a 45-degree bank, the chopper screamed downward and leveled off. We had five seconds to get out once we were over the LZ. The downdraft from the rotor blades bent the elephant grass almost flat. The noise was deafening. I kept looking over my shoulder at John. When he went, I would go.

We were 15 feet off the ground when Dodds stood on the skid and, with a last second glance in my direction, jumped. Sang was right behind him. Dai grinned a wide smile then, grabbing my arm, out we went. The chopper dipped its nose and was gone by the time we hit ground.

I hit the ground like a ton of shit. Then I saw why. We hadn't jumped 15 feet — it was more like 35! The grass was unbelievable. It had to be over ten feet high. I couldn't see Dodds, Dai or Sang. The downdraft from the second chopper bent the grass once more as I watched Adams and the

rest of the team exit. I could hear people moving around, but I still couldn't see anybody.

My adrenaline was pumping 90 miles an hour; sweat stung my eyes and my mouth was swollen from thirst. I kept telling myself: "Slow it down, you're not alone. The whole team's around you. You just can't see them."

Only a few minutes passed, but they seemed like hours. The only sound now was the wind blowing through the tall grass.

Then Dodds tapped my jungle boot with his M16 and almost gave me a heart attack. He whispered reassuringly, "How you doing, kid?" I told him I would be fine once I got my heart started again. He waved for me to follow him as he crawled through the grass. He didn't have to ask twice — I was right behind him.

Adams joined us with the rest of the team. No words were spoken as John pointed to Dai, then to the trees to our front. Dai nodded and moved quietly into the grass.

John told us to spread out and start moving for the tree line. Chuy was with me as we began the slow crawl forward. It had taken us five minutes to make it to the edge of the LZ. Dai checked the tree line and waved us forward. The Chinese spread out around us as John checked the map and keyed the radio. He gave the FAC our position and the direction of march, then we moved out. We went only a few yards before the jungle erupted in automatic-weapons fire. Dai was in trouble somewhere in front of us.

Our team hit the ground and began to

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COMBLOC BAYONETS

SOF Inspects the Sharp End of the AKM

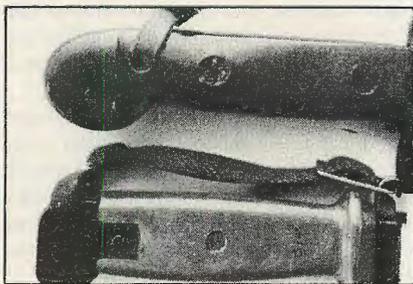
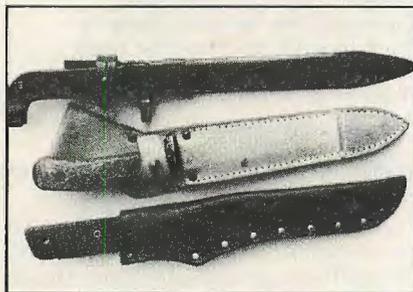
Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

REFERENCE books refer to them as Dragunov bayonets. Gun show dealers hawk Hungarian variants as East German and Polish models as Soviet. Ivan refuses to cooperate and publish a catalog. There is no more intriguing or desirable bayonet for a collector to possess, as they are in service from Afghanistan to Nicaragua. Yet, mass confusion reigns. So let's take a close look at the information I've gleaned over the past several years and cut through the blur of misinformation.

Most AKM bayonets can cut wire as well as poke people. A hole in the blade (shaped with a clipped Bowie point) can be inserted over a lug on the scabbard to form a scissors-like wire-cutter with the back edge of the blade and a projection on the bottom of the scabbard. To gain the required leverage, the bayonet should be mounted on the rifle and employed in a manner similar to the barbed-wire cutters fitted to the British SMLE rifle during World War I. The blades are satin-chrome plated and most have a row of sawteeth along the back edge. This latter feature is of dubious value. There is no fuller (the so-called "blood groove"). All of these bayonets have a single muzzle ring at one end of the crosspiece and a hook at the other end for opening bottles and attaching a wrist strap which passes through a hole in the pommel. When fitted to the rifle, the cutting edge is uppermost in the Czech/Austro-Hungarian manner.

There are two distinct models of the Soviet AKM bayonet. The earliest, or 1st pattern, had a steel scabbard with a matte-black paint finish. It was equipped with a rubber insulator that was grasped when cutting through electrical wire. Fitted to the hilt were plastic (reinforced with wood chips) grips with a large, bulbous pommel. Apparently the rifle's bayonet stud played havoc with the plastic pommel, and so the

hilt was redesigned with a heavy steel pommel. This 2nd pattern bayonet was issued with a ribbed plastic scabbard that eliminated the need for a rubber insulator. Several ComBloc countries eventually adopted either one or both the 2nd pattern bayonet and scabbard. There are thus four possible combinations: 1st pattern bayonet and scabbard, 2nd pattern bayonet and scabbard, 1st pattern bayonet with 2nd pattern scabbard or 2nd pattern bayonet with 1st pattern scabbard. As we shall see, there are examples of all four.



TOP: Predecessor and departures, top to bottom: original AK-47 bayonet, Czech Vz58 and Finnish Valmet Model 1962 bayonets.

ABOVE: Top: 1st pattern grips (Romanian). Bottom: 2nd pattern grips (Soviet).

The colors of the plastic on 2nd pattern scabbards, rubber insulators on 1st pattern scabbards and the grips of either type are useful indicators as to the country of origin. In addition, the color and material (either leather or webbing) used for the wrist straps and the type of frog or belt hanger with hilt loop, together with their color and the material used in their fabrication can also help to identify an AKM bayonet. A final distinctive feature is the bayonet blade itself, whether or not it has sawteeth or wire-cutting capability.

Three countries are also known to produce fighting knife derivatives of the AKM bayonet: U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia and Hungary. In each case they differ from the bayonet only in the design of their grips and by virtue of the fact that they cannot be attached to a rifle. They are presumably issued to elite airborne or commando units. All three possess wire-cutting capability and are rarely encountered in the West.

Let's examine the AKM bayonets of each known producing ComBloc nation, describing their distinguishing characteristics and approximate value.

Soviet AKM bayonets obviously represent the type classification. First pattern Soviet AKM bayonets and scabbards have a black rubber insulator, brown leather wrist strap, brown leather hanger and hilt loop and reddish-brown grips. They are extremely scarce and, if authentic (a Polish scabbard could be fitted to Romanian bayonet and wrist strap and fitted with a Russian 2nd pattern hanger and hilt loop) would bring close to \$350.

Although not exactly common, Soviet 2nd pattern AKM bayonets have been brought to the United States from sources in South Africa and Afghanistan. The plastic scabbards and grips are both varying shades of dark red. Scabbards are marked with either a five-pointed star or arrow-in-triangle. Web wrist straps accompany a brown leather hanger. Both scabbards and bayonets carry serial numbers, although none of the dozens that I examined in Afghanistan were matching. Difficult to obtain and the centerpiece of any AKM bayonet collection, they will fetch \$200 to \$300, depending upon condition. This bayonet is also used on the AK-74 rifle. I have seen only photos of the Soviet fighting knife derivative.

First pattern East German AKM bayonets and scabbards have black grips and black rubber insulators. They're uncommon, but could be faked by combining a current issue bayonet with a Polish scabbard. Presently, a 1st pattern bayonet with black grips is issued with a matte-black, 2nd pattern scabbard molded with a distinctive partial cross-rib at the midpoint. They have light gray leather hangers and hilt loops and a light gray, web wrist strap. In new condition, these later East German bayonets are worth about \$110.

Yugoslavia presently fields a 2nd pattern

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ABOVE: AKM bayonets are both fascinating and varied. Left to right: Hungarian, Yugoslav, East German, Romanian, Egyptian, Soviet (attached to rifle in the wire-cutting position), PRC (black and red) and Polish. In the foreground are Hungarian and Yugoslav fighting knives and another Russian AKM bayonet.

RIGHT CENTER: Rubber insulators on 1st pattern scabbards are useful indicators of the bayonet's origin. Left to right: Polish, Hungarian and Romanian.

BELOW: Hangers, frogs and hilt loops can determine the country of origin also.

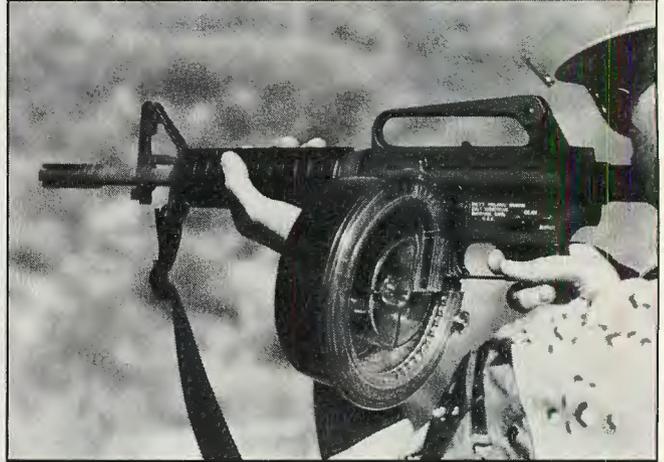


TOP CENTER: Top: 1st pattern scabbard (Hungarian). Bottom: 2nd pattern scabbard (Soviet).

ABOVE: AKM bayonet blades also vary. Left to right: USSR, Polish and PRC.

M16 90-ROUND DRUMS

by Peter G. Kokalis



FIREPOWER. Everyone wants more. Their reasons are usually vaguely defined and patently unsound, but they never have enough. The easiest way to provide more firepower is to slide out an assault rifle's 30-round magazine and slip in a drum. Those with AR15/M16 rifles now have two 90-round alternatives: a steel drum from the People's Republic of China and a domestic plastic drum. Which is better, and is either totally reliable?

MWG Company (Dept. SOF, 18689 S.W. 103 Court, Miami, FL 33157) fabricates its drum, called "The Ninety Rounder," from General Electric's high-strength engineering plastic (Valox), except for the follower spring and the nuts and bolts used to assemble the drum's body. It is in essence a 90-round magazine turned into a coil. And there's the rub. While only 3/4-inch longer than a standard 30-round magazine, the entire unit is offset to the left to allow firing from the prone position. This positioning not only disturbs the rifle's inherent balance, but interferes with the shooter's support arm as well. Worse yet, if the rifle is carried in the Israeli slung position, the drum thumps against your pelvis with every step forward.

