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The Journal of Professional Adventurers

JULY 1987

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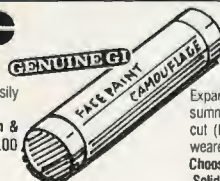
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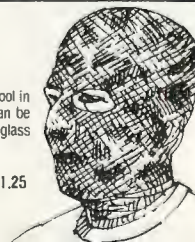
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COVER: Tattooed soldier of *Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste* (ANS), armed with AK-47 and sword, takes five during a combat patrol. Join SOF correspondent Peter Douglas as he patrols with an ANS unit in Vietnamese-occupied Cambodia. The adventure starts on page 46. Photo: Peter Douglas
COVER INSET: One of Britain's famed Gurkhas, brandishing kukri and ever-present smile. SOF travelled to Hong Kong to report on these consummate infantrymen. Story on page 38. Photo: Robin Adshead

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

All the News That Fits

NEWSEEEK, the magazine that brought you the Hitler diaries, ran an article in its 23 March 1987 issue about the mujahideen rebels battling the Soviets in Afghanistan. It stated, self-assuredly, that "the insurgents [mujahideen] can never hope to defeat their better equipped adversaries." *Newsweek* went on to say that victory for the rebels is "far beyond their reach on the battlefield."

Lucky thing we have heady media sources like *Newsweek* to inform the rest of us poor slobes about world affairs. Here at SOF we assumed the mujahideen were giving the Soviets hell. Admittedly, our view is based on firsthand accounts from the front rather than on *bureau reports* from armchair analysts. Our mistake.

Clearly, *Newsweek's* prophesy is nonsense to you and me because we know better. But the unwashed masses who rely on popular, quick-fix media sources like *Newsweek* are being served this politically biased trash on a daily basis. As a result, many freedom fighters are denied our assistance, or worse, are given just enough aid to get themselves killed.

But this is hardly news to us. Just look at the media's stance on past and current conflicts:

Country	Media's Favorite to Win	Media's Favorite to Lose
Vietnam	Soviet-backed guerrillas	U.S.-supported government
Afghanistan	Soviet-backed regime	U.S.-supported mujahideen
El Salvador	Communist guerrillas	U.S.-supported government
Nicaragua	Soviet-backed regime	U.S.-supported contras

Notice a pattern?

However, though the media's support of the Left shows consistency, the reasoning behind its support is anything but consistent. During the Vietnam War the press justified its anti-war cry by proclaiming how a well-equipped army (U.S. Army) couldn't possibly defeat a broad-based indigenous force (Viet Cong). Today, in the case of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, they're telling us just the reverse. The same inconsistency is true of reporting on El Salvador and Nicaragua.

And when communist-backed forces win, it's a "people's revolution" worthy of thoughtful editorials and documentaries. But when U.S.-backed forces win, as in El Salvador, the story is quickly dropped and our attention diverted. Compare the news coverage of Nicaragua and El Salvador if you doubt this.

With the stroke of a pen, facts are tailored to fit the theory, and public opinion is swayed.

Despite the dire predictions of the doctrinaire liberals at *Newsweek*, I believe the people of Afghanistan could expel their Soviet oppressors. Victory, while not inevitable, is not out of the Afghans' reach. With sufficient logistical support from the West — particularly more ground-to-air missiles — and increased diplomatic pressure, it's not inconceivable that the Soviets would write off their Afghanistan adventure as too costly and negotiate themselves out.

But it's safe to assume that, if that happens, the media will not own up to its mistake. By then the media will be busy hawking the forged memoirs of a dead fascist or preparing an up-close "human interest" story on someone significant like Vanna White or Madonna. ☒

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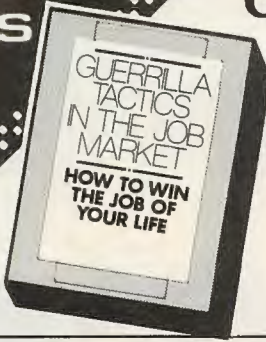
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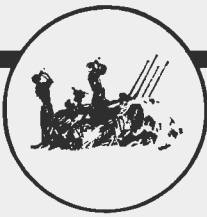
CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNIST SUBVERSION...

Sirs:

I have recently noticed that many members of Congress and policymakers in the U.S. media subscribe to the following: the abolition of apartheid and the eventual destruction of the South African government; the immediate termination of all funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative; an end to all support for the contras and the acceptance of the communist Sandinista regime, even if it is a Soviet satellite whose function is to destabilize other governments in the Western hemisphere; a similar end to military support to all peoples fighting Soviet aggression; a belief that the Soviet Union is consecrated to world peace, and its defensive reaction is the result of the expansionist U.S. foreign policy; the opinion that it is only the anti-communist mania of the U.S. government that is preventing a general reduction in armament and a peaceful solution to superpower rivalry.

In this connection, it should be noted that this is precisely the present line of the Soviet Union. Of course, I am certain that this parallelism is purely coincidental.

Samuel J.
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Sirs:

I, like many other Soviet émigrés and refugees who have had a taste of a "workers' paradise," am a dedicated reader of SOF. I spent half of my life in the Soviet Union. That was quite enough to convince me that, for the free world to survive, its leaders have to be vigilant, its countries militarily strong, its people wary of communist intentions and aims.

I write reviews of SOF articles for the Russian-American newspaper *Almanac-Panorama*, which is put out by recent émigrés from Soviet Russia. The readers really appreciate SOF, its articles and what it stands for. SOF is one of the few entities that realizes what communism is, how to battle it and what to do to stop its spread worldwide. We Russian-Americans love your magazine.

Paul Stonehill
Los Angeles, California

CITIZEN SOLDIERS...

Sirs:

You might be interested to know that mail continues to pour into our headquarters as a result of our being mentioned in the article "Citizen Soldiers" in the May '87 SOF. Keep up the good work!

Jerry Fogel
Executive Director
State Defense Force
Association of the United States

I was surprised to see my name in James Pate's story. I would like to clear up a few points.

Under the leadership of General Harris, we in the Texas State Guard have begun to train with the National Guard, when their training parallels our mission. The TSG has made a complete turnaround since the 1984 problems. The battalion that I am now a part of is ably run by a highly decorated Ranger veteran. I am now a captain and a life member of the state guard association. I am very pro-Texas State Guard. If we have problems, it is with funding. That is something the state of Texas is going to have to come to grips with.

I wish someone had made an effort to update facts before this article was written.

Capt. Kenneth G. Paynter
San Antonio, Texas

The facts were updated. The author noted that Mr. Paynter had rejoined the Texas State Guard after a change of heart (and of rank, from lieutenant to captain).

As for training with the National Guard, whether it occurs or not, such participation by state troops is unlawful under federal statutes. Even if the 100th Congress changes the law to allow state guard training at the federal level, it likely will mean little in Texas. And that is a point that does need updating. Texas State Guard Regulation 10-1, dated 2 January 1986, redefines the TSG mission. Contrary to prior practice, this recent regulation prohibits any voluntary official assistance by Texas State Guardsmen in civil emergencies.

"Authority for performance of voluntary duty as a unit in uniform to provide military support to civilian authorities in times of disasters or emergencies is revoked," the regulation states. Such assistance is restricted to times when the TSG



has been called to active duty by the governor, which has happened only twice in the TSG's almost 50-year history. The TSG's only other function is to take over custodial functions at National Guard armories in the event of a mobilization, which hasn't happened since WWII. Based on this recent order, the TSG now declines to even accept volunteer physicians for emergency disaster relief. This reflects a trend in the Texas State Guard of doing less, not more.

EXPLOSIVE ERROR...

Sirs:

I got a lot out of your December '86 issue, especially the story "Norway's Cold Weather Commandos" by Arnstein Tranoy. However, the lower right-hand photo on page 42 has a caption that is completely incorrect: "During training, breaks are few and far between, so soldiers take them when they can." Being an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Specialist, it is obvious to me that this soldier is not on break. In his hands is a 10-cap blasting machine. In front of him sits a spool of blasting wire, and farther ahead is a blasting galvanometer. That isn't the morning mist rising in the background, it's a cloud of smoke from an explosion. If you could correct this error, it would be appreciated by all of us EOD Techs.

Charles E. Lyon
APO New York, New York

The truth is that the author of that

photo caption was on break when he wrote it. You may rest assured that he has been dealt with.

AKS AMMO...

Sirs:

After reading "Kalashnikov's Sidefolder" in the October '86 SOF, I sent for one. I'd like to know where I might find some of the hard military primers Mr. Kokalis speaks of. With all due respect to the 7.62x39mm manufacturers, I'd like to be able to load my own ammo. Where can I find the kind of primers needed to do this? Also, where can I obtain non-corrosive Berdan primers, so I can handload those too?

John Balthard
Petersburg, Alaska

Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis writes: "Military rifle primers are less sensitive by virtue of a thicker cup. For example: Winchester small rifle primers have a cup thickness of .020 to .021 inches, while U.S. military small rifle primers have a cup thickness of .0255 inches. Unfortunately, there is no commercial source for military rifle primers. Under no circumstances should you fire reloaded ammunition with commercial primers in an AKM rifle without a firing pin spring. Yugoslav and PRC military ball has been imported in large quantities at reasonable prices.

"You can obtain non-corrosive Berdan primers from the Old Western Scrounger, Inc., Dept. SOF,

CANADIAN CONTRA...

Sirs:

Being an avid reader of SOF and a supporter of the contra cause, I was shocked at the death of Peter Bertie, a.k.a. El Canadiense. When I read his article in the June '86 SOF ["Task Force Pancasan"], I felt proud of this fellow Canadian, one of the few to actually give a damn and tell it like it is in Nicaragua. If it weren't for people like Peter and the staff of SOF, we would all have been swept up long ago by the left-wing press hype.

Jeff Birmingham
Oakville, Ontario

We join you in mourning our fellow freedom-fighter supporter Peter Bertie, who was killed in March while accompanying a contra patrol near Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Peter took risks to bring the true story out of the Central American jungles. He will be missed.

FUELING THE FIRES OF FREEDOM...

Sirs:

Even though I vocally support all aid given to the government of El Salvador and the contras in Nicaragua, after hearing about the American adviser killed by communists in El Salvador, I decided I'd better start putting some money where my mouth is. I think more Americans need to contribute. Those people down there have the guts to kick those bastard communists in the teeth. We can at least give them the tools to do it with.

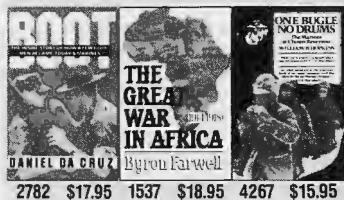
SOF is doing great! It's nice to read the truth for a change.

Kent V. Peters
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

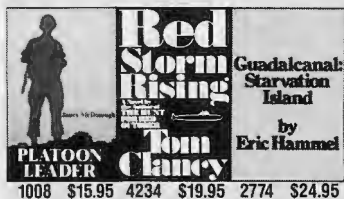
Yes, the freedom fighters in Central America do need and appreciate your help. SOF's El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund relies on contributions to keep supplying the anti-communists with combat boots, uniforms, jackets and web gear. Money is also needed to transport these items down south. To donate, or for more information, write to ESNDP, c/o SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306; or if using UPS, the address is 5735 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80303. ✕



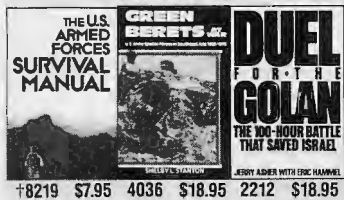
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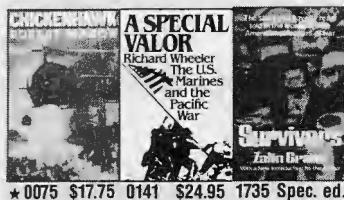
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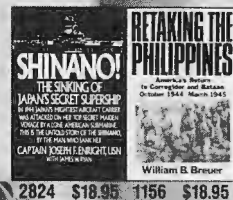
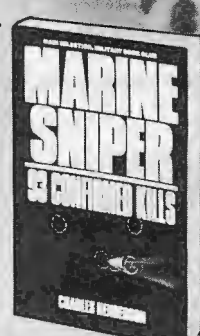
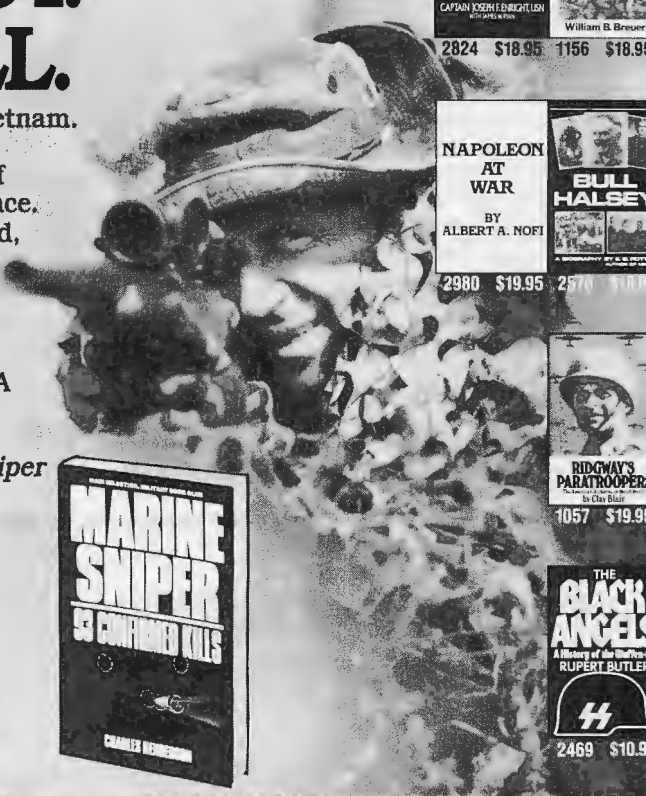
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ONE MAN. ONE SHOT. ONE KILL.

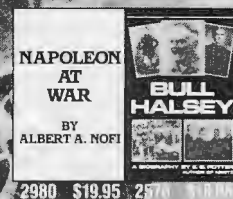
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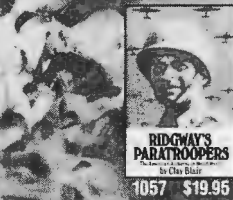
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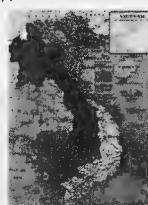
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GET EXXON OUT OF NICARAGUA...