The rear face of this drum is transparent to permit the operator to visually determine the number of rounds remaining. It can presumably be disassembled for cleaning or maintenance, although there should be little reason to do so. Use no solvents or oil-based lubricants on The Ninety Rounder. If required, it should be lubricated with silicone-based mixtures only.

Loading procedures require little explanation, as they are mostly self-evident.

ABOVE LEFT: PRC 90-round steel drum for M16 series is a spin-off of their drum for the new Type 81 SAW.

ABOVE RIGHT: "The Ninety Rounder" plastic drum, manufactured for the M16 series and fired from M16A2 Colt Commando.

Equipped with a Thermold charger for loading from 10-round stripper clips and a steel paddle or "pusher," simply place the charger over the drum's feed lips and manually drive the first forty or fifty cartridges into the drum as you would with any normal magazine. After forty rounds, as compression on the follower spring increases, mere mortals will have to employ the steel pusher rod to force the remaining rounds into the drum. Strangely enough, the instructions caution to avoid loading more than 80 rounds into The Ninety Rounder. (I don't like extra bits and pieces, like small tools and magazine loaders, in the field. In the bush, they usually disappear when you need them.)

Weighing in at 1.25 pounds empty, the loaded MWG drum adds 3.6 pounds to the M16. It can be used with any of the M16-series rifles, as well as the FNC, AR18/180, Korean K1 and K2 and the Galil with an adapter. It will accept all 5.56X45mm NATO ammunition. A version for the Ruger Mini-14 is also available. Complete with charger and paddle, the suggested retail price is only \$89.

PRC's response is an all-steel 5.56X45mm drum derived from the 7.62X39mm drum that feeds their new Type 81 squad automatic weapon. Imported

by Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 6030 Highway 85, Suite 222, Riverdale, GA 30274), it requires no loading tool or charger and can be stored indefinitely if you wind its driving spring just prior to use. Unfortunately, however, this sturdy drum's loading procedures are not self-evident and none are provided by the importer. So let's have a go at it.

Open the back cover. Partially depress the inner key and turn the spindle clockwise until the multiple-link follower stops in the innermost track. Insert two rounds in the outer track between the two spindle arms without cartridge holes, then eight more rounds in succession in the outer track, both between the spindle arms and in the spindle-arm cartridge holes. Hold the spindle with one hand and rotate the inner key on the spindle five clicks clockwise. Then release the spindle and the ten cartridges will move up into the magazine body on top of the drum. You can't stuff 90 rounds into this one either, so load 78 more cartridges in the tracks between the spindle arms and in the spindle-arm holes. Under no circumstances place any cartridges in back of the multi-link follower. Close the lid and snap the two clamps in place. Just prior to use, rotate the key on the lid clockwise seven complete revolutions (14 half-turns). Insert the drum and blaze away.

Center of gravity on the PRC drum is directly below the rifle and it does not interfere with the shooter's support arm. Assembly is by means of rivets and punch-welding. All components are phosphate finished. There is a wire hanger on the right

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FOR years the survival knife market languished in mediocrity. Then, with the movie "First Blood," Sly's custom Jimmy Lyle blade sparked a deluge of gutsy-looking survival knives, all featuring hollow handles, secret compartments and decoder rings. Most are inexpensive status symbols for Walter Mitty-ites who crave macho gadgetry.

Tekna, a California-based manufacturer of quality flashlights, has now jumped into the survival knife market with the introduction of its "Wilderness Edge." Unlike most of its competition, Tekna has made a serious attempt to overcome the tainted reputation of survival knives.

Development of use-specific "survival" knives probably began during World War II as an offshoot of combat fighting knives. In the late 1950s, the U.S. Air Force issued what was perhaps the first true survival knife. Made by Camillus, this 5-inch-blade knife featured a serrated spine for hacking your way out of an aircraft canopy and a heavy steel hammer pommel for shattering the plexiglass if the saw edge didn't work. The tie-down leather sheath also contained a pocket for holding a wet stone for honing the edge of the blade after you destroyed the factory edge getting out of your plane. These features remained standard in survival knives for many years.

However, there are some features that make the Wilderness Edge unique among these saw-back blades. First off, the sheath must hold a patent for ingenuity. Rather than enclosing the knife, it is constructed so that the blade snaps into place through a locking system which securely grips the knife's hilt on both sides. A locking safety lever keeps the blade in place. Additionally, the back of the sheath is actually a hidden drawer held in place by a knurled dial at the tip of the sheath. Spinning the dial open releases the back of the sheath (drawer), which comes free and exposes a bevy of survival-oriented — you guessed it — gadgets.

These include: signal mirror with sight, survival instruction cards, fishing reel/line (more on this later), braided snare wire, compass, folding ceramic sharpening stone/magnesium fire starter, six fish hooks, six split-shot weights, one dry fly and four barrel swivels.

I was not as impressed with the selection of the items as much as I was with the fact that, after I had removed them from their "secret" drawer, I was able to put them all back in again! If you've had experience with other survival knives, removing the gimmicks from their hiding place is an excellent way to ruin an afternoon — it takes hours, if it's possible at all, to put them back in place.

Unfortunately, while the Wilderness Edge is made of quality materials, Tekna did fall prey to the lure of pure gimmickry by including the fishing reel/line. This little doodad allows the knife's sheath to be converted into a fishing pole! Rather than dwell on the topic, just take my advice and get

TEKNA'S WILDERNESS EDGE

by Kevin Steele



Wilderness Edge handle, like that of most other "survival" knives, is hollow. However, Tekna adds a unique twist by stashing a lithium-powered flashlight inside.

Tekna's Wilderness Edge has an impressive array of gadgets, most of which are practical. Skeletonized blade is only real design flaw — blade strength and swing-weight are sacrificed.

yourself a good gill net for your survival pack.

Tekna's Wilderness Edge blade is stainless steel, measures 5 inches long and has a clip point with false edge. As expected, the spine is serrated for "cutting." (I use this word facetiously because these serrations are not crosscut or set, so they will not saw wood worth a damn.)

Skeletonized to reduce weight and allow it to lock into the sheath, the blade is too light for serious chopping and hacking. Since a survival knife's most important function is for building shelter, this is a serious flaw. I don't even advise using it to pry open anything heftier than a sardine can — you might break the blade.

Its full-tang construction features nylon handles which are attached to the blade with Allen screws. Here's the spiffy part: The handles have a secret latch that, when lifted, pops up the right handle, revealing a lithium-powered Tekna flashlight!

On a scale of one to 10, I'd give the new Tekna Wilderness Edge a 10 for concept, clever design and utilization of space. As a survival knife, I'd give it a four. While Tekna promotes the knife system's light weight as its best feature, I'd like to see another half-pound added to the package by a non-skeletonized blade with a strong 1/4-inch spine.

Wilderness Edge sells for \$129.95 in stainless steel and \$139.95 for the anodized version. Both knives carry a lifetime guarantee. Both can be purchased most anywhere Tekna products are sold. For more information, contact Tekna Design Group, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 849, Belmont, CA 94002. ✕

SOF MOVIES

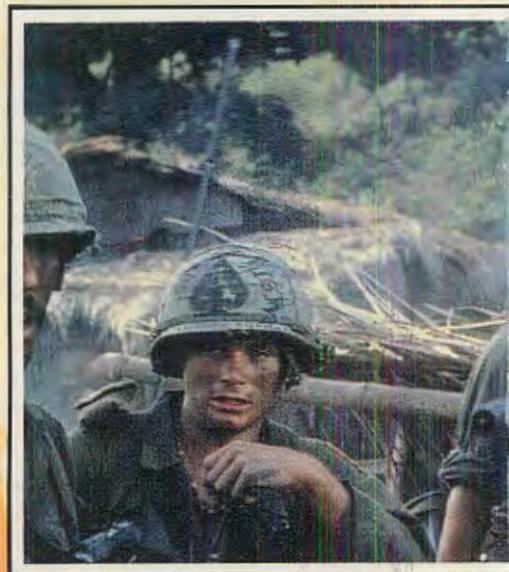
“PLATOON”

**In Nam, Murderers,
Rapists and Dopers Were
Exceptions, Not the Rule!**

by G.B. Crouse

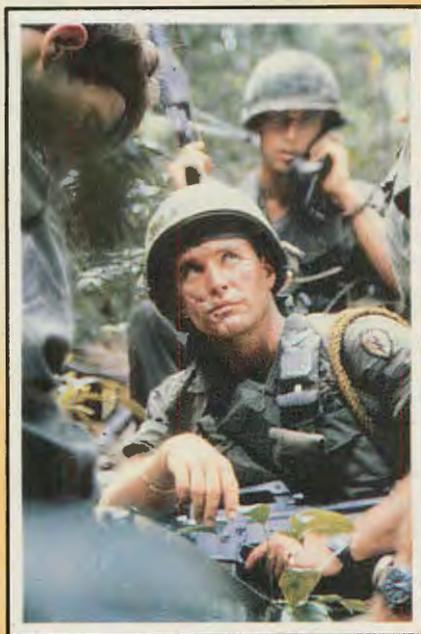
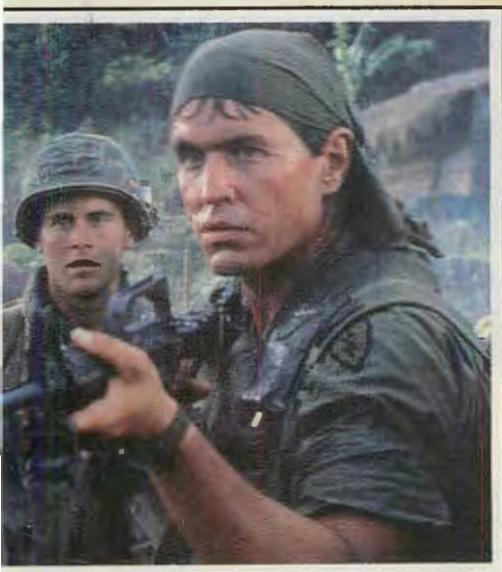
Photos by Ricky Francisco

“**P**LATOON” may well be as close as anyone in Hollywood will come to producing an accurate film about the war in Vietnam — a war understood by few people, even those who fought it. No other war movie is as harrowingly real, as technically accurate or as truly unpleasant to watch as “Platoon.”



“Platoon’s” climactic battle. Anything but choreographed, the movie’s battle scenes are the most accurate depictions of the chaos and confusion of combat yet produced by Hollywood.

A rude introduction to life in the bush at the hands of the movie's technical adviser left all the actors looking like the grunts they portray.



Sgt. Elias (Willem Dafoe, left), Sgt. Barnes (Tom Berenger, center) and Barnes' RTO, Tony (Ivan Kane, right).



Sgt. Barnes (Tom Berenger) pauses after killing an enemy soldier with his E-tool.





VIETNAM VETERANS REACT

Critics are calling "Platoon" the movie about Vietnam. *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine's Vietnam veteran reviewers disagree. Most described the movie as fatally flawed.

Within limitations, "Platoon's" grunts had the right uniforms, right weapons and right equipment; they spoke like troops and the action scenes were some of the best ever filmed. But the war it depicts is not one which many Vietnam veterans will recognize.

Plot and characterization are the real atrocities in this movie. Director Oliver Stone takes us back not to 1968 Vietnam along the Cambodian border but to some time late in the 1960s or early 1970s in Berkeley, California. Stone's dope-smoking, racist, officer-fragging, village-burning, baby-killing stereotypes who populate "Platoon" existed in the minds of the anti-war and anti-veteran crowd in America — not in Vietnam.

SOF's veterans review "Platoon":

"Frankly, it had some of the best battle scenes I have ever seen. It displays the confusion of close-quarters combat — something which has never been done before in movies.

"Unfortunately, Stone has seen fit to build his plot around unsavory types of incidents which, while they did occur on the odd occasion, are not representative of the experiences of the vast majority of



Director Oliver Stone.

Americans who served in Vietnam. Because of the impact of the movie, vast majorities of viewers will generalize from the specific and either overtly or subliminally come away with the opinion that American troops were all dopers, rapists and murderers or shot one another."

Capt. Robert K. Brown, Editor/Publisher of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, Battalion S2, 2nd of the 18th, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, July 1968-January 1969; A-334 Team Leader,

Tong Le Chon, January 1969-August 1969.

"The thing about this movie that makes it work is that it is the most authentic-looking of the Vietnam movies to date. They had the patches right, had them on the right shoulders, the language was right and the weapons were right. 'Platoon' put you there.

"It also explores serious moral issues. You're alone in the jungle, you have your weapon and there is someone there whom you would seriously like to blow away. It's a decision you have to live with the rest of your life.

"I'm just happy to have a Vietnam movie that looks like Vietnam."

Maj. Jim Morris, author of *War Story*, 5th Special Forces.

"It pissed me off. If you did not serve with an American infantry unit in Vietnam, which includes most Vietnam veterans, you may come away from this movie saying to yourself, 'The liberal press was right. American GIs were the dope-smoking rapists and murderers I've been told about.'

"Rather than have the enemy in Vietnam be the evil antagonist, Stone chooses to use an American sergeant. This is the only way his story will work. The enemy of the grunt in Vietnam carried AK-47s, SKSs, RPGs; they were the bugs, the booby traps, the heat, the frustration, the boredom, the incompe-



Oliver Stone, the director and author of the screenplay, served in the 25th Infantry Division along the Cambodian border in 1967-68. A realistic film portrayal of the war based on his own experiences has been a goal of Stone's since he became involved in the movie business. He struggled for 10 years with Hollywood indifference before

finding foreign backing to produce his movie.

Every scene of "Platoon" shows Stone's painstaking attention to accuracy and detail. This is precisely what sets "Platoon" apart from previous war movies. Virtually everything in it oozes realism: the radio traffic, the way web gear is worn and equipment carried, the language of the soldiers, the waterproofing of radio handsets, the stifling jungle heat, the confusion of battle, the elusiveness of the enemy.

Credit for this time-capsule-like authenticity goes to the film's military technical

adviser, Dale A. Dye, a retired Captain of Marines and former executive editor of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine. Dye completed multiple tours in Vietnam in the course of a 21-year career that was nearly as distinguished as it was colorful.

Dye's work began long before the cameras started rolling. Before taking off for filming in the Philippines, Dye began assembling actors' wardrobe and equipment. He found the gear he was looking for at a Los Angeles company called History for Hire and he worked closely with its owner, Jim Elyea, throughout the movie's production. Dye told Elyea, "I want it right — right down to a gnat's ass." And that's what he got. But finding the right equipment was only the first step.

On Dye's instructions, Elyea took the boots and scrubbed them with a wire brush until they were nearly white. Fatigues were bleached until they were no longer green but kind of a pale pastel. While gear was being rounded up and prepared, Dye took frequent trips to History for Hire's warehouse to check on details. If something wasn't right, they tried again.

Continued on page 100

tents at all levels; politicians, big business, calendars. The real enemies of American grunts have only supporting roles in Stone's movie.

"Unfortunately, Stone will earn a lot of money with this movie, which I'm certain was his motivation for making it, along with winning an Oscar or two. Ironically, he dedicates the movie to those who fought and died in Vietnam. If he truly wants to unburden his soul, he should put his profit where his mouth is and turn some of his gains to scholarships for the sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans, veterans' groups, etc."

1st Lt. Derry Gallagher, Platoon Leader, Alpha Company, 2nd of the 27th Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 25th Division, 1966-1967.

"'Platoon's' combat scenes certainly raise it above the level of most war movies and from a technical point of view it's good, as long as you're not bothered by Army infantry dressed and talking like Marine grunts. And any grunt with mud on his boots could tell you that you get malaria from mosquito bites (specifically the female anopheles, yellow and black on the tail), not from drinking out of a stream, as two of Stone's characters appear to believe.

"Does being more technically accurate than the other trash Hollywood has produced on Vietnam make 'Platoon' the movie on Vietnam? I hope that does not come to pass. Stone's characters and

the things they did don't match with any from my personal experience. Oh, there were a few guys around who used drugs, but not in the field. There were more who didn't care much for the tender mercies of their senior NCOs and officers, but not enough to even think about killing them. And most of the guys I served with neither trusted nor liked the Vietnamese, but American values and Marine Corps discipline prevented that from getting out of hand. Most of us knew perfectly well that if we committed an atrocity against the Vietnamese we would be severely punished. One of our constant fears when running night ambushes near villages was that we might accidentally kill a farmer headed out to his fields before daylight.

"'Platoon' was a disappointment. It just didn't have the feel of Vietnam to it and too many things about the movie are obviously anti-veteran leftist nonsense. This will be accepted by movie critics and possibly the voters for the Academy Awards as *the* Vietnam movie because it reinforces what they thought all along about Vietnam and the men who fought it, but that doesn't make it the best movie on Vietnam. That movie may get made some day, but it'll never get made by someone who has sold out his comrades for silver and fame."

Cpl. Jim Graves, SOF Washington Bureau Chief, 3rd & 9th Marine Regiments, 3rd Marine Division, 1967-1968.

"I didn't like it. What the movie did was bring back the stereotype of dope-smoking, baby-killing veterans. And at the end of the movie everybody is either dead, disfigured or psychologically scarred.

"Stone is a violence freak and his movie is a Roman circus — lots of blood and guts and cheap thrills which reconfirm the stereotypes of the liberals and allow them to say, 'See, we were right all along. Stone was there and he says it was that way.'

"'Platoon' didn't glorify the communists but it didn't give people any idea of who we were fighting and how bad those guys were.

"And when I was with the 25th Division, we didn't burn villages, kill civilians and go around raping people. Stone is a disgrace to every brave person who served in that division. He doesn't deserve to wear that patch."

Sgt. Al Santoli, author of *Everything We Had*, 2nd Battalion of the 22nd Infantry, 25th Division.

"I served as an interpreter with Special Forces for seven years and in all that time I never saw an innocent woman killed.

"'Platoon' was a movie made for Americans who were never in Vietnam — not for Americans who were."

Giang Bang La, SOF Mailroom Supervisor, Interpreter 5th Special Forces, 1968-1975.

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“CROWBAR”

Continued from page 55

the shaking, twisting car, careering left-right to present as difficult a target as possible. And me trying to take photos of the chaos inside, the air seeming solid with the firing, shouting, thin smoke, yelling, hot raining brass, bursts of excited Afrikaans over the radio, engine racing and drive train screaming in pain as the driver jams up, down and through the gears. I'm yelling stupidly at Du Rand, "HOW MANY ARE THERE? WHERE ARE THEY!" and he yells back, "WHEN YOU DRIVE INTO THEM LIKE THIS, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU CAN DO!" and I'm trying to stand to get shots of what's going on outside only to be slammed down by Lukas's hand; then looking out the window and seeing the ground erupting zipper-like under the impact of the fifties racing toward the water hole, tree limbs splintering and shouts of komesho! kolomesho! kolodio! SHINGA! SHINGA! I'm trying to get a shot of the trooper next to me who sprayed the inside, his hand laid open and bleeding badly, and another whose leg is bleeding, and I wonder if I'm bleeding as well, only I don't want anyone to see me looking at whatever it was that stung my legs. I stand again, shaking off Kilino's hand, and see Boesman's car angling away from us and pouring fire into the area around the water hole and Du Rand is yelling, "UNDER THE BUSH! UNDER

THE BUSH!" Then suddenly we're stopped, the hydraulically operated doors hissing open and I'm out and running behind the trackers who half-moon around a clump of low-hanging thickets, their R5s erupting streams of empty brass, leaves trembling under the impact of the rounds. Du Rand next to me yelling "THERE'S ONE IN THERE!" and I'm wondering what the fuck I'm doing outside the Casspir. I follow the trackers in under the branches, expecting to see a body but seeing only webbing and leather pouches and a half-filled gourd. I realize the firing has stopped and been replaced by hard, gasping laughter and the high-pitched giggles of excitement and relief.