A coalition of political, educational and religious groups representing several million Americans has announced a national campaign to demand Exxon Corporation end its operations in Nicaragua. According to Peter Flaherty, a spokesman for the coalition and chairman of Citizens for Reagan, "We now witness the bizarre spectacle of an American company refining Soviet fuel to power Soviet helicopters, tanks and trucks to defeat U.S.-supplied forces in our own hemisphere. For its services, Exxon receives special favors from the communist government, while at the same time the rest of the private sector in Nicaragua is under assault by the Sandinistas. Exxon's continued presence in Nicaragua is a shameful case of corporate irresponsibility and shows complete disregard for the national interests of the United States."

If you're as outraged about Exxon's support of the Sandinista regime as we are, call the Exxon Caribbean/Central America office at (305) 441-6000 or headquarters at (212) 333-6900.

A group of conservative organizations, including Citizens for Reagan, has established an "Exxon Out of Nicaragua" hotline. Call them at (800) 851-3415.

Serious cage rattling from potential and current stockholders goes a long way.

BULLETIN BOARD



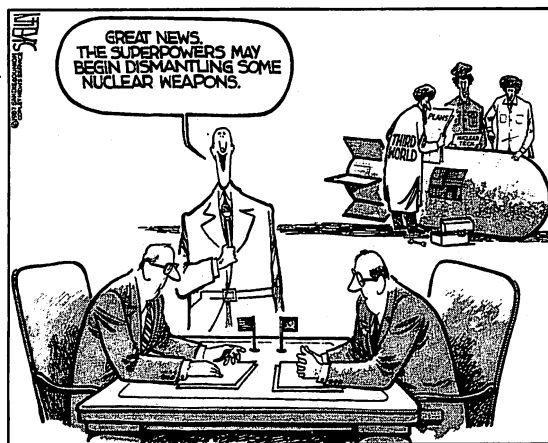
SOF'S OWN GETS HIS LITERARY DUE...

SOF staffer Colonel Alexander McColl (the only man you're likely to meet who's a graduate of Harvard Law School, the U.S. Army War College and the SOG jump school that used to be at Long Thanh) is about to become a published novelist.

His first book, entitled *Valley of Peril*, is the June 1987 selection of the SOF Adventure Book series, published with SOF's blessing by Tor Books. The yarn is based on his adventures in 1967-68 as Senior Adviser in Dong Xuan District, Phu Yen Province, South Vietnam.

Major General John K. Singlaub (U.S. Army, retired) has written the book's introduction; the two worked together when Singlaub was Chief SOG in 1968.

If you want a rattling good read this summer, look for *Valley of Peril* on your local newsstand.



HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors: SFC Manuel A. DeSilva; Richard "Doc" Woolfe; Terry Adams; Thomas N. Traylor; Dale R. Smither; Robert A. Neal; Steve Layman; Conner Viant; In memory of Airman Jeffrey J. Beckham, USAF; Steve Freeman; Tim Voss; R. Ken Poole; Gary Olivieri.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund contributors: Grayson Levy, Russ Frey.

Numerous donors requested their names not be printed.

CONTRA NEWSLETTER...

The Nicaraguan Democratic Force (*Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense*, or FDN), which supports the major U.S.-backed guerrilla force operating inside Nicaragua, has established a newsletter, entitled *FDN Boletin*, covering the activities of the FDN and the Nicaraguan anti-communist freedom fighters generally.

The publication will appear monthly, and subscriptions will cost \$12 per year. To subscribe, send your check to: *FDN Boletin*, P.O. Box 952, Kenner, LA 70063.

The FDN has also established a nonprofit organization called the Nicaraguan Development Council (which can be reached at the same address), donations to which are tax deductible.

Bear in mind that: 1) the \$100 million in aid appropriated by Congress last year is not enough, and 2) there are a lot of necessary projects, such as keeping the American people informed on the struggle to free Nicaragua, that cannot properly be sustained with government funds. This is your chance to support a worthy cause and write it off on your Schedule A.

SANDINISTA CAFFEINE FIX...

If you happen to be a leftist wimp who has grown weary of having to boycott everything from American cheese to South African gold, here's something you can be for — Nicaraguan coffee.

Seems that drinking Danny Ortega's bean juice has become the "very thing" among the radical chic set. According to *The New York Times*, it's being sold out of church basements and food cooperatives around the country and being snapped up by buyers "making a political statement" (presumably the sort Tokyo Rose used to make).

All of which is quite legal, it turns out, thanks to a loophole in the two-year-old trade embargo President Reagan imposed on the communist Sandinista government. The embargo stipulates that Nicaraguan products can be allowed into the country if they are "substantially transformed" in a third country, which in the case of Nicaraguan coffee means roasting,

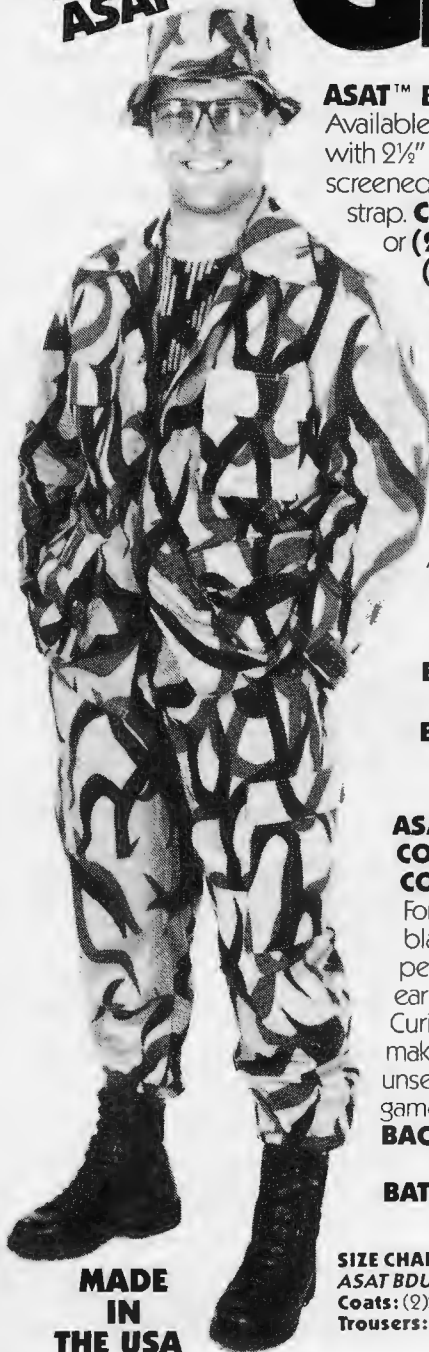


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If it's any comfort, at least the parlor pinkos are paying the same sort of prices for their strange brew that they might expect to pay if they were buying Dutch coffee in a Marxist country.

A seller in Cambridge, Massachusetts, called Equal Exchange — it bills itself as "an alternative trade group" — charges \$7 a pound for Danny's blend, more than twice what you would pay in a supermarket for capitalist grounds.

REUNIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS...

4th Marine Division

Association 40th Reunion is scheduled for 24-28 June in Baltimore, Maryland. Contact: Norman Grammer, 7900 Babikow Rd., Baltimore, MD 21237, (301) 686-9396.

22nd Bomb Group (M/H), 5th AF (WWII), Hqs., 2nd, 19th, 33rd, 408th Bomb Squadrons have scheduled the 38th Annual Reunion 22-26 July in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Contact: Jack Clark, Box 4734, Patrick AFB, FL 32925, (305) 636-5004.

11th Armored Cavalry veterans of Vietnam and Cambodia second reunion is scheduled for 7-8 August

in Washington, D.C. Contact: Reunion Committee, c/o Ron Ballweg, 1217 Hilltop Dr., Annapolis, MD 21401, (301) 974-0547.

First Special Service Force reunion is scheduled for 13-15 August in London, Ontario. Contact: Bill Story, 11815 Quarter Horse Ct., Oakton, VA 22124, (703) 620-5990.

Nebraska Vietnam Veteran Reunion is scheduled for 14-16 August in Grand Island, Nebraska. Contact: Jerry Kinney, 1740 Superior, Lincoln, NE 68521.

59th Air Police Squadron reunion is scheduled for 7-9 August in Memphis, Tennessee. Contact: Charles Arendall, P.O. Box 27336, Memphis, TN 38127, (901) 353-4467.

River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) reunions are scheduled for 14-15 August in Norfolk, Virginia, and 10-11 November in Albany, Oregon. Contact: John Williams, P.O. Box 5523, Virginia Beach, VA 23455, (804) 464-2312.

TRUE FACE OF GLASNOST...

The Soviet Union may be trying to clean up its image in some parts of the world, but when it comes to Afghanistan the Soviets have shown little inclination to forgo mass murder.

According to the Afghanistan Relief Committee, since 1978 (when

the civil war began) a million Afghans have been killed, 5.5 million have fled the country and another two million, fleeing Soviet attacks, have become internal refugees.

At least half a million Afghans are currently facing starvation due to a deliberate Soviet policy of devastating the country's arable land. Last winter, 85 percent of the Afghan infants in the hard-hit Panjsher Valley died because of the war.

Afghanistan Relief Committee, headed by former U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and author James A. Michener, aids Afghan refugees in Pakistan and supports a number of medical relief agencies, including Freedom Medicine (which trains Afghans as paramedics) and Doctors Without Borders (a Paris-based organization that supports medical teams in-country).

Contributions can be sent to Afghanistan Relief Committee, Inc., Room 4100, 345 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10154.

THAIS GO AFTER OPIUM WARLORD...

Thai Special Forces are taking another crack at ridding the Golden Triangle of opium warlord Khun Sa, and this time they may have a slightly better chance of success.

The reason? For the first time, Burma appears to have given the Thais tacit approval to cross the border in pursuit of the world-class doper and his private army (at least that is what the Thais are claiming).

Khun Sa's HQ is on the Burmese side of the border, in Burma's Shan state, where a Thai attack drove him in 1982.

Khun Sa seems to have annoyed the Thais sufficiently to provoke their latest drive against him by holding a press conference at his headquarters last winter.

Burmese forces were also reported having a go at him.

Needless to say, the United States heartily approves.

Don't expect a cakewalk, however. *Jane's Defence Weekly* reports that Golden Triangle dopers have obtained a supply of SAM-7s, and as a result the Thai air force is using F-5s in air strikes against them instead of the more vulnerable OV-10C Broncos it had originally assigned to the operation. ✖

IT happens in a heartbeat. The distance is usually not much beyond arm's reach. You are often alone.

Each year, countless undercover law enforcement officers, most of them working narcotics, face this special kind of gunfight. Many wonder how they can improve their chances of being the one who walks away alive. While safe undercover work begins long before contact with the suspect is made, lethal force is usually what determines who wins a close encounter.

Therefore, in undercover police work, effective concealment of your handgun is imperative. This is especially true for narcotics work, since experienced dealers are always on the lookout for a hidden weapon on their customer. Hiding your handgun wouldn't be much of a problem if it weren't for one simple fact: You also need quick access to your gun.

As a holster maker, I get requests for concealment rigs that often put handguns in awkward, uncomfortable and, worst of all, inaccessible places. A favorite among inexperienced cops is a holster that places the gun in the middle or small of the back. This is unwise placement because it makes the draw slow and awkward (it is nearly impossible to draw your pistol while seated in a chair that has a back, such as in a car) and it is annoying to have a holstered gun jammed into your spine for hours at a time. Most importantly for undercover work, this carry position is not very concealable. Consider, for instance, how often you need to bend forward to examine the contraband you are buying. Under these circumstances even small handguns will tend to "print" through your clothing.

The carry position that solves these problems is inside the pants, *forward* of the hip. With a proper holster, draw speed is practically the same whether standing or sitting. When the pistol is drawn from under a shirt worn outside the pants and swept up by the non-gun hand, the draw is almost as fast as when unconcealed. Overall concealment of the weapon is enhanced because bending forward causes the pistol to press *into* the body.

Of course, there are other concealed-carry options. Perhaps the least successful of these is the shoulder holster. A shoulder holster works fine if you are wearing a coat. But for undercover work you need more versatility in your wardrobe — sport coats and winter jackets are out of the question when working under the hot sun. Even when fitted very tight and flat against your body, shoulder harnesses tend to show through light clothing. Many people try to wear a harness next to the skin with a loose-fitting shirt for concealment, but this severely limits the



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Bruce Nelson

Undercover Concealment



Inside-the-belt concealed carry with holster positioned forward of the hip keeps weapon accessible whether sitting or standing and does not diminish draw speed.

size of the handgun that can be carried. And trying to draw through the buttons on your shirt is dangerously slow and uncertain.

A more successful method, useful in extremely warm climates, is the ankle holster. It allows you to get by with wearing a T-shirt, and few people ever look at someone's ankles for a concealed weapon. The trade-off here is an unavoidable slow draw and a draw method that requires some physical agility. A more important drawback is that ankle holsters also restrict the size of the gun you can carry.