"The bodies are over here," I heard Du Rand say behind me. Turning and walking toward the water hole, I saw the first one lying face up on a pile of dead branches. Bare feet protruded from camouflage trousers. Further on, at the base of a tree, was the second, face down, the right foot almost severed by a .50-caliber round. Both bodies with the limp heaviness of new death. One of the trackers yanked the second body onto its back. He reached inside the camouflage shirt and pulled a tan, checked collar into view. "Civvie clothes, see?" he hissed, contemptuous of the deceit. An AK-47 lay alongside, the ballistic launcher for the nearby Heatstrims shot cleanly off the muzzle. The bodies were stripped of equipment and quickly searched for documents. They

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were left where they had fallen. As we walked back toward the cars, the tracker ahead of me hawked, turned his head and spat hard in the open-eyed face of the body atop the dead branches. The flies quickly resettled.

Back at the cars, Boesman explained that as we came out of the bush, the two had broken from their hiding place next to the water hole. Had they stayed hidden, they could easily have taken out one of the Casspirs, or gone entirely unnoticed. Such is fate.

(Two days later, another group working the same area picked up information that there had actually been three more terrorists. Were they hidden somewhere nearby, trying to line up on us? I'll never know. If they were, the awesome firepower of Koevoet must surely have discouraged them.)

Jim Du Rand called the contact "a last one just for old times' sake." Daubing at a blood smear on his leg, he admitted it was the worst injury he'd taken in his six years with Koevoet. I breathed a sigh of relief.

That night, the contact was relived over and over again. The tape I had made of it brought everyone clustered around to hear, asking to have it rewound and listening again, recognizing each other's voices amid the fury of the firing. Some re-enacted Lukas shoving me down whenever I tried to stand. Others howled with laughter as they described how Eme ran over me once and then a second time. In the middle of it all,

Lukas caught my eye. He nodded, raising his fist, thumb up. Thanks, I nodded back.

The morning after returning to Oshakati, I was scheduled on a 130 back to Pretoria. On the way to Ondangwa Air Force Base, I asked the army lieutenant to make a short detour.

It was Wednesday, the beginning of a new week for half of Ops K. There was Zulu Alpha, loading up for another seven days in the bush, a week spent in base. There were Marius and Apie, Christo, Tuis, Otto and Samsak, Dean, Porky, Jack and the rest whose names I could never remember, just as I had seen them that first day two weeks before. Shaking hands, saying the good-byes, I knew I was going to miss them.

As the car pulled away, I turned to look back, watching till they disappeared from view. Facing forward, I suddenly felt more a deserter than a writer.

You crazy bastards, I thought. Go safely. ✕

CONTRA AID

Continued from page 41

Bermudez warned his troops to be on the alert for a Sandinista attack. Last Easter the FDN beat back a large-scale Sandinista assault along the Honduran border in heavy fighting. A teenaged contra summed up the feelings of his brothers-in-arms when asked

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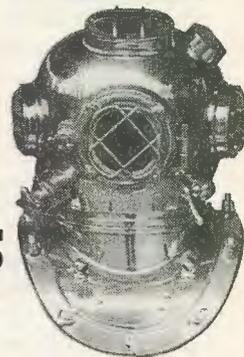
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if he was worried about another Sandinista foray: "It's the pircoacos who should be worried about us. We're going to win!"

When President Reagan signed the executive order last October renewing U.S. military aid to the anti-communist forces, he also put the Central Intelligence Agency back in the ball game. All government agencies were barred by Congress from direct involvement with the contras two years ago following the CIA-directed mining of Nicaraguan harbors. The CIA is destined to administer the aid under the supervision of Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliot Abrams. The Agency will not only carry out logistical duties, but it will be able to advise the contras on strategy and tactics, provide expertise in communications and share intelligence with the rebels. The congressional ban forbidding American advisers from coming within 20 miles of the Nicaraguan frontier may result in selected contra troops being trained in the United States by the Army's Special Forces.

Still, private-sector aid, which played a crucial role in sustaining the freedom fighters over the last two years, "is always welcome," according to Enrique Bermudez, the FDN's field commander. And it will certainly be necessary when the now Democrat-controlled Congress once again decides to stop aid to the struggling freedom fighters.

— The Editors

JUNK FORCE

Continued from page 69

batteries and listen to Hank Williams on the dying batteries of the portable phonograph. By 2300, conversation wanes. I watch the huge moths flutter around inside, trying to orient to the light. Lizards lurking in the shadows snap them up.

WHAM! As instinct takes over, I knock the lamp down as I hit the floor and roll through the door. The second and third incoming rounds blast nearby. Our machine guns clatter all along the north wall. Junkies sprint for battle stations. I make it to the mortar pit, where Da is already directing fire at pre-selected points along trails to the north.

Excited junkies shift their voices into high nasal register and rapid chatter. The little bit of Vietnamese I have is useless. This musical, tonal language is difficult enough to understand in class. This is impossible. It doesn't matter because we all understand what we're doing anyway.

The first round landed over in the shacks where the married men live with their families. The second or third caught Duc, the corpsman, as he came out of his little dispensary. Duc is dead, six of the dependents are badly wounded and several more are cut up. I send George to radio for a dustoff. Da sends the same request up Vietnamese channels.

As our guns gradually quiet down and it becomes clear we are the only ones still shooting, I check on 37.

"No problems," reports Schultz. "We saw your rounds going out and we fired in that direction. Nothing hit over here, though."

I ask about the newsmen.

"Bill Kelley was right there beside me at the wall, shooting hell out of nothing, just like me. Klepper and Bell took it all real calm, talking into tape recorders and looking it all over."

I go back to the command post. Da has all the wounded in there. Some are in real bad shape.

"How about the helo?" I ask.

"Outside," George directs me. I follow him over to our place. "You won't believe this shit," he shouts. "The ARVNs can't send a helo, but won't say so. Our guys can't send a helo unless the Vietnamese can't." George is pissed. So am I.

I spend the next half-hour on the radio getting the same ridiculous crap from some snot-nosed geek who tells me I "just don't understand the Big Picture." Well, that's no shit.

I talk to Da, he talks to me. One of the dying is Ha Si Loc's wife.

I call Vung Tau again. The commander has left word he will not talk to me. I'm told to get my shit together and do my job. Right. I'm that asshole in the Delta who doesn't understand.

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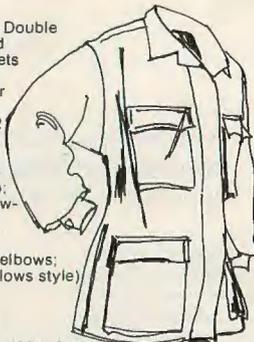
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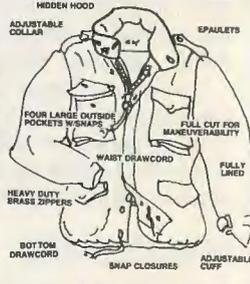
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Mac had fixed some coffee. We sit and smoke with the burnt, sandy feeling of too much adrenaline and too little sleep. Everyone is quiet with a vaguely shared feeling of failure. I watch the special yellow sky that the Delta has, trying or hoping to unwind enough to rest, when I hear the wop-wop of an approaching Huey.

It doesn't really register until I watch it hover over 37 and land. It loads super fast and is gone.

"Goddamn, I don't believe that shit!" George screams. "Those rotten cocksuckers! Shit! Shit! Shit! That fucking helo was for the reporters! We can't get a helo to pick up wounded, but they fly those assholes — 'Yes Sir, No Sir, Anytime-You-Say-Sir.' They can kiss my ass!"

As the mate lays a little harder on the throttle, I try to redirect my thoughts by checking on the wounded. I look in on Ha Si Loc's wife. She's dead. I try to think about something else again, but my mind reels uncontrollably to the departing newsmen, the war, the world. The thoughts are quite uncharitable. Sherman was right. And hell sucks. ☒

FIRST BLOOD

Continued from page 75

spread out, weapons pointing in a full 360 degrees. Enemy fire increased. We could hear the heavy sound of the AK-47s mixed with the sharp crack of Dai's CAR-15. Meanwhile, Dodds was on the radio frantically trying to make contact with the FAC for air support.

Suddenly, Sang was on his feet moving forward. Before I knew it, I was right behind him with the selector switch on my CAR-15 set on full auto. Sang looked back at me and, with a smile on his face, waved me up.

As we moved closer to the sound of the rifle fire, Sang motioned for me to get down. Two NVA soldiers broke through the cover of the trees to our right and separated. They were trying to flank Dai. Sang waved me in the direction of one of the NVA while he went after the other. The firing died down for a moment.

I lost sight of the NVA soldier, but I knew he had to be close. My hands shook as I strained to hear the slightest sound. Where was Dodds? Where was Adams? What the hell was I doing this far out in front of the others?

I could hear someone moving less than 30 feet to my right. Slowly pointing my rifle in the direction of the movement, I waited. The sound came closer — my finger tight-

ened on the trigger.

Without warning, Sang opened fire on the left, scaring me half to death. At the same time, the NVA on my right broke from the palm leaves at a dead run. We both fired at the same time. My 5.56mm rounds caught the NVA in both legs and he crumbled in a heap in front of me. My only thought was that I had just shot a man. He was screaming and holding both legs, trying to stop the flow of blood.

Dodds suddenly appeared at my side, staring first at the NVA and then at me. I don't think he believed that I'd got the guy. But he said, "Good goin', kid. That's our prisoner. Dai says the place is crawlin' with NVA, so we gotta get the hell outta here!"

We tied tourniquets around the NVA's legs, shot him full of morphine and used our plastic handcuffs to secure his hands behind his back. Dodds gave me his rifle, threw the NVA across his shoulders in a fireman's carry and headed for the LZ.

At the edge of the trees, Dai met us and took the prisoner. Dodds was back on the radio again, calling for an extraction. The NVA were moving all around our position. We were going to need those Cobra gunships pretty damned fast!

Adams appeared at my side and told me that I'd done great on my first mission out. That was the last thing he ever said. Just as he finished his sentence, an AK round hit him square in the back and tore through his heart. He was dead before he hit the ground.