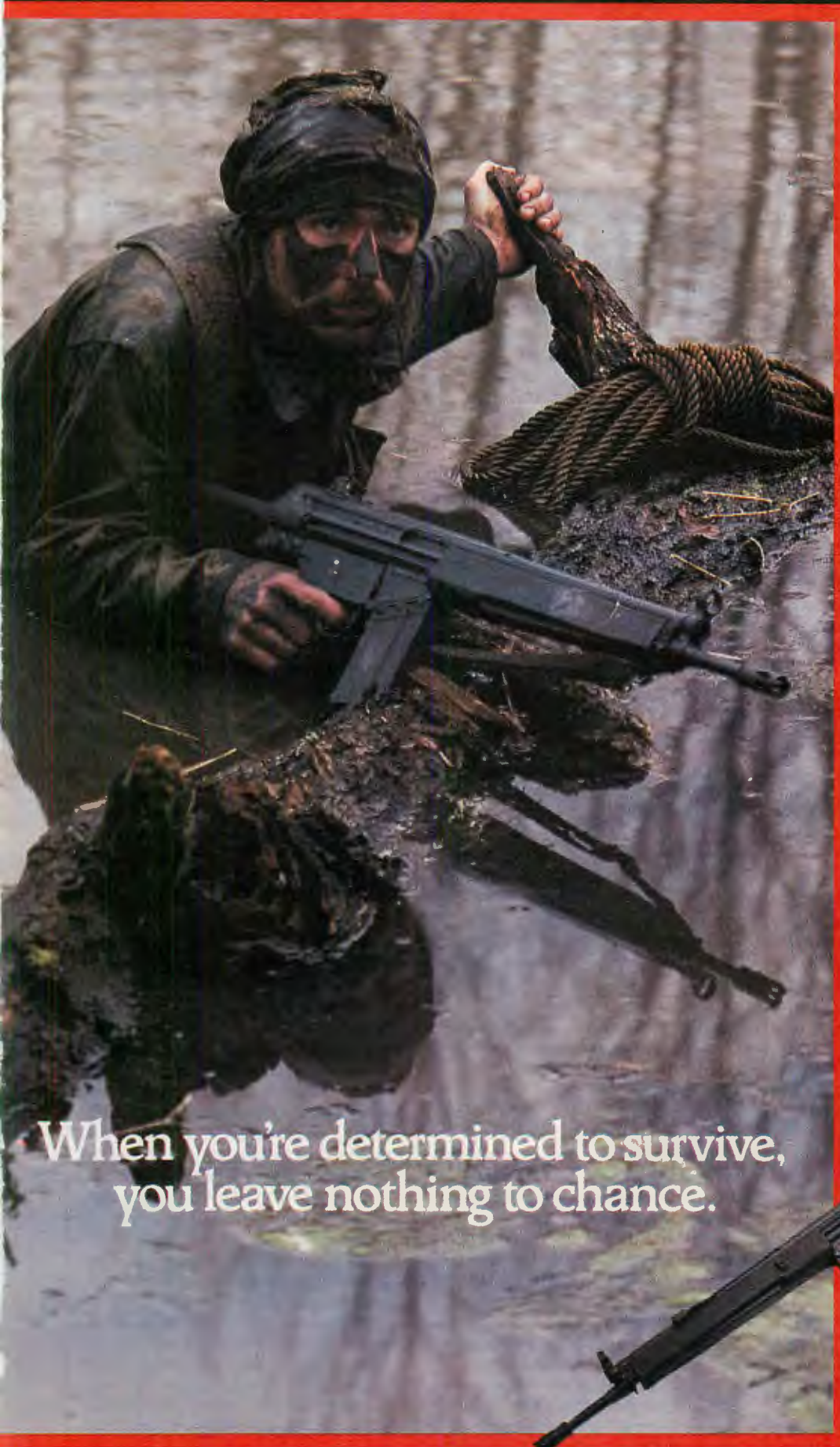
Although simplicity and resistance to dirt and pocket-fuzz seem to favor the revolver, there is one very good reason to use an auto for concealment: width. The cylinder on a .44 Mag six-shot is about 1.75 inches, while the standard 1911 Colt .45 is closer to 1.25 inches and the Heckler & Koch P7PSP is 1.1 inches. In terms of hiding any of those under clothes, it is obvious that the thinner weapon will not make the same kind of impression on clothing that the thicker one will. Additionally, longer barrels for slower-burning powders, hammer-spurs and a design requirement for the cylinder to ride above the hand in the pistol's frame make nearly all revolvers harder to hide than standard large-frame autos.

Just as important to concealment as

holster design and weapon size is clothing selection. Shirts and jackets should be of a large or full cut. Pants need to be slightly larger in the waist to accommodate inside-the-pants holsters and fuller in the legs for ankle holsters. Belt loops must be wide enough to accommodate wide gunbelts. Opaque shirt fabric and dark colors prevent your weapon from showing through, and thick fabrics reduce the likelihood of a weapon signature when bending over or stretching. If you have special requirements for concealment, and can afford it, a tailor might have to make some fine adjustments to your clothing.

Before you begin using your carry system, you must practice extensively. Be sure to select a holster that allows a solid, complete firing grip while the pistol is fully holstered. Drawing from concealment can be tricky and should not be attempted with an incomplete grip. Fumbled and dropped pistols are no help under fire. Carry spare ammunition whenever possible. If you get separated from your team, it doesn't hurt to have at least one complete reload available.

The bottom line is to make drawing your concealed weapon second nature. After you have arrived at the right undercover carry method for you, practice often and don't change your system without good reason — stick with one method that you feel comfortable with in all conditions. You can be sure the guy you're up against has done *his* homework. You've got to be quicker than he is if you're going to survive. ☒



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The HK 91 was derived directly from the G3. Its delayed roller-locked bolt system reduces recoil to keep the gun on target. It exceeds the most stringent NATO accuracy requirements—right out of the box. And HK's revolutionary scope mounting system guarantees that you're still zeroed-in every time you mount your scope.

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H&K firearms are designed to be as safe as possible at all times. But the safe handling and responsible use of a firearm are your responsibility. Read the owner's manual carefully before using your gun. Keep all firearms in a safe place at all times. And consult your local police department for information on firearms instruction and gun ownership in your area.

AMMUNITION for the M60 GPMG is issued in 100-round belts packed in a cardboard box which fits in a cloth bandoleer. Two of these bandoleers are packaged in the standard U.S. M19 .30-caliber-size ammo can. A cloth carrying strap is sewn to each bandoleer and a web strap is sewn on the side of the bandoleer for attachment to the gun — difficult enough to do in the barracks and next to impossible in a combat environment. The cardboard soon falls to pieces and the flimsy cotton bandoleer itself will rot and rip to shreds in just a few days in the tropical bush.

Two superior pouches were originally fielded. One was fabricated from rubberized oilcloth, the other of canvas with a heavy metal zipper on one side. They were attached to a holder riveted to the receiver. Unfortunately, the pouches were too large to permit the gun to left traverse on the M122 tripod (adopted in desperation after the M91 tripod for this weapon self-destructed at Aberdeen Proving Ground). In addition, the four alignment tabs on this holder would catch belts fired without the pouch and shut down the weapon. The tabs also broke off with alarming frequency.

Yet, M60 belts should never be carried "Pancho Villa"-style across the chest as was the practice in Vietnam. The M13 links rust quickly and cartridges often slip out of the link's extractor-groove tab, resulting in stoppages. Like it or not (I don't), the M60 will be in our inventory for the foreseeable future. What to do?

Capco Enterprises, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 3250 Pollux Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89102) has developed a plastic assault pack (patent pending) for the M60 that exhibits quite a bit more ingenuity than the machine gun it attaches to. Holding 100 rounds, it can be fabricated from black or clear (to show the number of rounds remaining) plastic. Two will fit into the M19 ammo can. It can be installed or removed quickly from the bandoleer holder attached to the M60's feed tray (at the place previously occupied by two anti-friction rollers).

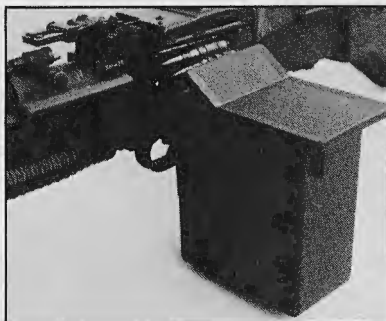
There is a sliding lid and provision for attaching carrying straps. A longitudinal rib on the lid's underside prevents unintentional removal and increases the pack's structural integrity. The lid extends ¼ inch over the box and tilts up and back by means of a hinge. Attachment to the gun will pop the lid open for feeding. SOF's tests clearly demonstrated superior feeding in comparison with the current system. A metal clip permits two assault packs to be connected while attached to Load Bearing Equipment so the weapon may be fired with the packs mounted to the gunner's hip (especial-



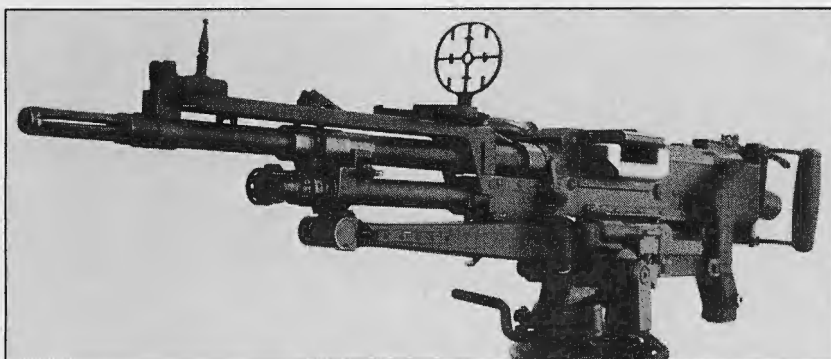
FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

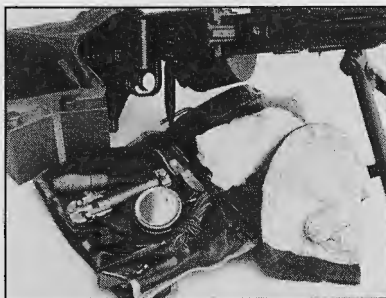
Potpourri



LEFT: Plastic assault pack for M60 GPMG holds 100 rounds of linked ammo and offers much-needed alternative to cloth bandoleers which rot and fall to pieces after just a few days on jungle ops.



ABOVE: FN MAG 58 General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), caliber 7.62x51mm NATO, with ring sight and spade grips, is effective and reliable weapon system for helicopter door gunners and armored vehicle personnel.



ABOVE: MG-42 kit from Collectors Corner provides every spare part you'll ever need, plus some tools you never knew existed.

ly useful with the new M60E3).

Sturdy and reusable, logic should mandate the immediate adoption by the U.S. Armed Forces of this decided improvement over the pathetic cloth bandoleer. Bungled procurement policies in the past indicate this may not happen, but early testing by the USMC has been favorable. A limited quantity of pre-production series overruns are available to the public for \$9.95 each.

FN MAG 58 Accessories

Armored vehicle personnel and helicopter door gunners need spade grips and antiaircraft sights. Those lucky armies equipped with the Belgian FN MAG 58 will find that *Fabrique Nationale* has provided these acces-

sories, designed with the same high quality and efficiency as its superb GPMG.

FN's ring-sight assembly clips rigidly onto the standard MAG 58 barrel, over the gas block, and can be installed or removed instantly. Both front and rear sights fold down when not in use so as not to obscure the standard ground sights. The rear sight, a large ring-aperture of conventional antiaircraft configuration with interrupted vertical lead bars, can be adjusted for windage zero. The front post, with a bead top, can be adjusted for elevation zero. Both are phosphate finished. The mounting bracket is black baked enamel over phosphate.

FN's spade grips replace the usual wood buttstock and incorporate a sealed buffer. They are used in conjunction with a special trigger lever encased in an aluminum housing attached to the standard pistol grip/trigger mechanism. When the trigger above the buffer on the spade grips is pressed downward, a spring-loaded

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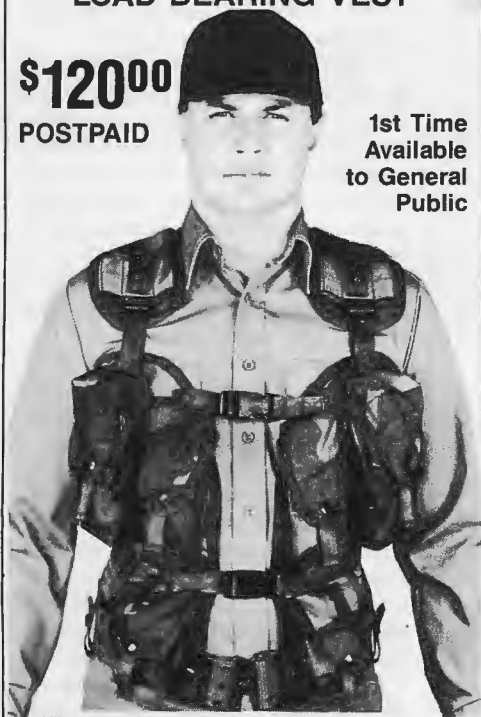


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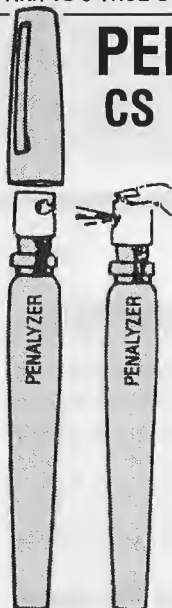


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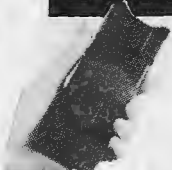


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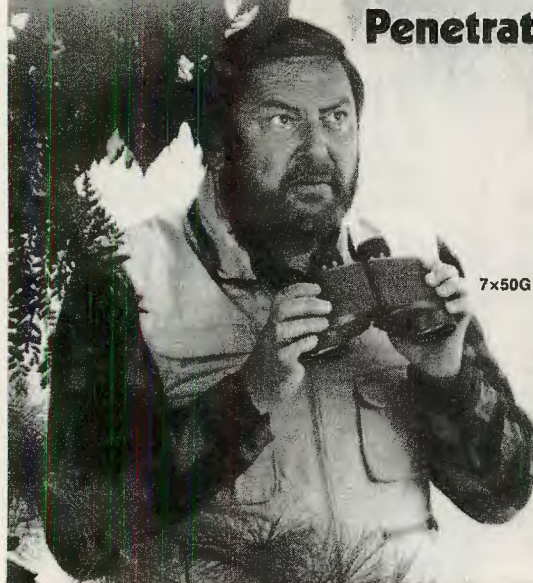
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lever fixed to its axis pin is rotated up and forward. This lever, in turn, lifts up the trigger lever which, rotating on its axis pin, drives a steel pin against the conventional trigger to fire the gun. A simple, effective and reliable mechanism.

Qualified military end users should contact either *Fabrique Nationale Herstal s.a.* (Dept. SOF, Branche Défense et Sécurité, B-4400, Herstal, Belgium) or FN Manufacturing, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 104, Columbia, SC 29202).

MG-42 Kits

Heartthrob of every German militia collector, the MG-42 GPMG remains an excellent design. To this day it serves in the Yugoslav army, where it is known as the M53 — essentially unmodified and in its original caliber, 7.92x57mm. Manufactured by Zavodi Crvena Zastava, Kragujevac, M53 parts are completely interchangeable with those of the German MG-42.

Tragically, the hundreds of MG-42s in U.S. collectors' hands are mostly a fatigued, tired lot. Forty-five years of trash ammo and mismatched components have not helped. Sears and bolts rarely meet with full-face engagement and runaway guns are common. Firing pins break with irritating regularity, and the use of cut-down BAR firing pins and rusty nails as replacements results in premature ignition and destroyed receivers and top covers. At gun shows, collectors fight over MG-42 parts like a pack of mad dogs.

Collectors Comer (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 687, Chardon, OH 44024) has a limited quantity of brand-new M53 gunner's kits that consist of the following useful and essential items, all stuffed in a canvas case with leather trim and carrying strap: complete bolt assembly; additional spare bolt parts (two ejector actuator rods, one ejector rod, two extractor claws, two extractor springs, one extractor keeper and two firing pins); a funky extractor removal tool; chamber cleaning tool; ruptured case extractor; disassembly wrench; muzzle booster scraper tool; hot barrel pad; chamber brush; three-piece, brass-tipped steel cleaning rod with two brushes; large oil can; large solvent can; small brass oil can; a bundle of cleaning fiber and a canvas receiver cover. The price for this entire assemblage is only \$450. The bolt components alone are easily worth that.

Collectors Comer also has a few sets of brand-new spare magazines issued for the Yugoslav M49/57 submachine gun. These 35-round, curved, box magazines can be used, without modification, in the Soviet PPSH41 SMG. The sets include an all-leather pouch with carrying strap containing four magazines, loading tool, two-piece

Continued on page 77

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TAKE care of your favorite blade and it will take care of you. With knives, as with other things, a little preventive maintenance goes a long way toward keeping minor problems from becoming major headaches. It simply makes sense to take care of your equipment.

With this in mind, here are a few fixes for some of the glitches that may afflict your knife from time to time.

Above all, keep your knife sharp. It works a lot better that way, and your appreciation of it is enhanced if it is working at a high level of efficiency.

Don't throw your knife. If you do, sooner or later you will snap the point off, knock the guard loose, or crack or loosen the handle — or all of the above.

Keep your knife dry and don't put it in a wet sheath. Wet sheaths cause blades to rust, even those made of stainless steel. A little oil or diesel fuel on the blade will work wonders in preserving its finish.

So much for the dos and don'ts. Now, what do you do about such things as loose and cracked handles, rusted and pitted blades, broken points and nicked edges? Frankly, there are some things you can repair yourself and some you can't. Some of the things you can fix will depend in great part on where you are and what tools you have at your disposal. It should be obvious that a man with a fully equipped knifemaking shop can accomplish more than if he has only a file and a lot of inspiration.

Some repairs are easy. Small cracks in a handle can be tended to quite simply. Force grinding dust or fine filings down into the crack with a straight pin. Then apply Super Glue to the filled crack. Don't use the regular or five-minute variety of epoxy here, as both are too thick to really get down into small cracks. Also, you need to be sure to use some kind of dust for filler, otherwise the Super Glue won't harden under the surface. Three or four minutes after application, file off the excess with a small file and sand with fine sandpaper of about 220- or 240-grit. If you have a buffer, you can buff out the fine sanding scratches. If not, steel wool works well enough.

How about big cracks? If the handle itself is not loose, these too can be filled via the grinding-dust and Super Glue method. Just be sure that you have dust forced all the way to the bottom of the crack, and do this type of repair in stages, a bit at a time. The layer approach is the ticket here and, done slowly and in stages, allowing each layer to dry completely, a surprisingly large crack can be permanently filled.

What if the handle is loose? Maybe you can fix it yourself and maybe not. If



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Knife Care & Repair



Some knife problems can easily be fixed, some can't.

the handle is of full-tang construction, you might be able to peen the rivets or pins tighter and dress the hammer marks out with a file and sandpaper. If not, you need to send the knife back to the folks who made it for their attention.

A handle with a concealed tang rarely gives trouble, but if it does, and if it is equipped with a retaining nut on the pommel, you have a chance at fixing it. Remove the nut and fit a shim or washer under the pommel. If this takes out the slack, fine. If not, and if you can't snug the handle back up by tightening the retaining nut, box up the knife and return it for professional repair.

A knife with a concealed tang and no retaining nut at the back of the handle is best returned to the maker if the handle comes loose. There are several ways these handles are attached, and the folks who make this style of knife don't all necessarily use the same method of securing the handle.

What about rust on the blade? This

fix is fairly easy. If you are out in the field for an extended period and this problem crops up, simply go to the nearest creek or river for some sand and rub the blade with it until the rust comes off. Note that I said *rub* the blade with the sand. Don't stab the blade into the ground to try to achieve the same thing, for two reasons: One, you will dull the blade, and two, if there is a rock beneath the surface, you will probably hit it and bend or break the point of the knife.

Be advised that the sand will scratch the blade somewhat and the knife will not be as pretty after this treatment, but this is preferable to heavy rust.

If you are home or in the shop and have a rust problem, get some 600-grit sandpaper. It works better if a small strip is used on a file and the blade rubbed with the file supporting the sandpaper. After the rust is removed, you will find the 600-grit finish a smooth surface that is easy to buff if you have access to a buffing wheel.

Nicks in the edge can be taken out with a good 6-inch file and a coarse carborundum stone. The Norton peo-

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ple make a very good India stone that has a quite coarse surface on one side and an India surface on the other. These can be purchased at most large hardware stores and industrial supply houses. Simply remove the nicks with the file and then remove the file marks with the coarse side of the stone. The India surface will then remove the scratches left by the coarse surface, and the sandpaper-on-a-file trick will remove the marks left by the India surface.

Broken points are treated in much the same manner as nicks in the edge. You simply take a good file and reshape the point so that it suits you, then work out the scratches with progressively finer abrasives. When working the point, or any of the bevels for that matter, take care to preserve the original bevels and tapers as nearly as possible. This will make a difference in how the knife looks and cuts, so time expended in this area is time well spent.

You will notice that I have not said anything about using a power grinder. The reasons are twofold: One is that power tools generate heat, and regardless of how careful an unschooled and unskilled person is, and regardless of how many buckets of water he has at hand, he will burn the blade and destroy the temper at some point before he is through. If you are attempting to repair your own blade and have no experience in this area, avoid this pitfall.

The other reason for staying away from a bench grinder with your blade is that the grinder makes a rough cut and it will put ridges and gouges in the blade that you won't be able to remove with a file. Professional knifemakers have a wide array of belt sanders at their disposal, and training and experience in using them. This enables them to make nice, smooth grinds that you can't begin to approach with a bench grinder. It is better that home repairs be made with hand tools.

One other thing. If you have knocked the guard loose, there isn't much you can do. Many custom knives have the guards attached with silver solder, and the heat required to resolder the guard will burn the handle. It is necessary to remove and replace the handle if the guard requires resoldering, and most attempts at home repair don't go this deep.

In a nutshell, the knife repair business goes something like this: If the problem is a crack in the handle or a nick in the blade, chances are you can fix it. Broken blades, loose handles and the like will probably require professional attention.

If you have a front-line knife and give it reasonable care, odds are it will never require a structural repair. ✕



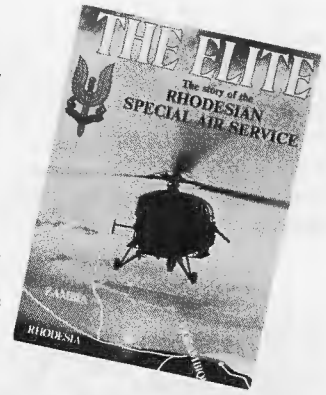
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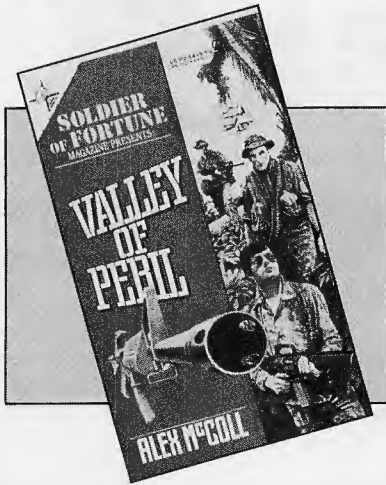
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VALLEY OF PERIL. By Alexander M.S. McColl. *Soldier of Fortune Magazine Adventure Books*, published by Tor Books, Dept. SOF, 49 W. 24th St., New York, NY 10010. 1987. Paperback. \$3.50 (plus \$1.00 postage and handling). Review by Robert K. Brown.



MOST Americans who served in Vietnam served in American units. Most press coverage of the war and most subsequent historical accounts have concentrated largely either on the highest-level strategic and political scene or on the lives and adventures of the enlisted men and women in those American units. The glamour and controversy attached to the "Green Beret" have also assured for the Special Forces and such entities as the Studies and Observations Group (SOG) a fair measure of attention.

That is far from the whole story. As in most wars, the typical participant got thoroughly acquainted with his own specific piece of the puzzle, further had a general idea of what went on in adjacent pieces and, beyond that, had to rely on the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*.

One very big piece of the war effort that hardly ever came to anyone's attention was the "Civil Operations/Revolutionary Development Support" (CORDS) effort in support of local-level Vietnamese civil administration and such commonly misunderstood organizations as the Regional Force (RF) and the Popular Force (PF).

This is where Alex McColl's *Valley of Peril* comes in. McColl's book is a series of lightly fictionalized sketches of his activities in 1967 and 1968 as a district senior adviser in a remote, insecure district/subsector in South Vietnam. The senior headquarters in the district was the 95th NVA Regiment, unfortunately, and occasionally they would make that

IN REVIEW



fact unpleasantly obvious. So McColl's book is unusual on at least two counts: It tells the story from the viewpoint of a relatively junior officer, and the story itself is one that most Americans, even those who served in the war, have never heard of. In it we read of not only the battles but also the lives and loves, the bureaucratic infighting, the wondrous workings of "informal" logistics at the tail end of the priority list, and more. Since the principal free-world unit in the area was a battalion of the ROK 26th Regiment (of the famous Tiger Division), we even get a look at how the South Koreans operated.

Valley of Peril begins with an introduction by retired U.S. Army Major General John K. Singlaub (McColl worked for the general when he was chief of SOG, but that's another story), and it ends with an informative glossary of technical terms that appear in the text.

Alex McColl is probably the only person you'll ever meet who is a graduate of Harvard Law School, the Army War College and the MAC-SOG jump school at Long Thanh. He retired as a colonel of the U.S. Army Reserve and currently serves under me as Omega Group's director of special projects and as SOF's contributing editor for military affairs.

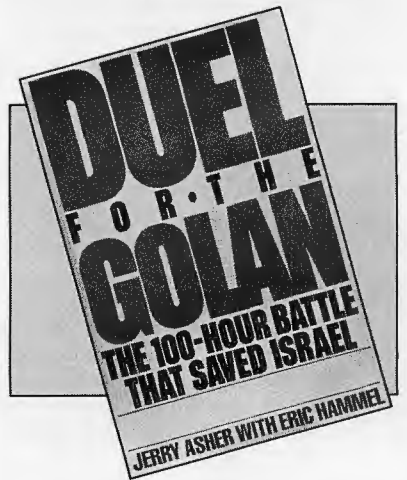
DUEL FOR THE GOLAN — The 100-Hour Battle That Saved Israel. By Jerry Asher and Eric Hammel. William Morrow & Co., Dept. SOF, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. 1987. 288 pages. Hardcover. \$17.95. Review by G.B. Crouse.

ACCOUNTS of battles hold little significance, save perhaps for the men who fought in them or the military leaders who might learn from them. All anyone really needs to know about a battle is that it occurred, who won and what impact — if any — the battle had on later events.

Yet, rare is the battle, large or small, that doesn't get an account published somewhere. The reason is clear: Battles — especially desperate, all-or-nothing battles — contain all the elements of high drama. Triumph and defeat, life and death struggle, heroics

and irony, and ordinary men at their best — and worst.

Duel for the Golan contains all of that. What's more, this account of the 1973 battle for the Golan Heights is told as well as any battle's story can be. It helps that the authors had a battle with all the needed elements built into it, but the quality of their work has more to do with how well the story is told than do the events they describe.



The authors' excellent sense of timing and drama pulls the reader along, holding his attention, almost demanding that he not put the book down until the battle is won — or lost.

Military writers and students alike can learn a great deal from Asher and Hammel's *Duel for the Golan*. Their talents at writing and their formula for presenting the story create a dramatic and compelling book on a par with Cornelius Ryan's *A Bridge Too Far* and Walter Lord's *Day of Infamy*.

THE MODERN U.S. WAR MACHINE — An Encyclopedia of American Military Equipment and Strategy. Edited by Ray Bonds. A Salamander Book published in the U.S. by Crown Publishers, Inc., Dept. SOF, 225 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10003. 1987. 240 pages. Softcover. \$14.95. Review by J.D. Mayfield.

LOOKS are deceiving in the case of *The Modern U.S. War Machine*.

This "encyclopedia" assaults the eye with an illustrated cover that makes you think the book is meant for kids. An awesome salvo of weaponry

from the arsenals of the U.S. Armed Forces blasts out of the cover, guaranteeing that the book will be an attention-grabber in shopping mall bookstores.

But, when you open this presumed book-for-kids, you discover what looks to be some fairly heavy material. You find first a foreword by retired U.S. Army General Richard G. Stilwell, a former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense; followed by four essays on U.S. military history, national security policy, defense organization and intelligence; five essays covering U.S. strategic forces and each of the four armed services; one essay on the Soviet threat; and four encyclopedia-format weapons sections covering current U.S. ground weapons, warships, combat aircraft, and rockets and missiles. The essays fill the first half of the book, and the weapons sections the rest. What's more, the contributors are heavies in the field — well-known military journalists, analysts, academics and retired officers.

Monochrome, duotone and four-color photographs, along with a good number of charts and illustrations, cover half or more of the printed space in the book. The vast majority of the photographs are virtually the latest, official DOD-issue, action shots of U.S.



combat hardware deployed around the world. But the photographs are deceiving — and there lies the problem. The dramatic photographs — which make the book so appealing during a brief bookstore browse — are more up-to-date than the text. The images are fresh, but the information already is beginning to fade with age — and this, regrettably, in a book with a 1987 copyright.

Perhaps **The Modern U.S. War Machine** will be of some use to kids after all — for cranking out term papers. Even at that, though, they'll be

better off going to the library and using the more up-to-date *Jane's*.