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We were surrounded by NVA regulars and the battle was on again. The Chinese opened up, trying to secure our perimeter while our radio man called for air support. The action got hotter and heavier when our FAC came back on the radio to tell us that we had Fast Movers, Cobras and extraction choppers 10 minutes out. Dodds told him we'd be ready.

During the firefight, Chuy was hit in the arm. Sing B caught a round in the lower left leg. And to make matters worse, the prisoner was killed by a stray bullet.

Air support arrived right on time. Dodds called for the Fast Movers with their napalm and then used the Cobras to keep Charlie's head down while we carried the wounded and Sgt. Adams' body back out into the elephant grass. The extraction choppers came in and picked up the team. I went on the first chopper with Dai, Chuy and Sing A. Pulling the bandage from my first-aid pack, I wrapped it around Chuy's wounded arm and tried to light him a cigarette, but my hands were shaking too badly. I hadn't noticed until then. Chuy took the lighter, lit the smoke and handed it to me. With a wide grin on his face, he gave me the thumbs-up signal. Dai had seen the move and nodded to me in approval.

I had come to Vietnam with questions about the war and questions about myself. In this one action, I found answers to both. I didn't freeze when the pressure was on. Nor had I run. But then I wasn't heroic, either. I just kept my head under fire — and that's really the best any good soldier can hope for.

Within a few months I was in command of RT Viper. Patterson was my one-one for about four months until he got his own team. He was later seriously wounded and sent home. My friend Magsman finally got out of the communication shed and to a team, only to be killed during a training mission on Monkey Mountain along the coast of Da Nang.

Of the 30 Green Berets who had arrived in Cam Ranh Bay that warm September day in 1967, three were listed as MIA, 11 were killed and 14 were wounded and returned to the States, myself included.

Did we win or did we lose? I feel like I won. As someone once said, "War is nothing more than a conflict which does not determine who is right, but who is left." The wisdom of this statement escapes politicians. It is known only to the soldier who has faced a vicious enemy and prevailed. ✎

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COMBLOC BAYONETS

Continued from page 76

bayonet and scabbard with black grips and glossy black scabbard. They are available brand-new for \$80. The Yugoslav fighting knife has a 1st pattern scabbard with black rubber insulator, light tan leather hanger and hilt loop and crude blond wood grips with a muzzle ring (although it cannot be attached to a rifle). Quite rare, these knives go for about \$275.

Poland now combines a 1st pattern scab-

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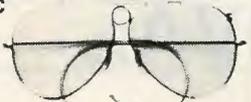
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bard with a 2nd pattern bayonet. This variant is easy to identify as the blade has no sawteeth. The scabbard has a black rubber insulator. Both wrist strap and hanger with hilt loop are light tan leather. The grips are orange-brown in color. Neither 1st nor 2nd pattern Polish grips have wood-chip reinforcement. New Polish bayonets are imported from Frankonia Sporting Goods in West Germany. Pay no more than \$65, and then only if the serial numbers (scabbard and crosspiece) are matching.

Hungarian AKM bayonets and scabbards are both 1st pattern. The grips are reddish-brown, reinforced with wood chips, and the insulator is flesh colored. Wrist straps and the belt hanger are fabricated from tan leather. Once uncommon, a large quantity was imported recently by Interarms. The semi-automatic Hungarian AKM imported by Kassnar Imports, Inc., is also equipped with this bayonet. They are now worth no more than \$35 to \$45. The Hungarian fighting knife is still quite rare, however, and goes for \$300. The flesh colored insulator on its 1st pattern scabbard is 1 inch longer than the insulator on the Hungarian bayonet. The knife's handle is black plastic, to which is attached an unusual 5-foot leather security thong. Its leather belt hanger is larger than the bayonet's and can be adjusted for belt width by means of a buckle. The blade has been brought to a sharper edge than that usually encountered on the bayonet.

Romania's entry remains 1st pattern in both bayonet and scabbard. Its gray rubber insulator is surrounded by a large brown or tan leather frog. The wrist strap is brown leather and the wood-fiber impregnated plastic grips are reddish-brown. Not common, you can expect to pay up to \$125 for one. Some are apparently issued with the more usual leather hanger and spring hook, as I have one so fitted from Angola. Some Romanian bayonets and scabbards carry serial numbers and some do not. In an effort to prevent tracing their source, a number of Romanian bayonets captured in Angola have had the serial numbers obliterated by either grinding or welding. This reduces their value by at least 25 percent.

Egypt produces a bayonet for its Maadi AKM. It has a 1st pattern scabbard with a glossy black finish with a gray insulator. The tan leather hanger with hilt loop is unlike any other variant. Of 2nd pattern configuration, the bayonet itself has chocolate brown grips and an olive green web wrist strap. Recently encountered is an unusual Middle Eastern AKM bayonet with dark orange grips and without sawteeth. It's carried in a dark orange 2nd pattern plastic scabbard with a distinctive longitudinal rib along the front end and Arabic markings. The hanger and hilt loop are black leather. The most likely source is Syria.

AKM bayonets from the People's Republic of China are 2nd pattern in configuration except they have no wire-cutting capability on either blade or scabbard and are without sawteeth. Grip and handle material is either black or reddish-brown plastic without

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wood-chip reinforcement. Some grips have exposed brass rivets and in other instances the rivets have been covered with plastic plugs, indicating only a different manufacturer. Most have only a flimsy steel clip hanger, but web frogs are now available. PRC bayonets sell for only \$25 to \$35. The web frogs alone will fetch \$25 each.

North Korean AKM bayonets are reminiscent of the original Soviet AK-47 bayonet except that the two ears on the pommel (which fit around the cleaning rod and gas block) have been cut back. Grip and crosspiece design are also different. Their clipped-point Bowie blades are 1½-inches shorter than those of the AK-47 bayonet. Scabbards are blued steel and crudely punch-welded with olive green web hangers and brown leather hilt loops. Very scarce, they start at \$175 and go up, depending upon condition.

Russian AK-47 bayonets have 8-inch phosphated or satin chrome blades (except for the cutting edge, which is positioned uppermost on the rifle) with a spear-point shape and centrally placed fullers. The blued steel hilt has wood-fiber impregnated plastic grips held in place by two bolts with slot-heads at each end. Hangers are either leather or web and attached to two metal loops at the rear of the scabbard. The steel scabbards are either blued or painted black. AK-47 bayonets (of probable Polish or Bulgarian origin) are available in new condition for \$55 to \$65.

Finnish Model 1962 bayonets and scabbards for the Valmet version of the Kalashnikov are of completely indigenous design. Dark green plastic grips (some are marked "FISKARS") wrap around the hilt's T-mortise which supports the forward catch. Hilt and blade are a single component and black phosphate finished. A traditional Lapp hunting knife sheath of green leather contains half of the hilt as well as the blade. These unusual bayonets are worth \$70 to \$80.

Czech Vz58 bayonets are as different from the Soviet pattern as their rifle is from the AKM. Blade and hilt, a single component, are cast by means of the lost-wax process. The conventional fullered blade is 6.9 inches in length and phosphate finished. Grips are of bonded wood chip. Catch and T-mortise are at the forward end of the hilt. As the T-mortise's open end faces forward, the bayonet must be attached to the rifle by pushing it toward the muzzle. This is an extremely poor design, as all of the thrusting force upon impact is focused on the locking catch. The tan leather scabbard has a peculiar offset, integral hanger. Vz58 bayonets are also imported from West Germany and you should pay no more than \$40 to \$50 for one in new condition.

Imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery and copies of the AKM wire-cutting design have become quite a fad in NATO countries. In 1970, Eickhorn of Solingen, West Germany, together with the Dutch

firm of N.W.M. (Nederlandsche Wapen en Munitfabriek N.V.), developed a bayonet for the Stoner 63 system with wire-cutting capability. The clipped-point Bowie blade, complete with sawteeth, used the same wire-cutter concept employed on the AKM bayonet. No longer in production, these Stoner 63 bayonets can be identified by the figure of a squirrel over the N.W.M. trademark stamped on the blade and a tan leather thong on the black plastic scabbard. Variants of the original Eickhorn bayonet have been fabricated for the M16, FN FAL, G3, Steyr AUG and Swiss PE-57 rifles — all with unmarked blades. M16 and G3 versions are still available for about \$35. Even the U.S. Army decided it wants to snap wire. Recently adopted, the new U.S. M9 "multi-purpose" bayonet system has Soviet-type wire-cutters, a 7½-inch blade, green nylon Zytel grips and a Buckmaster plastic scabbard. The initial contract calls for 315,600 to be produced for a total cost of \$15.6 million (about \$49.50 each).

There is no more fascinating bayonet to collect and own than the Soviet wire-cutter and its predecessors, clones and indigenous substitutes. Listed below is a group of sources for these anachronistic devices that will get you started.

Loren Relin (ComBloc bayonets and militaria), Dept. SOF, 11024 Washington Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90232; Paul Masterson (ComBloc daggers and combat knives), Dept. SOF, Grethenweg 86a, 6000

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Frankfurt 70, West Germany; Jeff Howard (Egyptian AKM bayonets), Dept. SOF, 5140 Zachary Lane, Plymouth, MN 55442; Mitchell Arms Corp. (Yugoslav bayonets), Dept. SOF, 2101 East 4th Street, Suite 201A, Santa Ana, CA 92705; Globe Militaria, Inc. (Polish, Hungarian and Czech bayonets), Dept. SOF, RFD 1, P.O. Box 269, Keene, NH 03431; Sherwood International Export Corp. (Eickhorn bayonets), Dept. SOF, 18714 Parthenia Street, Northridge, CA 91324. ✕

BOUNTY HUNTER

Continued from page 45

L'Enfant Plaza West S.W., Washington, DC 20260-2100.

INTERNATIONAL

International terrorism has recently taken center stage in the media and in the minds of travelers. Many solutions have been proposed, from better passenger security to anti-terrorist military units, retaliatory air strikes and terrorist insurance.

Strangely, the idea of offering monetary rewards has been almost overlooked by airlines, governments and multinational businesses. One exception is a little-publicized program run by the U.S. State Department. On 19 October 1984, Public Law 98-533 was enacted, authorizing the Secretary of State to offer rewards for the apprehension, prosecution and punishment of persons guilty of international terrorism.