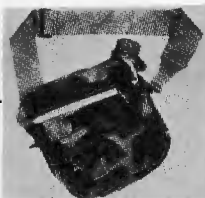
FLORIDA'S ARMY — Militia/State Troops/National Guard 1565-1985. By Robert Hawk. Pineapple Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 314, Englewood, FL 33533. 1986. 285 pages. Hardcover. \$25.00. Review by Tom Slizewski.

TALK about ambitious projects. Robert Hawk had only seven months to compile **Florida's Army**, an illustrated history of militia and guard troops in Florida. Hawk's hurried labor produced a rich result, blanketing the subject from its very origin at the time of Spain's historic settlement of St. Augustine (1565) through virtually the present (1985).

Floridians account for some of the finest chapters of American military history, fighting the French and Spanish and even the Seminole Indians on their own turf, and also the Germans, Japanese and Mexicans in America's foreign wars. Their exploits make good reading, and Hawk, a long-time Floridian who is director of the Historical

Continued on page 86

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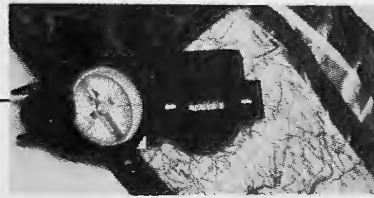


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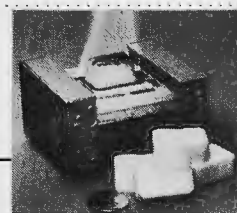
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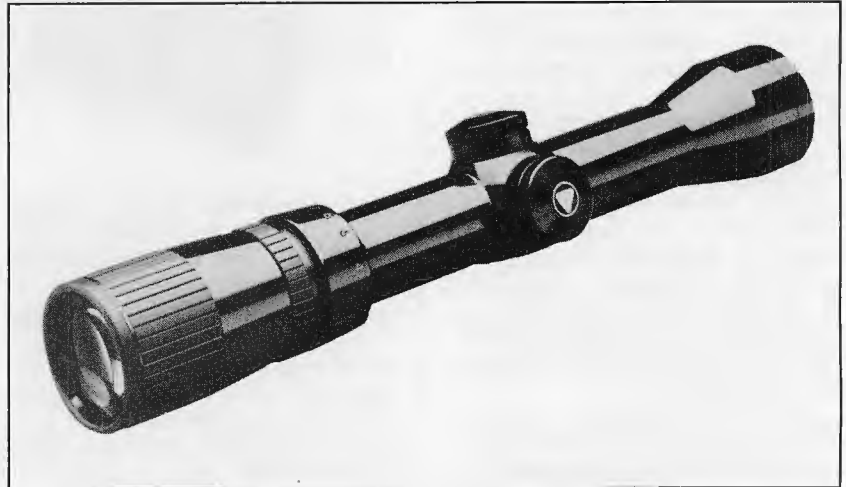
Featuring multi-coated, precision-ground and polished lenses, Balvar scopes assure maximum brightness, clarity and light-transmission characteristics, even under low-light conditions.

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ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by Tom Slizewski

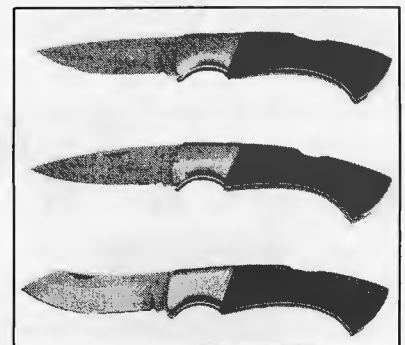


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Though not exactly hot off the production line, Assault Systems Assault Rifle Cases deserve mention because of their no-nonsense approach to gun portage. Made of waterproof treated Cordura nylon and double stitched at all seams, Assault Systems rifle cases meet military specs, have quality YKK zippers, 1-inch dense foam padding around the weapon, and are extremely lightweight. The six external pouches with Velcro closures are particularly useful for holding ammo, spare magazines and any number of other shooting accessories.

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Available in black and woodland camouflage, the cases retail for between \$67 and \$77. For a copy of its nylon gear catalog or to order, write to Comsec International, Inc., Assault Systems Division, Dept. SOF, 1075 Headquarters Park, Fenton, MO 63026-2478, or call toll-free 1-800-325-3049.



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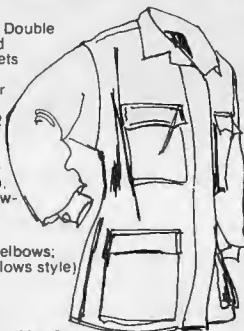
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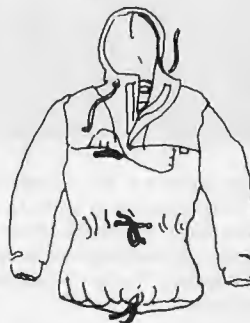
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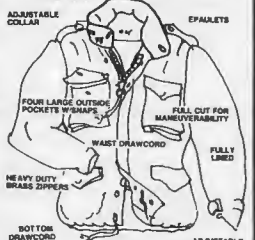
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H EAT, humidity, sand and sweat were taking their toll on C Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines in the summer of 1966. We were on one of those operations designed to show the rear-echelon brass that we had Charlie on the run. Seemingly endless days were spent prowling dry rice paddies and spending hundreds of dollars in outgoing ammo for every round a sniper pumped into us.

But as much as we hated "the 'Nam," we always looked forward to nightfall. After digging our fighting holes and sending out LPs, we'd have some C-rats and coffee. If you closed your eyes you could hear the tunes from back in the world and imagine "she" was there with you, especially after having read her letter for the fourth or fifth time.

It was on a night just like this that one of the strangest incidents of my life occurred.

After a typically mind-numbing hump through the bush, we set up for the night and began to relax — if you could call it that. We'd been sniped at throughout the day, which reminded us that, even though we couldn't see him, Charlie was still out there. After all, we were in his backyard.

Tonight there wasn't the usual tension in the air like you felt when you knew you were in for a few mortars from the local cadre. Fireside chatter dropped off as the velvet darkness slowly crept in and wrapped itself around each man, caressing him in his own private war with the night.

I felt a touch and jumped awake. Time for my watch. I got my gear and was given the SitRep. It was one of those conversations that passed on maximum information in minimum time, because time was sleep and sleep was escape, if only for a few hours.

Suddenly a shot pierced the night.

Immediately the line was at 100 percent, as every man grabbed his M16 and switched it to full auto. But nothing happened. The word passed that a VC popped out of a spider hole in front of one of 2nd Platoon's M60 positions. He inflicted a minor stab wound on the Marine at the cost of his life. The line settled down and sleep soon returned to the Marines not on watch.

About an hour passed. I felt the back of my neck start to crawl as I heard movement inside the perimeter. Pucker factor took over and I half whispered, half yelled that age-old call: "Halt! Who goes there?"

It was a cardinal sin to fire into the perimeter without a visible known target. And God help you if you were wrong. I waited for a second, put my rifle on automatic and started to raise it toward the sound. "Wells! It's me, Bertoff." The platoon commander had



I WAS THERE

by Garry Wells

Counting Coup



After killing a VC infiltrator, most of C Company went back to sleep. An hour later, however, there was more enemy movement inside the perimeter. Photo: Department of Defense

decided to check the line to see if everyone was settled in after the previous episode.

Lieutenant Bertoff approached to within 6 feet of my position. I climbed out of my foxhole and started toward him. That's when it happened. A dark figure rose from the shadows and raced toward us, brushing against me. My mind moved in slow motion as I saw him pass by and sprint out of the perimeter. He could have qualified for the Olympics.

It was Charlie, *the enemy*, and he was running for his life. I raised my rifle to get a bead on him, fired a short

burst, but knew he was gone, free and safe.

We went to look for him the next morning at first light. But nothing was there. He'd made his escape. Who knows? He might have been the one who dropped a few rounds on us over the next couple of nights.

I admired his daring, courage and skill. Dressed only in black shorts, he had low-crawled through a Marine company and the last we saw of him was elbows and heels. For a brief moment his life hung on a slender thread, but he got away to fight another day.

In his haste to escape, he ran the only possible route that provided him safety. In so doing, he had unknowingly accomplished something that many American Indian warriors took great pride in. He had counted coup. He touched the enemy in combat and lived to tell about it. ✕

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I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your age? _____
2. If you buy SOF on the newsstand, 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. SOF is interested in what its readers think about the subjects of the articles in the July 1987 issue and how well the readers feel the authors handled those subjects.

A) How interesting did you find the subject matter? Circle the number under the appropriate heading.

Title	Very Interesting	Somewhat Interesting	Not Interesting
San Diego DMZ	1	2	3
Border Legend	1	2	3
In Defense of the Realm.....	1	2	3
Cambodian Killing Ground	1	2	3
Back-Up Power — Sirkis 9mm	1	2	3
Graveyard in the Clouds.....	1	2	3
42 Commando	1	2	3
Assault Rifle Look-Alikes	1	2	3
HALO Into Honduras.....	1	2	3
"Platoon" Return Fire	1	2	3

FIRST FOLD ◀ DOWN

B) How do you rate the quality of the features (how well did the author handle his article)? Circle the number under the appropriate heading.

Title	Excellent	Good	Poor
San Diego DMZ	1	2	3
Border Legend	1	2	3
In Defense of the Realm.....	1	2	3
Cambodian Killing Ground	1	2	3
Back-Up Power — Sirkis 9mm	1	2	3
Graveyard in the Clouds.....	1	2	3
42 Commando	1	2	3
Assault Rifle Look-Alikes	1	2	3
HALO Into Honduras.....	1	2	3
"Platoon" Return Fire	1	2	3

3. A) If you were the editor of SOF, what topics would you give the most space to? List the topics from 1 to 17 (1 being the most important).

- | | |
|---|---|
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SECOND FOLD ▶ UP

B) What is your definition of Military Affairs? _____

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

4. If you were going to assign a writer to do an article on political affairs, what would you have him write about? _____

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Place an X in the space provided next to those subjects you want to read about.

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CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



7. Do you think any of the major articles in this issue are too long? _____

8. A) Was this issue Excellent ____ Average ____ or Poor ____.

B) Why? _____

9. What would you do to improve SOF? _____

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

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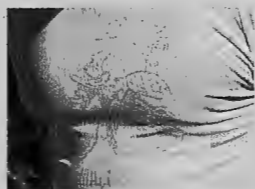


1005

BACK

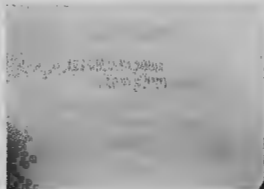
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1006

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1008

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1008

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1009



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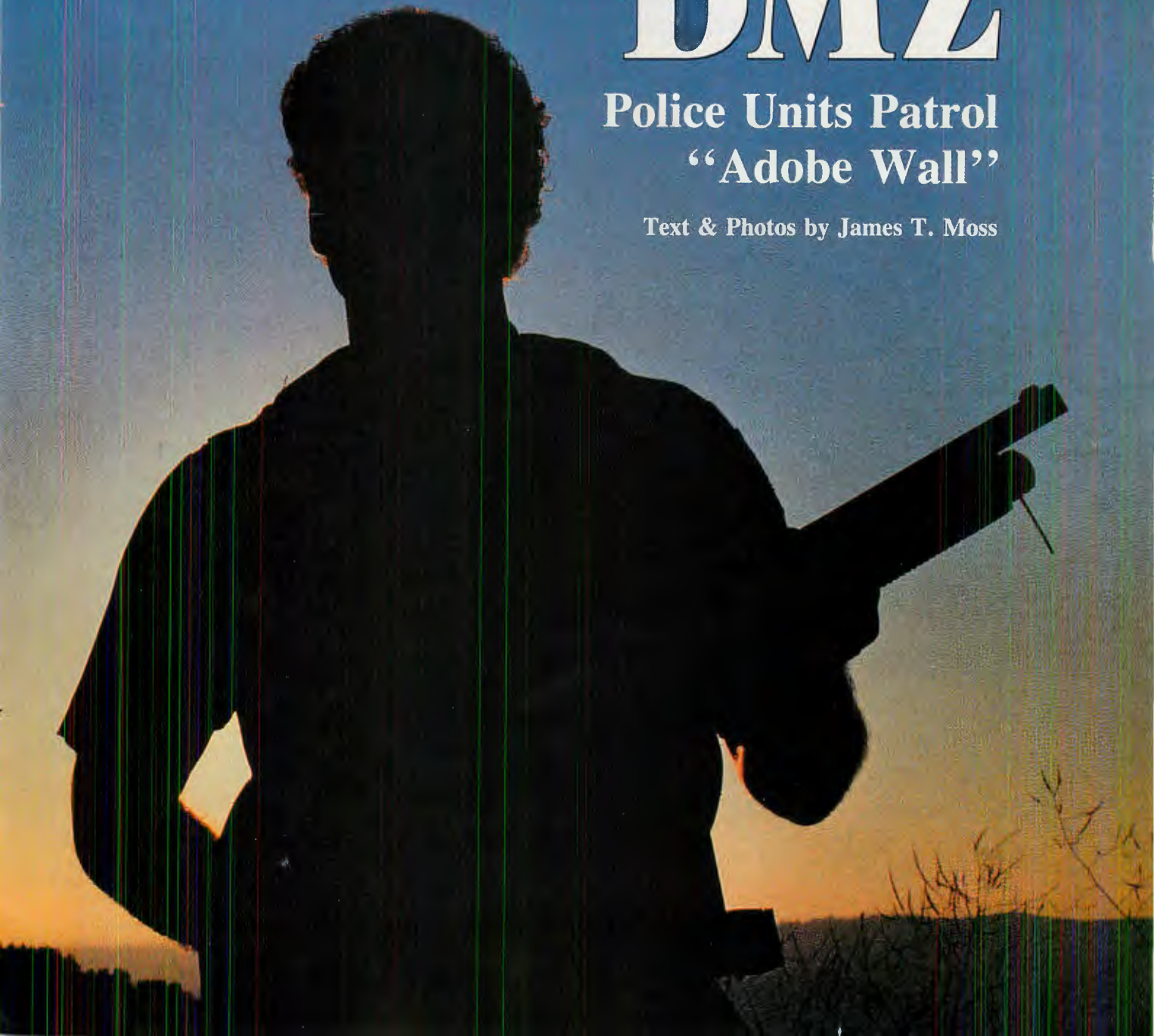
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SOF LAW ENFORCEMENT

SAN DIEGO DMZ

**Police Units Patrol
“Adobe Wall”**

Text & Photos by James T. Moss



OFFICIALLY, it was their fourth operational day as a team. Only it wasn't day. It was a warm, half-moon night as the four men and one woman crept, walked and waited for the inevitable firefight with the phantom enemy. The Border Crime Prevention Unit — the BCPU — was on patrol along the Mexican border, inside the city limits of San Diego, California.

Their night, so far, had been spent chasing ghosts along the Adobe Wall, a barren wasteland border zone buzzing with guides — *coyotes* — leading herds of illegal aliens — *pollos* (literally, "chickens") — Mexican and Latino refugees migrating to the Promised Land of the North. The bad guys — the bandits, the *baja pollos* (literally, "lowliest chickens") — were usually easy to recognize, for they almost always moved south.

At the E-1 road that night, two of the BCPU team members, their sweat moistening the grips of a short-barreled 12-gauge tactical shotgun and a 9mm semiautomatic pistol, covered two other team members walking the fence. Nothing moved. Then, out of the black rushed five bandits. The team gave chase, but the bandits slipped through the torn, twisted non-fence separating Mexico from the United States. Nothing, no action.

After almost retiring, the unit decided to hit a new area to hunt its enemy — the robbing, murdering *baja pollos*. But, if this was a hunt, who was really the prey and who the hunter? And, because *everyone* out there wasn't the enemy, the team, in an encounter, had to wait until the last second to act.

Five miles from the fence, six BCPU Alpha team members walked single file, squeezed from the sides by the bamboo-like foliage, sloshing through mud and sand over dead trees. The river bottom is a spooky, no-second-chance kind of place where bushes grab like hands.

The companion Bravo team walked parallel, across the river, looking for the same enemy. Weapons drawn, ready to react.

U.S. Border Patrol Senior Patrol Agent (SPA) Bill Tatu heard code words from the rear and, brushing long green leaves away from his face, clicked his radio four times. All six of the team peeled right to look behind and wait. Perhaps someone was there, perhaps not.

As the last man spun, his 9mm pistol met, pointblank, the face of a bandit, charging and slashing the black air with his big 10-inch Buck.

Flash, pop, pop, pop. Two bandits went down hard.

Flares from the north side of the river etched red arcs across the stars. Within minutes, Border Patrol helicopters swirled above, flooding white light and blowing

U. S. Border Patrol Senior Patrol Agent Bill Tatu stands ready for action as nightfall comes to the canyons along the San Diego border.



TOP: Already on U.S. territory, illegal aliens — *pollos* — await darkness to make their journey north.

ABOVE: United States Border Patrol Senior Patrol Agent Bill Tatu and San Diego Police Department Sergeant Hank Hiskes survey the night's area of operation.

dried river dirt over the swampy, bloody scene.

Score: Two bandits wounded, one hit four times in the face and chest; no team members shot. The bandit shot pointblank survived, the bullet having ricocheted across his cheekbone and popped out. Eleven rounds had been fired. One BCPU agent hit both assailants.

The inevitable had happened again: This was the twenty-first shooting incident since this special law enforcement detail was first activated, now more than three years ago. A continuing joint operation between the United States Border Patrol and the San Diego Police Department, the Border Crime

Prevention Unit covers perhaps the most dangerous and crazy police beat in the United States today. This DMZ-like beat, where illegal aliens tramp across the sometimes imaginary international border, known to some as the Adobe Wall, is squeezed between the affluence of "America's Finest City," San Diego, and the squalor of perhaps one of Mexico's worst, Tijuana, population one million, a sprawling cardboard and concrete metropolis.

Five nights a week, the BCPU — six Border Patrol agents and six San Diego police officers, including a senior agent and a sergeant as supervisors — walk a 20-square-mile no man's land which hugs the busiest port of entry in the world. More than 32 million people pass through the San Ysidro border crossing — legally — each year.

Just to the east of this crossing are the hills and canyons where the BCPU officers and agents spend the majority of their time. The smooth, rolling hummocks carry names that tell stories: Deadman's Point, named for obvious reasons, and Bendorf's Bush, where a patrol agent was wounded in the jaw by a bandit trying to escape. Within the rolling country, notorious areas like Redondo Beach and the Pistol Range lie near equally notorious Wruck, Spring and Dillon Canyons, which wind their way west toward the blue Pacific Ocean. Then there's the River Bottom, a swampy, jungle-like place which has long been a favorite of

LAW BRIEF

James T. Moss has worked with law enforcement officials and has written on law enforcement subjects for the past two years. "San Diego DMZ" is his first article for SOF.



knife-brandishing bandits looking for victims to rob.

The rolling mounds of earth, covered with low, stiff bushes hiding snakes and rocks, are scarred with thousands of miles of twisting footpaths. And these trails all seem to originate at a strange, semi-flat piece of terrain called the Soccer Field.

At times, nearly 800 illegal aliens gather here, selling serapes and shoes, eating *carinitas*, scoping out possible victims or simply waiting for darkness — waiting to make the mad scamper to the promise of the North. This bizarre gathering repeats daily, not in Mexico, but on U.S. soil, just 100 yards this side of the fence. And this place lies within San Diego city limits, thereby bringing *all* crimes committed here under the jurisdiction of the San Diego Police Department.

That's the paradox: Murders, robberies and rapes are being committed on U.S. soil, but they are being committed by illegal alien bandits against illegal alien victims.

In 1986, the Border Patrol apprehended more than 629,000 illegal aliens in or around this area. Border Patrol spokesman SPA Wayne Kirkpatrick estimated that, for every one caught, another one makes it north into the United States.

Why the flood? "It's the draw of the American dollar," said Kirkpatrick. And that fact isn't likely to change for a while, even with the recently enacted immigration bill signed into law late last year.

But the draw of the greenback pulls

TOP: Hole in fence at E-1, looking toward Tijuana.

ABOVE: Border Crime Prevention Unit (left to right, top row then bottom): Chuck Kabrel, Alex Ilusorio, Hank Hiskes, Bob Hines, Brian Fleming, Anne-Marie Tyler, Michael Gonzales, Pete Cruz, Larry Pierce, Bill Gallagher, Brian Poulsen, Manny Garcia. U.S. Border Patrol agents wear green uniforms; SDPD officers wear beige.

another element out of the gutter. Across the garbage-filled ravine from the Soccer Field, the slum-like Tijuana suburb of Colonia Libertad is home to many of the bandits. Some are smugglers, some are glue sniffers and still others are heroin addicts with their habits, and therefore their crimes, almost as predictable as their need for a needle in the arm. Ski masks hide their faces and overcoats cover their weapons, among them possibly Mini-14s, which is why some team members would like to see increased firepower in the BCPU. Other weapons can be knives, pistols, pipes and even sticks. Anything to intimidate, to hurt with.

Most of the bandits arrested are Mexican nationals with gang-related habits. A few are American citizens, again mostly gang types. The most famous was a guy nicknamed Rambo for his camouflage attire. He was recently wounded and arrested by the San Diego County Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail (SED), which conducts a similar operation in the county's jurisdiction.

Before the BCPU, it was nearly impossible to catch the *baja pollos*, much less stop them from their robbing and murdering of the *pollos*. And, even with the BCPU presence, the crimes continue. During 1984, 156 crimes were reported against illegal aliens. Those numbers were up 25 percent in 1985 and were on the rise again in 1986. Probably for every one crime reported, another 10 go unreported.

Since its inception in January 1984 through the time of this writing (in November 1986), the BCPU had made 165 arrests, mostly felony. Twenty-five bandits had been shot and seven had died. Three BCPU members had been wounded. More important even than its record of actions in the field — which is excellent, considering the working conditions — the presence of the BCPU has left less opportunity, less time for the crimes to occur. Just as the BCPU has to guess where the bandits might strike, now the bandits have to guess where the BCPU might patrol.

Before the BCPU, there was no one to stop the crimes. The *pollos* were easy prey for the *baja pollos* to enjoy in their brutal way. Some BCPU officers think the bandits want to show just how brutal they can be. Back in the winter of 1983, crime was up, even for this land of the lawless. Two-time BCPU member SDPD Officer Larry Gordon recalled one of the worst incidents:

"It was in the E-1 area," Gordon remembered, a small hole in the fence only hundreds of yards from the San Ysidro port of entry. "We arrived on the scene near the end of our graveyard shift, at about 0400. There were 12 victims: men, women and children," he said, deadly serious. "I couldn't believe it. The two eight-year-old boys were cut from ear to ear, across the face. The mens' throats had been slashed. As we later found out, the group had presented no threat [to the bandits]."

Intimidation, as usual. Spring and stab first, and demand later. It's the typical, brutal pattern of crime in the canyons.

The murders had been happening about every three weeks, for years, and all the crimes had been happening far too often, and far too close to the San Diego suburbs. Early in 1984, San Diego Police Chief William Kolender and Border Patrol Chief Alan Eliason consulted, and decided to put law and order back on the border.

In the late 1970s another team had existed, nicknamed BARF, for Border Alien Robber Force. Its members had dressed as decoy aliens, waiting until the bandits struck before using their pistols. The media and a national best seller, *Lines and Shadows* by Joseph Wambaugh, immortalized them, characterizing them somewhat as "gunslingers."

Today's BCPU team members said the book added too much Hollywood to the job in the hills. Said one, "He [Wambaugh] spent too much time on their lives *out* of the hills."

One major difference between the BCPU and the BARF is the duration officers are

assigned to the field. Today an officer can only volunteer for three four-month tours. In the past there wasn't a limit on the time. Is a four-month tour too short a time to learn the hills? Even among the team members, it's tough to get a definite answer.

Even more than tour duration, the tactics of today's team hardly compare to the methods of the past. The BARF team dressed as *pollos* and lured the bandits into firefights, hence the "gunslinger" image. Today, all BCPU team members wear the uniforms of their respective departments on patrol and take a different approach to action in the field.

Another night, another shift. As the light of the summer afternoon waned, SDPD Sergeant Hank Hiskes and Border Patrol SPA Bill Tatu prepared to brief the other officers and agents of the BCPU team about intelligence gathered from the *coyotes* a few days before. Thirteen days had passed since the twenty-first shooting. The team was sharp — having experienced one shooting, they now awaited the next. The firefights always seemed to come in waves.

It was a quiet, calm scene in the trailer behind the San Ysidro police substation. Hiskes' Barclay cigarettes swirled smoke around his pleasant, brief smiles. He was a best-friend kind of guy, always coaching gently, yet ready to command. Except for perhaps Tatu and SPA Fred Stevens, Hiskes knew the hills as well as anyone. He had nine years on the PD, several with SWAT, and had spent one hell of a year in 'Nam.

Half-filled Pepsi cups, hot coffee and somebody's dinner rested on the table with the ammunition, H-harnesses and radios. As the agents arrived, small talk mixed with the strapping on of body armor. Everyone knew the saying well — flak jackets are for those who would rather "sweat than bleed."

Next came the harnesses, then the radios with earphones, then the weapons of choice. Each team member carried two handguns — a 9mm semiautomatic and a .38-caliber revolver. Usually one in each team also carried the short-barreled Remington 870 12-gauge for added punch. Another also carried a bag complete with flares, flashlights, extra ammo and whatever else the team needed that night. A Charlie team of two people usually stayed with the four-wheel-drive vehicle with duplicate gear as backup.

Hiskes stood near a small chalkboard at one end of a fluorescent-lit conference room. He scribbled an A and a B, then slashed down the center. Under A, he scrawled the names of two agents and two officers assigned that night to the Alpha team. The unit was two team members short that night because of shift changes, but they had one other man along — Border Patrol Agent-in-Charge Bill Veal, commanding officer of the Border Patrol's Chula Vista station, was along to observe. He would go with the Bravo team.

The team members gestured while listening to the intelligence information about a



SDPD Officer Anne-Marie Tyler and U.S. Border Patrol Agent Larry Pierce reconnoiter possible areas of activity for the night's patrol.

211 — a robbery — involving four suspects with a rifle and handgun. "I'll be with the Alpha team, and we'll work the Spring-Dillon-Blaylocks area for the guys with the rifle," Hiskes said. "We'll insert at just above Airport Mesa to get into the Spring Canyon area. Stay loose while approaching, then we'll go in real close. The Bravo team will stay high to use the starlight scope to cover us."

The BCPU hustled into the SDPD's four-wheel-drive Ram Charger and the Border Patrol's van for the trip to Airport Mesa. It was a clear, moonless night, clear nights being worse than cloudy ones — with cloud coverage, the fluorescent orange glow of the lights of Tijuana reflect back, giving dimension to the usually flat, black landscape. On this night, Hiskes could only see the *pollos*, or perhaps the bandits, when they crested out. Otherwise, against the hills, everything was a dark void.

The Alpha team dropped off at Airport Mesa, near the Soccer Field, and took up positions just above the area where they thought the 211s had been occurring on the previous nights. Someone thought they saw three people silhouetted against the dark sky on the crest of a nearby ridge. It looked like they had something in their hands.

Hiskes spotted another group. He tried to read them through the scope, but all he could get were red blobs. Did they have weapons? He tried again to find them, but they had vanished into the dark hills. They were moving toward the team, and they weren't moving south. They were coming west, quickly.

On top of this barren knoll stood Hiskes in front, Tyler to his right, Moore to his left, with Poulsen covering the rear. They could feel the bandits.

Then, Hiskes had them. His fingers clicked his radio. Two were coming from the west, the other had split left. Somewhere, under the lip of the hill, he walked straight at Hiskes.

Hiskes' flashlight and 9mm semiauto flew up. The beam lit up the bandit — and a rifle pointed straight at the sergeant's brain.

"Take 'em down!" Hiskes yelled as he fell back, trying to escape the rifle's deadly bore. He felt a sting in his neck. He'd been hit! Muzzles flashed, pop, pop, pop, pop.

Poulsen spun to fire at the two bandits coming from the west, only feet away now. The slide of a pump-action shotgun clattered, a casing fell on the hard dirt. In a hail of fire, the two bandits fled into the black, toward the protection of the border fence and the amnesty of Mexican soil. A shotgun hit the dirt, a ski mask fluttered to the ground nearby.

Hiskes felt his body. He was whole. A hot casing from Moore's barrage had stung his neck. In all, 42 rounds had been fired.

The downed bandit, surprised by the response his intended victims had given him, lay a few feet away, wounded in the stomach, wrist and foot. Next to him rested a Ruger 10/22 rifle.