This program has not been as effective as it could be. It has received little publicity and successes are not made public. No announcements of payoffs are made, supposedly "to protect informants and not to compromise ongoing investigations." In addition, the rewards offered are small compared to the seriousness of the offense and the danger involved. The danger factor is compounded by the requirement that the terrorists must be taken alive. Also, the State Department won't pay anything for mere information, no matter how useful.

Recent State Department reward offers include:

- A reward of \$100,000, regarding the restaurant killing of four off-duty U.S. Marines in San Salvador in the summer of 1985.
- Two rewards of \$250,000 each, regarding the hijackings of Kuwait Airways Flight 221 on 4 December 1984 and TWA Flight 847 on 17 June 1985.
- A \$250,000 reward for suspected terrorist mastermind Abbul Abbas and others in connection with the 7 October 1985 hijacking of the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*.

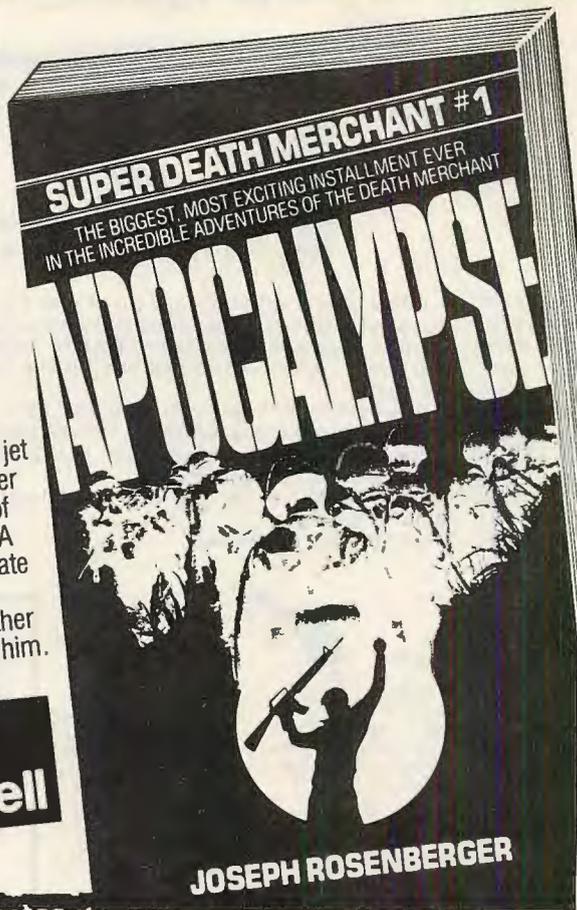
Contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the State Department for more information about this program and specific rewards.

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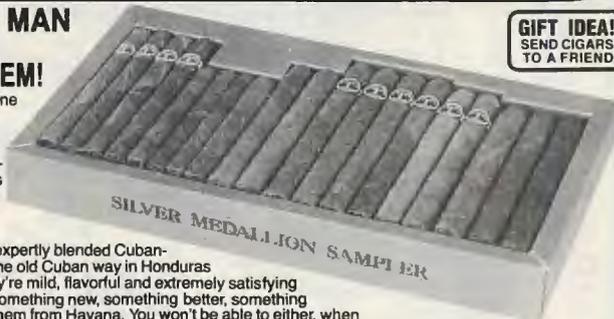


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ly work for professional soldiers and should be investigated through foreign service channels.

Soldier of Fortune readers are familiar with the magazine's private initiatives in the offering of rewards. Soviet Mi-24 Hind-D attack helicopters of the Sandinista air force in Nicaragua have been all but grounded due to SOF's offer of \$1 million for the surrender of such a craft by a Sandinista pilot or air crewman. Unfortunately, SOF's reward offer of \$10,000 in gold for the capture of Idi Amin has not been as effective.

Rumors have circulated for a number of years that the U.S. government has earmarked large sums of money for special rewards. These rumors have been corroborated by contacts in military intelligence and at the highest levels of government. Put simply, secret discretionary funds have been authorized in the six- to seven-figure range for up-to-date Soviet military hardware, especially sophisticated avionics and entire weapon systems such as fighter planes. For pilots or others with specialized military skills, the nearly impossible feat of grabbing the latest Hind or MiG might be an acceptable challenge when viewed in light of the potential reward.

Bounty hunting at all levels is a growth industry. Unfortunately, as the private sector steps in to do more and more of the jobs that governments cannot — or will not — do, bureaucratic red tape will insinuate itself into the bounty hunter's world. However, in the immediately foreseeable future, the challenging and still very free field of bounty hunting will continue to grow in importance around the world. Today, before some bureaucrat comes up with a "Bounty Hunter Exam and License," may be the day to begin a new life in one of man's most ancient professions.

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GALIL

Continued from page 71

for 100 meters have also been retained. To use, at dusk or night, the front betalight is flipped up to expose a luminous vertical bar which is aligned between the two rear luminous dots. When the rear tritium sight is flipped up for use, the rear peep sights must be placed in an offset position, midway between the two apertures. But all of these are, at best, for emergency use only, since the heart of any sniper system is its optical unit.

Knowing full well that mounting a scope on a Galil (or Kalashnikov or FN FAL) sheet-metal receiver will result in unacceptable vertical dispersion, IMI has wisely welded a dovetail base to the receiver's left wall. Interface with the optical sight is by means of a sturdy, all-steel, quick-release mount. While its heavy construction and latchwork seem to ensure maintenance of zero through repeated removal, it offsets the scope to the left, which prevents left-handed

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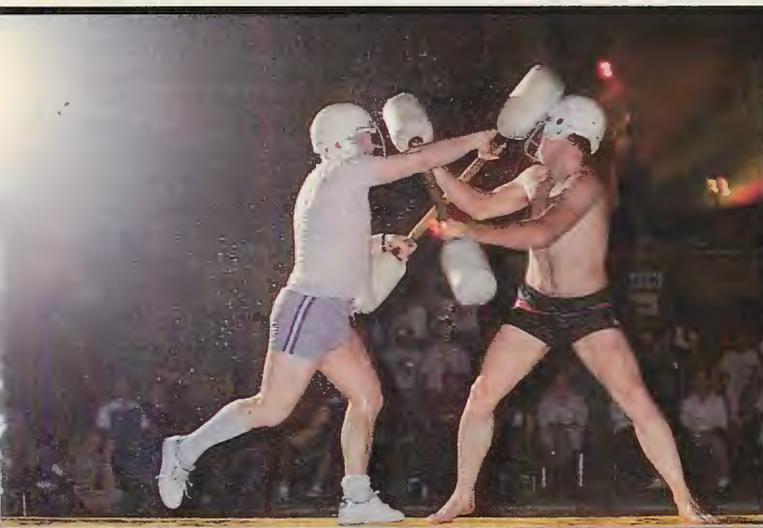
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shooting. One advantage of this setup is that the iron sights remain unobstructed.

The milspec Nimrod scope mounted on the Galil sniper rifle is manufactured in Japan by a subsidiary of KOOR Industries, an Israeli firm. It has a fixed magnification of six power, an ideal compromise and more reliable than any variable-power scope. Objective and ocular diameters are 40mm and 32mm, respectively. The field of view is 19.6 meters at 300 meters (3 degrees 45 feet). The eye relief is about 3 inches. Heavy bars are superimposed over the crosshairs on the right, left and bottom. There are two auxiliary crosses, one for aiming at 900 and 1,000 meters, the other for high-trajectory ammunition.

Range estimation with the reticle pattern duplicates that of the Dragunov/RPG-7 optical sights. At the bottom of the field of view is a baseline below five short steps. The step closest to the baseline is marked "10" for 1,000 meters, while the farthest is marked "2" for 200 meters. The three steps in between correspond to 800, 600 and 400 meters in ascending order. Just align the target's groin with the baseline and match the top of his head with the appropriate step. Dial the correct distance into the range drum on top of the scope (calibrated in 50-meter clicks from 200 to 800 meters for 7.62X51mm M118 match ammunition) and fire away. The windage drum, located on the scope's left side, provides five mils of adjustment to the right or left in 1/2-mil increments. This method is simple, quick,

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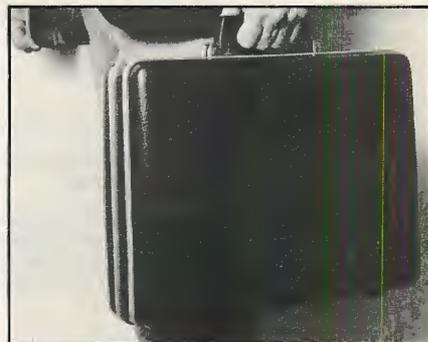
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supposedly achieved with Lake City's M118 match ammunition (so-called "Special Ball") and its 173-grain Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) projectile. This is an unfortunate choice, as Lake City Arsenal has failed to produce consistent M118 match-grade ammo in more than a decade. Instead we selected Federal's match ammunition (M308) with its fine 168-gr. Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) bullet for our test. It departed from the Galil's heavy barrel with an average velocity of 2,622 fps. Ciener's suppressor dropped this by only 68 fps with no change in the point of impact or loss in accuracy.

Our best group at 100 yards was 1.6 inches. However, most groups hovered around 2 inches under minimal wind conditions. Although no semiautomatic rifle can ever reach the accuracy potential of a turn-bolt, this is mediocre performance at best, as M14 rifles, at half the weight, can be tuned to achieve 1 MOA groups (although this will not last for more than 800 to 1,000 rounds). Since the Galil's forged receiver is quite rigid, the optics of high quality, the scope-to-rifle interface apparently secure and the buttstock adequately stable, the problem almost certainly lies with the barrel.

It seems to be of no better quality than IMI's .30-caliber Browning machine gun barrels. Substitute a Douglas Number 1 Contour Premium barrel and this rifle would turn 1 MOA all day long. Douglas uses 4140 chrome moly steel barrel blanks which are carefully heat-treated before they are bored, reamed and button-rifled. Equally important, in caliber 7.62X51mm NATO the bores are cut to .309-inch, as subsequent stress relieving not only collapses all radial stress but will spring-back the bore to the correct groove dimension. No doubt about it, the very best match-grade barrels hail from either the U.S., Austria or West Germany.