It had been a hairy one — pointblank in the darkness, waiting for the threat, with less than seconds to decide whether to pull the trigger or not. The decision had been good, and the BCPU's twenty-second shooting incident had ended well. The wounded bandit would later be convicted.

Hiskes and the others had to remember, though, that the firefights always seemed to come in waves. Another night, another shift. ❧

BORDER LEGEND



Casting a Giant Shadow on the San Diego Border.

by Isaac Staats

AS the patrol moved up the side of the canyon in the dark of night, the point man detected an ambush ahead.

When the patrol stopped, one man in the ambush element moved forward. He was obviously armed and dangerous. As the point element in the patrol moved forward to engage him, flank security moved right to check a second armed man moving toward the unit.

When the flank security man moved past a bush, looking at the second man, a third man popped up with a handgun and the darkness erupted with gunfire. The flank security man returned fire with his own handgun. The two men stood there, blasting away at each other, less than 3 feet apart, orange flashes framing them against the pitch-black night.

Other members of the patrol opened fire and, finally, one of the bullets struck the ambusher between the eyes, blowing away the back of his skull. The ambusher was dead long before his body stopped rolling down the steep side of the canyon, leaving behind a long trail of blood.

For a moment, Fred Stevens just stood

Stevens' knowledge, experience, skill and dedication contribute much to the successes of the San Diego Border Crime Prevention Units.

there. "I couldn't believe it. So many things go through your mind. . . Those firefights always start so suddenly. And then it's so quiet."

Stevens radioed, "PA down. . . I'm hit. . ."

A few months later, Stevens reflected, "I didn't want to lie down. I didn't want to die out there. I kept fighting to stay conscious. I thought about Lydia, my girls, 'Nam. . . Then the guys arrived."

COVERING THE HOME FRONT

Based in the San Diego area, Isaac Staats writes on law enforcement subjects. This article on the border action occurring virtually in his own back yard is his first for SOF. He served in Special Forces in Vietnam.

One patrol member later said, "The shock of the gunfight was nothing compared to the realization that we could lose Fred. We fumbled to move him to a comfortable position, to treat him for shock, and I felt as though my own life was draining away. Fred Stevens couldn't die. He had been through too much, come too far, lived through too many violent fights. I suddenly realized that, in my mind, I had come to count on him as being immortal. The idea that he might not be seemed as outrageous as the sun falling out of the sky."

A helicopter whisked Stevens away to a nearby hospital, where wounds in his left hip, left thigh, right thigh and left arm were treated. "There was an angel of mercy on that bird," he said. "She kept talking to me, kept me conscious on the flight to the hospital. She was great. . ."

A week later, a slug which had come to rest near his spinal column was surgically removed. His bulletproof vest had stopped two rounds, including a killer shot above his heart.

Fred Stevens spent three tours of duty in Vietnam between 1964 and 1970. But this ambush that had felled him was not sprung by the Viet Cong or by a North Vietnamese Army squad. This was not one of the many firefights in which he was engaged in Vietnam. This ground on which U.S. Border Patrol Supervisory Patrol Agent Fred Stevens spilled his blood, on 4 May 1985, was U.S. soil — the canyons of southern San Diego. The ambushers his team encountered were bandits, criminals lying in wait to prey on illegal aliens sneaking north into the United States from Mexico.

Harold W. Ezell, western regional commissioner for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, has many times described those San Diego canyons as a "war zone." People in San Diego don't realize how deadly those nearby canyons can be, how on occasion they do indeed resemble a war zone.

Ezell recalled awaiting word from the doctors in the hospital after Stevens was shot, talking with Stevens' wife, Lydia: "She told me right there that if Fred wanted to return to the canyons, she'd support him because she believed in what he was doing."

Ezell recalled her words about the bandits' intended victims, the illegal aliens her husband and his team were out in those canyons that night to protect: "This is my country," she said. "Whether they're here legally or not, they shouldn't be raped and robbed or murdered. I want my husband to protect them."

In law enforcement circles in San Diego, Stevens, 39, the father of two girls, is a legend. Fellow Border Patrol agents, San Diego police officers and San Diego County deputy sheriffs respect Stevens for his skill as a Border Patrol agent, the compassion he has for the illegal aliens, the intelligence network he has established along the border, the talent he brings to the Border Crime Prevention Units and his amicable personality.

EXPERIENCE BREEDS TACTICS

Fred Stevens has command presence. He is small yet stout, fiery yet easy-going. His Peruvian blood and his life in America suspend him between languages, much like his job with the U.S. Border Patrol stations him between two worlds. He is one of the most respected individuals who has ever served on the Border Crime Prevention Unit, and he is probably the person most responsible for its professional success.

Stevens talks with a quiet, deep voice in a rough, Latino-twanged style, giving lessons from the land and the people he understands all too well. He knows everyone: the elusive *coyotes* with the ground-level information, the hurting and humble *pollos*, the foul *baja pollos*, and most of the key BCPU team members.

Having been the senior patrol agent on the first BCPU team, Stevens knows the BCPU's tactics, from the chalkboard sketches to the live action. With more than nine years on the Border Patrol, one year spent in deep cover, and three tours in Vietnam from 1965 through 1970, he knows what it takes to be effective in the field against the shadowy bandits.

Like other Vietnam veterans on the BCPU, Stevens finds the hills of Southern California very different from the rice paddies of Southeast Asia.

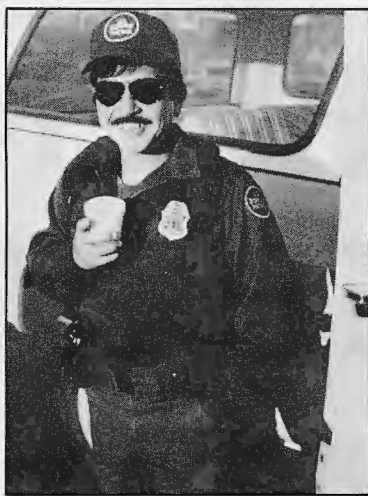
Tactics are a difference. "Number one, we are here to prevent crime," Stevens states. The BCPU must adhere to police procedures, penal codes and federal laws — which include, for example, the requirement that they identify themselves as *policia* before any action is taken.

"If I was in the military," Stevens says, "and I suspected an enemy to be in that bush over there, I could recon by fire. You can't do it out here where thousands of innocent people are walking around in the dark."

Stevens recalls some of the problems he encountered in the field with the first BCPU team he worked with: "Once we started takin' a walk, we discovered a few things. One, the Border Patrol men had a bad habit of chasing people," he laughs, "regardless of who the person was. . . . And the police officers had this other bad habit, that the first thing they saw or didn't like, on goes the flashlight. Bink."

For that first year and a half, Stevens worked the hills, listening for whispered secrets from the *coyotes* and the *pollos*, rolling in the mud and dirt in the shadow of the Adobe Wall with the *baja pollos*, and learning hard-as-lead lessons in three firefights.

Throughout that time, tactics were molded with Stevens' eyes, hands and mind. With the assistance of others, he



Stevens' easygoing personality underlies the respect he receives both from fellow law enforcement officers and the illegal aliens he is assigned to police and protect.

combined the strategic planning of SWAT, the aggressive movements of the military, the consideration of innocent people's lives and the needs of the unit, creating out of the mixture most of the principles the BCPU uses in the field today.

The San Diego County Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail (SED), with which Stevens currently works, conducts the same operation as the BCPU along a river bottom within the county's jurisdiction, less than five miles from the border. There is a lot of alien traffic through the mucky ravine, and where there are aliens, there are bandits. "They have the advantage," Stevens says. "They get to make the first move."

Using Stevens' tactics one night, the SED successfully ambushed an ambush. Knowing about where the bandits usually struck because of their ever-present need for drug money, Stevens had three team members walking single file down a narrow trail. As muzzle flashes lit up the night in a crossfire, the lead men covered themselves while eight officers split and swept in for the arrest. The bandits had ended up shooting more at themselves than at the team.

Stevens' fortitude, his hard knowledge of the hills and his concern for the innocents have helped the BCPU become what it is today. And it looks like he will have a job to do for a while. Few think the new immigration law will influence the traffic at the border. Even if it does, it won't cut back the number of *baja pollos* lurking in the dark land, ready to prey on their easy victims, the *pollos*.

The BCPU and the SED will continue their dangerous duty.

— James T. Moss

And Stevens is unique for another reason: He was born in Peru, immigrated to America legally, and in his teens became a U.S. citizen.

"My family and I appreciate what this country is and what it has to offer perhaps more than most Americans born here," Stevens said. "A lot of Americans take their inalienable rights for granted. I don't."

The night he was shot, Stevens was on patrol with one of two Border Crime Prevention Units which attempt to protect the thousands of illegal aliens entering the United States in the San Diego area. One unit is composed of Border Patrol agents and San Diego Police Department volunteers. The first unit started patrolling the canyons in 1984. In 1985, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department joined forces with the Border Patrol and formed a second Border Crime Prevention Unit, which patrols farther east from the San Ysidro Port of Entry.

Stevens was one of the Border Crime Prevention Unit pioneers.

"It's the most dangerous job in the Border Patrol, but it's also the most important, in my opinion, because we are out there protecting those who can't protect themselves," he said.

Four months after he was shot, Stevens cut short his time off by two days to help the second Border Crime Prevention Unit go operational. Although he didn't go out on actual foot patrol that night, he briefed the teams before they deployed into the canyons, sharing intelligence he had developed regarding bandit activity in the area. Included in his report were rumors that some of the bandits had begun carrying rifles and possibly automatic weapons. Later he helped direct the patrols from the observation truck, which was equipped with night-vision equipment.

"These bandits represent the darkest side of mankind — raping, robbing and shooting unarmed, passive people; people who are simply trying to improve their station in life," Stevens said. "The bandits are spineless cowards."

One of the areas Stevens frequents is the filthy, rock-strewn gathering place for illegal aliens known as the "Soccer Field" — a piece of U.S. soil located in San Diego just across the border from the Tijuana community of Colonia Libertad. On any given day, Stevens can be found mingling among the illegal aliens who are there waiting for night to fall before beginning their northward trek. He circulates, seeking to get the latest word on the bandits and on where they last attacked.

"I never have any problems down there," Stevens said of his forays to the Soccer Field. "They know I'm there to help protect the people. They trust me."

One evening, shortly before launching a mission into the deadly Otay River Bottom area, Stevens was standing on top of a mesa, just north of the border, overlooking Tijuana. The panorama was stunning. The sun

Continued on page 82

IN DEFENSE OF THE REALM



Britain's Gurkhas Soldier On

by Tom Marks

LEFT: Smiling in the face of adversity, a Gurkha trademark. Photo: Robin Adshead

BELOW: A Gurkha "brick" in position overlooking likely avenues of approach for illegal immigrants near Sha Tau Kok, Hong Kong. Photo: Robin Adshead



RIFLEMAN Biplop Rupacha peers into the blackness of a Hong Kong winter's night. In his night vision device, the hilly sector of the border with China appears a plasma-like neon green — broken undergrowth and distant twinkles of light but no human forms. He sits back. "No I.I. (illegal immigrants). Too difficult now. Too cold."

He smiles, that smile so unique to Gurkhas, a cross between a shy and yet mischievous grin. In his twenties and already a veteran of six years with the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, or 10 GR for short, Biplop enlisted because his father had

done so before him. Though the elder Rupacha had been one of the elite few, a Queen's Gurkha Officer, World War II had left its mark. He urged his son to choose another calling. Not to be put off his own chance to serve the Crown, Biplop signed up anyhow and became, on the British Army rolls, 4675.

Once paired off, the number and Biplop were inseparable. In a procedure which at times borders on low comedy, both officers and men can be heard referring to Gurkha servicemen by their serial numbers, as though the hardy tribesmen from the hills of Nepal have somehow dis-

appeared into a British Foreign Legion. Earlier in the evening, for instance, 4675 had introduced me to his partner in the observation post, 1406, whom he continued to address in that manner throughout the evening. Like many other things in their surroundings, the numbers were something of a mystery to the two troops. But there wasn't really much point in speculation. It simply was the way things were.

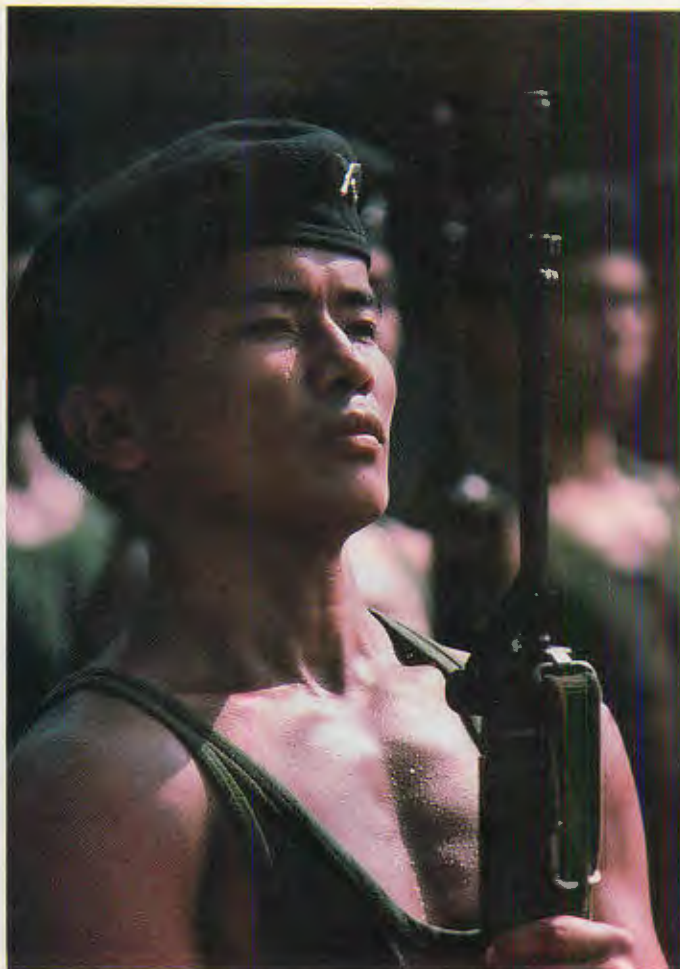
That is the Gurkha outlook in a nutshell. Do what has to be done — do it well and leave philosophizing to others who have idle time on their hands. Such fellows cer-

RIGHT: Decorated Queen's Gurkha Officer looks on as his men are inspected. QGOs rise through the ranks and provide the backbone of the British Gurkha system. Photo: Tom Marks



FAR RIGHT: Gurkha recruit. Photo: Robin Adshead

BELOW: Gurkhas boarding a Royal Air Force Wessex helicopter. Photo: Robin Adshead



tainly aren't in a Gurkha regiment. There, the business at hand is soldiering, pure and simple. "Duty," Gurkhas invariably reply when asked why they do something. Always duty. They say it with a reverence long since lost in most of the West, their words rich with the respect that filled my own father's admonitions that any job worth doing is worth doing well.