Over the course of our test, more than 300 rounds were fired and we experienced two stove-pipes and several failures to feed when the bolt was retracted by hand. There were no other stoppages of any kind. As expected, felt recoil was almost imperceptible, but firing from any position other than the prone is not practical with this beast.

Although it's as quiet as any modern .30-caliber rifle sound suppressor (since the .30-caliber projectile leaves the muzzle at a velocity above the speed of sound, the downrange "crack" is not eliminated), Ciener's unit, when fitted to a Galil, is badly in need of a gas-relief valve similar to that fitted to the original Sionics suppressor fielded during the Vietnam War. When you contain propellant gases in a suppressor tube, they will eventually migrate either forward or rearward. Most will be exhausted into the atmosphere from the muzzle end of the suppressor. Back pressure will, however, drive some rearward. In a Kalashnikov-type rifle they will invariably exit out the square cut at the end of the sheet-metal receiver cover, directly into the

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shooter's face. This would prove more than just irritating to snipers in a combat environment.

Military snipers require both high first-round hit probability and the ability to fire rapid succeeding shots. Bolt-action rifles cannot meet this latter criterion. The Galil sniper rifle is based upon a reliable, battle-proven system. It shows great promise, but we need to shave off at least five pounds, screw in a more accurate barrel and effect some other minor modifications. This can be accomplished without sacrificing the potential for mass production.

It has just recently been accepted for service by the IDF. In very limited quantity, the Galil sniper system is being imported by Action Arms, Ltd. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124) with a suggested retail price of \$3,995, complete. ☒

90-ROUND DRUMS

Continued from page 78

side for attaching the drum to your load-bearing equipment. It can be cleaned in any solvent and lubricated with any petroleum-based product. The price is \$149.95 direct from the importer. Although its magazine body will protrude, this drum can be carried in an RPD drum pouch, also available from Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc.

Now that they're loaded, how do they perform? We fired 1,000 rounds of Portuguese ball ammunition in the M193 configuration (headstamped "FMN 82-17") through an M16A2 Colt Commando (11.5-inch barrel) to answer that question.

No matter how robust, all large-capacity, spring-loaded drums (Ultimax 100, RPK, etc.) are plagued with a single generic curse. If you have enough spring pressure to hold the last 10 or 20 rounds tightly up against the feed lips, you will probably have too much pressure when the drum is loaded to capacity. As a consequence, until the drum has been partially emptied there is usually too much "stripping pressure." When the bolt drives forward in counter-recoil it meets with excessive resistance as it attempts to strip the next round from the drum. The bolt's forward velocity is reduced to such an extent that it is still slowly rotating into the locked position in the barrel extension when the hammer starts to fall on the firing pin. The result is invariably a "light hit" with failure to ignite the primer. The operator's only recourse is to retract the charging handle, extracting and ejecting the unspent round. This stoppage requires only seconds to clear, but could prove fatal on the battlefield. Early "waffle" pattern 20-round M16 magazines were prone to this problem.

Each of these drums occasionally exhibited this condition, the MWG drum more often than the PRC entry. In addition, because the MWG drum's feed lips and follower so closely resemble Colt's magazine, we experienced several "bolt-over-base"

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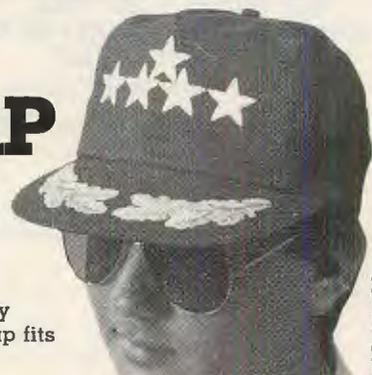
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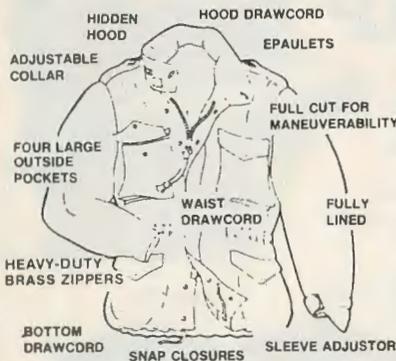
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(the bolt overrides the cartridge base) stoppages with this system.

The plastic drum will either survive a drop test or shatter. The steel drum must be protected from dropping as its stamped, sheet-metal housing can be dented.

Neither can be loaded quickly. It takes about five minutes to load the PRC drum and almost four minutes for the average operator to load The Ninety Rounder with the charger in place. I can load three 30-round M16 magazines, using a charger and stripper clips, with greater speed.

If forced to choose, I would take the PRC drum with its vastly superior ergonomics and marginally greater reliability. Cost means nothing in these matters.

Do drums like these have any legitimate military applications? Yes, albeit limited. They are well-suited to the M231 Firing Port Weapon on the M2 Bradley IFV (Infantry Fighting Vehicle). When the M249 SAW has been altered to fire from magazines more reliably, they would be somewhat useful for sustained fire if belts were not available. Riflemen rarely shoot at aircraft anymore, but drums can be employed in perimeter defense, house clearing or some ambush scenarios.

But don't let some lunatic tell you they can be used to "walk" a rifle or submachine gun onto a target with a 10- to 15-round burst. You can be sure that anyone proposing such wasteful nonsense has never humped his ammo load in combat. Furthermore, and far more important, if your opponent has a weapon and knows how to aim it, you'd be dead meat before any of your bullets reached the sole of his combat boots. ✖

BATTLE BLADES

Continued from page 24

lowing directions, so those of you who are feeling creative need to listen up. Perform the modifications in the sequence listed. Do the guard first, then the blade and lastly the handle. The guard is big and clumsy and should be done first so that the rest of the knife is accessible. Do the blade next, because with the blade finished the material you remove from the handle serves as a means of altering the balance of the knife.

If you do the handle and then the blade it is harder to arrive at the proper "feel" the knife should have.

Your modified knife will not perform as well as a custom blade made by a good knifsmith, but it will give strength and cutting performance superior to knives costing much more. It's tough, better balanced and takes and holds a very good edge for the price.

All of the modifications listed can be done without power equipment. The knife shown with the modifications was done using only hand tools. No

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attempt was made to buff or polish out any tool marks or scratches. With a little additional time and effort spent on spit and polish, this modified knife could be made to sparkle. ✂

MICE AND MERCS

Continued from page 39

Chinese put suitcases on the table and opened them. They were neatly filled with \$100 bills.

The third Chinese started talking to the man in the center. I didn't understand the language, but he was a worried man. The boss man growled something back to him and closed his suitcase. The other man did the same. Ted told me to go back to the motel and wait while they worked out the problem.

Ted came back alone a while later. I could tell the problems hadn't been worked out because Ted immediately started talking about cutting costs — from \$750,000 to around \$480,000. He said the third Chinese had promised his share of the money but was trying to pull some switch-around deal. He had planned to borrow the cash from a loan shark, show it at the meeting and then return it while he worked up some other financing.

Godfrey came back into the room and told Ted he wanted to talk to him outside. I was starting to get some bad feelings about my part in this operation. Arrangements were being made that I didn't know about. Ted was talking about cutting out a lot of the weapons we'd need on the beach. He also seemed to now be running this op, and both he and Godfrey were cooling toward me.

I was also getting pissed off about payment for this deal. Godfrey had said he wanted us to stay on after the coup to train the army, at \$3,000 a month. He'd also promised other "bonuses" that would make it worth my while. I knew there was a ton of money in the Ghanaian banks and a lot to be made from the diamond and gold mines. If I was going to shoot it out on the beaches, I wanted some of it.

Ted and Godfrey came back into the motel room and we immediately got into a fight about my cut in this deal. Ted said I'd only get the \$3,000 promised to me. Godfrey said the banks had no money, that Rawlings had taken it all. I asked about the diamond and gold mines.

"The Argentine banker's going to get the diamond concession," Ted told me. "The Israelis are going to get a share of the gold mines and so will the Libyans and the Brits. You're out of that end of it."

"What the fuck's your cut in this deal?" I shouted at him. "Are you hitting the beaches with us?"

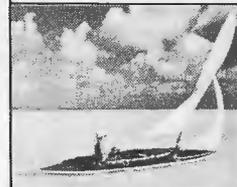
He shook his head. "I've only been contracted to get the weapons and the boat. I'll be handling the boat while you guys attack the beach."

Fuck that. I could have killed them both

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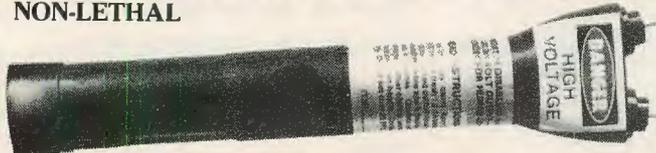
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right there. Ted said we should all relax and get back together in a few days. I caught a cab and went back to my hotel in Queens.

I had one more meeting with Ted a couple of days later. Godfrey wasn't there. We talked about how we'd get the mercs from the States to Buenos Aires. Ted said they'd organized visas for us and that we'd be walked through customs when we arrived — no questions asked. He also mentioned that Bob Foti was in on the deal and that Foti wanted John Early to be put in charge.

When he told me that, I knew I was out of the operation. But by that stage I didn't really care. Too many people knew what was going on. And I didn't know if all the money and gear that were promised would ever turn up. I was running short of cash and Godfrey wasn't giving me any more.

I gave Ted my home telephone number and told him he could contact me there if he wanted to talk again.

I was flat broke and owed something like \$1,000 on my phone bill when I got home. Neither Ted nor Godfrey called me again and Foti didn't tell me shit when I called him.

I heard the job had been cancelled, was back on again, then cancelled again. Finally, around the middle of March, I read a news story that eight mercs had been arrested in Brazil. Their boat had broken down off Rio and the mercs had been arrested on contraband charges.

The story also said the mercs claimed they were working for the Ghanaian Ministry of Defense — acting as guards for the weapons and other gear. It was a good cover and I hoped they'd get away with it. Last I heard they were facing charges running from illegal entry to arms smuggling into Brazil, which could cost them four years in Rio's central prison.

I'm just fucking glad I wasn't there.

Next month, Senior Editor John Coleman carries on with this incredible saga of the Boys in Brazil. In part two, SOF will uncover the mercs' departure from Miami to their link with the Argentine intelligence that organized the weapons; the first seeds of doubt and double-cross; heat-searing days aboard the Nobistor; the mercs' arrest and imprisonment in Brazil and their abandonment by the U.S. State Department. If you're looking for a textbook example of modern-day merc work — Murphy's Law style — then stay with us next month.

— The Editors ✕

“PLATOON”

Continued from page 83

Despite the extraordinary efforts of Stone and Dye, something that doesn't quite belong occasionally pops up in the movie. As the movie opens, the unit identification flashed on the screen should have been the 25th Infantry Division rather than simply

the 25th Infantry, which implies a regimental designation. In one scene a close-up of an M60 machine gun reveals a belt of blanks hanging from the breech. Somehow a Cold Steel Tanto, a 1980s knife, finds its way onto somebody's web gear.

But these errors are easy to forgive in a movie that is all too real. In the average war movie, insignificant minutiae like these would be lost amid the Ramboesque antics Hollywood usually tries to pass off as "real." Mentioning them here is merely an exercise in self-defense. Failure to point them out would result in a flood of mail from our alert readers.

Dye's efforts to make the movie as real as possible went beyond preparing the wardrobe and occasional suggestions on the set. When the actors who had been cast were informed via a polite letter that they would undergo rigorous military-style training before filming, five decided not to take the job.

Training started shortly after arrival in the Philippines. The Hollywood actors, now under Dye's command, spent two weeks in the bush carrying out patrols, digging their own foxholes, subsisting on C-rations, humping through the jungle, firing their weapons and having their night's sleep interrupted by two-hour shifts on watch.

The 14-day course instruction included weapons nomenclature and maintenance (American and ComBloc), fieldcraft, field sanitation, land navigation and individual protective measures. After these fundamentals, Dye's "troops" advanced to mines and booby traps, including employment of claymores, attacks on fortified positions, evacuation of wounded and helicopter ops.

All of this concluded with an actual patrol requiring that troops execute a cordon and search operation. Encountered in the course of the patrol were ambushes and booby traps set by Dye.

How did they take it? According to Dye, "At first they were just shocked. They couldn't believe we were going to go this far with it." Ivan Kane, who portrays "Tony," the platoon sergeant's RTO, thought, "OK, so they're going to have us living in a barracks, doing a few pushups." But shortly after touching down in Manila, he realized this was not going to be the case. "Before we knew it, we had humped 15 klicks into the jungle and Dye told us, 'Dig a hole, girls, that's your home for the next two weeks.'"

What was the result of this Dale A. Dye/Attila the Hun school of method acting? When filming started immediately after training ended, the actors looked just like tired, battered, veteran grunts should look. But Dye's hard training had produced more than believable appearances. His leadership had formed in the platoon of actors the same camaraderie, frictions and friendly competition found in platoons of soldiers. They began to pull together as a functioning unit. It was then Dye knew it was all going to work. "Once they understood they were going to survive, that they could rely on each other as an infantry platoon does, they began to enjoy it in a perverse sort of way.



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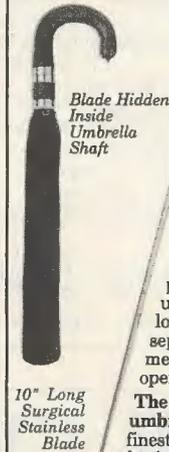
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I knew then that we had an infantry platoon." According to Kane, "We became brothers. We still hang out together and talk about it. We went through an experience we won't forget."

In an industry known for egos, they didn't present a problem within the platoon. Said Kane, "My hooch-mate was Berenger. Here I was, a supporting character in the same foxhole as the star. But it wasn't a typical star/supporting actor relationship. The star system broke down the minute we got into the jungle — we were all grunts."

Stone's commitment to realism is what makes the film work. "Platoon" doesn't have heroics that change the tide of battle, waving flags, a triumphant return to a grateful nation or the defeat of an evil enemy — all the things that have made war films popular with American audiences. All this is replaced by a truly intensive look at the lives of a group of men at war.

The images portrayed in "Platoon" are images of fear, counting days left in-country, frustration, casual brutality, exhaustion from humping 60 pounds of gear through the jungle, sudden and extreme violence, and death.

Film is the perfect medium for showing what war *feels* like. And that is "Platoon's" crowning achievement. Like a conveyor belt, film pulls you along at its own pace, producing images when it sees fit. Watching the film makes you feel like you're on patrol, knowing that something out of your control can occur at any moment.

However, film is a bad medium for close analysis. You can't turn back pages and re-examine passages or stop the flow of images to concentrate on a single scene. And it is here that Stone's artful use of powerful, realistic images contradicts his goal of portraying realism in "Platoon."

Though based on Stone's experience of 15 months in-country, at which time he witnessed drug abuse, murder, rape and other wartime atrocities, "Platoon" leaves us with the incorrect impression that such activity defined American involvement in that war. What Stone did was condense into a two-hour movie a hefty collection of reprehensible acts and unforgiving behavior, all of which, admittedly, did occur during the war, but occurred over a period of 10 years. While this technique does give the film its dramatic, larger-than-life quality, it also distorts the truth by amplifying it. In so doing, "Platoon," like many of its predecessors, ends up reinforcing the negative stereotypes many people already have about the Americans who fought in Vietnam.

By showing what war feels like — constant hardship, impossible missions and confrontation with death at the hands of an unseen enemy — "Platoon" should at least leave audiences with an empathy for the men we sent to Vietnam. It is hoped that this increased empathy will lead to greater respect for the Americans who fought there.

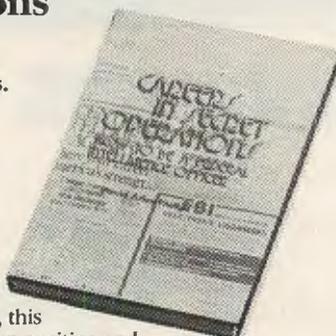
If this happens, and I believe it will, veterans and the country they served will be better off for "Platoon" having been made. ☒

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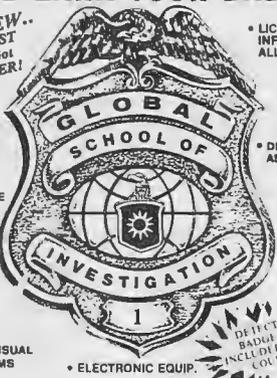
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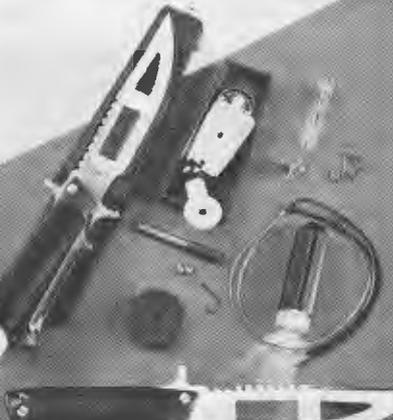
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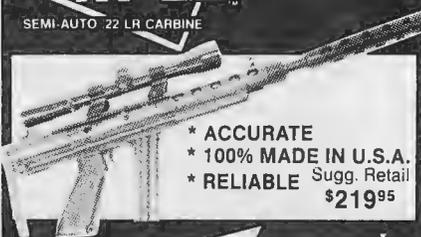
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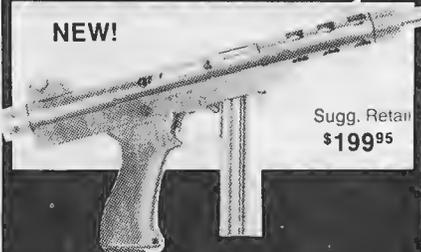


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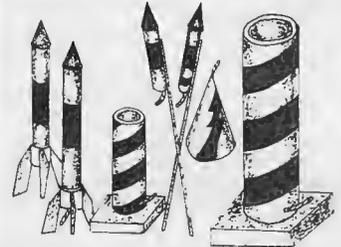
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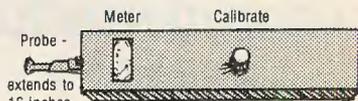
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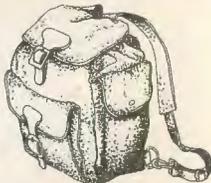
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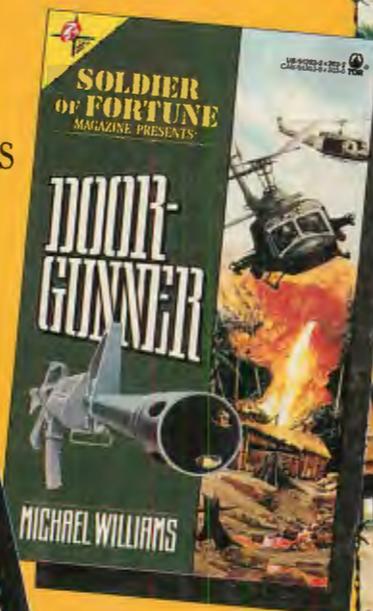
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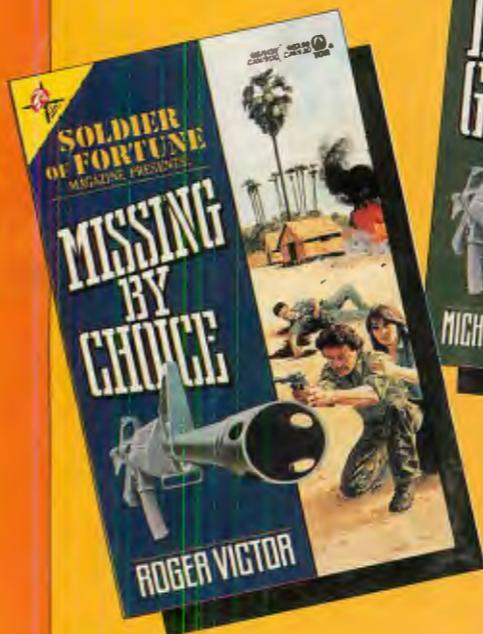
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