The job at hand this night is to watch the border for illegal immigrants, a boring, tiring task which occupies each company of the regiment for a month or two each year when it is in Hong Kong. The two Gurkhas, in position astride a good avenue of approach from the Chinese border, are half

of a four-man observation team, or "brick," from D Company (D Coy). The term brick came into general use in the urban environment of Northern Ireland. Here, it is a bit incongruous amidst the hilly, broken terrain of the Sha Tau Kok area.

The other two brick members are alert on the crest of the rocky hill. Such teams dot the border, where they pull shifts of 12 or 24 hours. Mercifully, ours is but 12 hours. This may be the Orient, but the December night is so cold that three layers of coats and a sleeping bag do nothing to still my shivering. For my brick partners it might as well be just another summer's night in the Himalayas. They take turns on watch and sleep soundly while my teeth chatter.

Cold has begun to slow the steady stream of I.I. who seek a better life in Hong Kong. Only 100 individuals were nabbed in November, down from a high of 192 in September and 134 in October. Most attempted crossings at this time of year are overland, for efforts to swim are virtually doomed by, as one Gurkha officer put it, the "bloody cold" temperatures. Still, some try, and a special Gurkha Boat Company, assisted by a unit of the Special Boat Squadron on temporary assignment, patrol favored water routes. On land approaches the Gurkhas are assisted by regular police and dog patrols. Those apprehended are handed

over to the police.

Gurkhas along the frontier do not carry firearms. Instead, they are issued riot clubs. Such armament is not as meager as it might seem. Hanging on his belt, each man has the famed *kukri*, the curved blade which is synonymous with the term Gurkha. While violence is unusual during apprehensions, it does occur. In August 1986 a rifleman was electrocuted when he was knocked into an electrified fence during a scuffle with his quarry.

Tonight, however, is unbroken darkness and silence. I sit and talk softly with 1406, who in reality is Corporal Gum Sher Rai, age 31, father of three children. His family is waiting at Burma Lines, the camp which is 10 GR's home for this rotation. A Gurkha's family can spend only three years of his 15-year enlistment with him. For the remainder, they must stay in Nepal, where Gum Sher visits them every three years on the six-month home leave extended to all Gurkhas at this interval. To make up for the absent personnel, 10 GR, like all Gurkha units, is about a third larger than other infantry battalions in the British Army.

Like his friend Biplop, Gum Sher's Gurkha service is something of a family tradition. His father was an "Indian Gurkha"; that is, a Gurkha in one of the estimated-to-be 40-plus Gurkha battalions in the Indian

AT HOME WITH THE GURKHAS

Tom Marks covered the Gurkhas in his usual way — by following them into the field. His previous forays into the bush have resulted in two articles from the Philippines, "Island Fighting" (SOF, July 1986) and "Cease-Fire Maneuvers" (SOF, May 1987), as well as an up-close look at another Asian war in "Counter-Insurgency in Sri Lanka" (SOF, February 1987).

RIGHT: The world's best infantrymen in the making. Recruit squad at the Brigade of Gurkhas training depot, Hong Kong. Photo: Robin Adshead



CENTER: Recruit field training, Hong Kong. Photo: Robin Adshead

BELOW: Gurkha recruit practicing vehicle anti-ambush drills. Photo: Robin Adshead



Army. As the hours pass, we talk about 10 GR and the life of the Gurkha soldier. English is now the working language for all units — Gurkhali (the British Army term for Nepalese) was still used when last I spent time with a Gurkha unit — so we experience no communications gaps. I am particularly interested in whether Gum Sher had been tempted to follow in his father's regimental footsteps, to join the Indian Gurkhas. He thought about it, he says, but becoming a British Gurkha was the pinnacle as far as a Gurkha was concerned. Why strive for anything less?

Tradition aside, the lure of Gurkha life, as far as Gum Sher is concerned, lies in the chance to travel. Nine out of ten Gurkhas will say the same. And travel Gum Sher has, serving in, among others, Hong Kong, Belize, Brunei, Fiji and the United Kingdom. He is particularly eager to see Hawaii, where D Company will deploy in mid-1987 for a two-month exchange with the 25th Infantry Division of Schofield Barracks, a unit with which I once served.

As first light breaks and we move gingerly down to a pickup point, we agree to meet again in Hawaii.

A Memorable Year

For most Gurkha soldiers, Hawaii conjures up visions of paradise and a chance to see yet another foreign land. But for many, especially the officer corps, the islands

evoke bad memories best forgotten, memories of an event that shook the institution which is the Gurkhas to its very core. For in Hawaii the unthinkable happened — discipline broke down. During an exchange visit in May 1986, a few disgruntled members of Support Company, 1st Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles (1/7 GR), attacked their company commander, a British major, and a Queen's Gurkha Officer who came to his assistance. Both officers suffered broken ribs. When the troops closed ranks and refused to cooperate with the subsequent official inquiry aimed at identifying the culprits, virtually the entire company was dismissed and sent home to Nepal.

The shock waves which reverberated from Honolulu to Hong Kong to London were predictable. Gurkhas attacking their officers? The thought was unthinkable. Altogether, 123 Gurkhas departed (some accounts say 111). They were not given dishonorable discharges; their services were simply terminated. Thirty-six reportedly exercised their rights of appeal (12 to date have apparently been reinstated). For the remainder, many of them combat veterans of the Falklands campaign, their boyhood dreams had ended.

Even as the news broke in early August, five Gurkhas of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles (2/2 GR), returning to Britain from leave in Nepal, were apprehended

attempting to smuggle into the country marijuana and heroin valued at \$350,000. Shortly afterward, at Reading Crown Court, they were sentenced to terms of one to six years imprisonment.

When it rains it pours. At almost the very moment the 1/7 Gurkhas were having their problems in Hawaii during May 1986, violence erupted in the normally placid hill country of the Darjeeling District in northern India. There, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), led by a former Indian Gurkha corporal, Subash Ghising, was demanding establishment of a separate Gurkha state within the Indian union. Many of its members were unemployed former Indian Gurkha servicemen — at least 40,000 of whom are reported to live in the district. GNLF violence led to nearly a dozen deaths and the evacuation of 3,000 tourists from Darjeeling. Indian troops were deployed to control the separatists.

Such a coincidence of events — assault, drugs, rebellion — was too good to be passed up. The press had a field day. "Fading Legend" blared one headline; "Troubled Times for a Legend" said another. Despite the unrelated nature of the events, they all had Gurkhas in common. The vultures began to circle. The Hawaii incident naturally took precedence, it being human drama fairly easy to cover, but everything from Gurkha pay to the state of Gurkhali



LEFT: Shot out. Gurkha mortarman crouching by his 81mm mortar during live firing exercises on Hong Kong. Photo: Robin Adshead

BELOW: Taking their turn at ceremonial duties, Gurkhas of the 7th Gurkha Rifles mount the guard at Buckingham Palace with Grenadier Guardsmen. Photo: Robin Adshead

proficiency among British Gurkha officers became fair game. The discussion eventually expanded to include speculation on the very future of the Gurkha units in the British Army.

Predictably, as is their trademark in trying times, the Gurkhas soldiered on. Faced, for really the first time, with negative comment — the Argentines had tried unsuccessfully to foment global censure of the British use of Gurkhas (the 1/7 GR) during the Falklands campaign — the units went about their business. Naturally, troops with whom I talked said, they felt deeply what had happened, but duty was paramount. Nothing would be allowed to detract from that.

How, then, had the incident with Support Company 1/7 GR happened? What concept of duty had prevailed there? The heart of the answer lies not in the tawdry specifics of the attack but rather in the context. And the context tells a great deal about the Gurkhas.

As the saying goes, there are no bad soldiers, only bad officers. Given proper leadership, even the worst of men can be made to soldier properly. Take outstanding human material, lead them well, and you have, well, the Gurkhas. Each year a single "intake" of Gurkhas is recruited in the central mountain areas of Nepal. Flown to Hong Kong for 41 weeks of basic training, these fortunate few, normally fewer than

500 per annum selected from thousands of applicants, swear their oath of allegiance in individual regimental ceremonies conducted as the calendar year ends.

The text of that oath is illuminating (see the accompanying "A Gurkha Soldier's Oath"). A new Gurkha swears allegiance to his regiment, to his officers and superiors, and to his comrades. It was the conflict between the second and third of these loyalties that ultimately caused the departure of the errant 1/7 GR company. For, as the oath concludes, "If I should fail to honour my vows may God destroy me."

Officers interviewed in December sadly noted that "the lads" had been well aware of the consequences of refusing to cooperate with the official investigation. They had been informed repeatedly that a breach such as had occurred could not be allowed to exist. Still, they remained true to their pledge to "honestly and faithfully defend [their] comrades" and to "commit no act which may cause them harm." What made the punishment which followed all the more heartbreaking was that the officer involved, Major Corin Pearce, was not a Gurkha Officer, but was rather on a three-year secondment from a regular British unit and only months away from rotating back to his parent outfit.

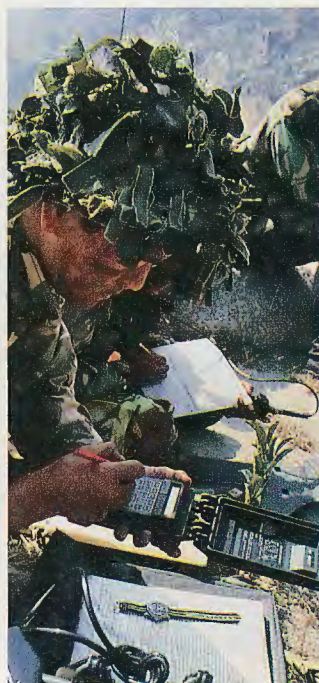
It is necessary to explain that four types of officers are present in any Gurkha unit. The



backbone is provided by Queen's Gurkha Officers (QGOs), Gurkhas who have risen through the ranks and who comprise most of the officers in the battalion. They are normally platoon leaders and company second-in-commands (2IC). It is their experience that makes for the exceptional proficiency displayed by Gurkha units. Serving over them in the key positions of command are British Gurkha Officers, regular British officers who make the Gurkhas their regimental home. At any one time there will normally be a few platoons commanded by new British second lieutenants (2LT) learning the ropes, together with various captains



FAR LEFT: Gurkha mortarman, Hong Kong. Photo: Robin Adshead



LEFT: Gurkha determines deflection and elevation for mortars using a fire control data computer. Photo: Robin Adshead

BELOW: Gurkha trains with the Bren Gun in the jungles of Brunei. Photo: Robin Adshead

and majors commanding the companies and filling the staff positions. Battalion commanders are lieutenant colonels.

Additionally, there are a small number of Gurkhas who hold regular British Army commissions and thus may perform all the duties of British Gurkha Officers (or even transfer to other regiments). Queen's Gurkha Officers serve only with Gurkha troops. British Gurkha Officers, however, regularly perform career broadening tours away from their regiment. This creates temporary gaps which must be filled by the fourth category of officer, British officers on secondment from the army at large, a loan of sorts to tide the unit over until its British Gurkha Officers return.

Secondment works to the benefit of all concerned. It allows the regiment to send its officers away for experiences they could not gain within the regiment. My host at D Company, Major Mike Trueman, for instance, had only recently returned from a tour as a helicopter pilot with British forces in Germany. Other officers may gain combat experience in Northern Ireland, where Gurkha units are not allowed to serve for reasons of political sensitivity. Simultaneously, the seconded officer gets the chance to serve with the Gurkhas and experience the legend firsthand. These personnel, of course, bring their own experi-

ences and expertise.

It is easy to see, however, that there might also be problems with secondment, not the least of which is language. Though all Gurkhas now learn English, it is also true that British Gurkha Officers are required to pass a proficiency examination in Gurkhali within their first 12-18 months of service. The language is widely used in communicating with the troops, who also use it with each other. Seconded officers may or may not prove capable of mastering the tongue in the short time they are with a Gurkha unit. Similarly, a regular British Gurkha Officer who, for whatever reason, does not hit it off with Gurkhas quickly transfers elsewhere.

Secondment is by its very nature basically an extended orientation tour in which the borrowed officer's technical skills take precedence over his personality. Considering the laws of probability, it seems almost inevitable that eventually an individual personality from outside might not mesh completely with the Gurkha way of doing things. According to best evidence, this is what happened in the Support Company 1/7 GR case.

Gurkhas are renowned for the bonds they maintain with their officers. Says a 1982 publication, "Every Gurkha knows that whatever his officer — Gurkha or British — decides and orders must be best for the unit



and himself. No Gurkha would ever doubt an officer's order." For whatever the reason, this did not prove to be the case for Major Pearce and the QGO who rushed to his defense; as fate would have it, it was Captain (QGO) Chandra Kumar Pradhan, the only QGO to be "Mentioned in Dispatches" during the Falklands campaign. In the incident's aftermath, numerous grievances surfaced ranging from dissatisfaction with low pay to the poor quality of rice received while training in Hawaii to allegedly insulting remarks about Gurkhas and Nepal made by Major Pearce. None of

these complaints were serious enough to prompt an assault on an officer.

Of greater consequence, as my own discussions with various Gurkha soldiers and their officers seemed to reveal, was that the bonds of trust between the outsider, Major Pearce, and his unit failed to jell. It was pointless to point the finger and search for individual fault. The end would have been the same — small grievances, present in any unit, became larger than themselves and led to an explosion. Not only individuals but the Gurkha legend suffered the consequences.

Remnant of Empire?

What is remarkable about much of the media commentary that emerged as details of the Hawaii incident were discussed is the notion, either stated explicitly or implied, that the Gurkhas are an anachronism whose time has passed. The most negative line holds that allowing Gurkhas to serve in the British Army is an insult to Nepal's independence. A more general view seems to be that they are quaint little men who spend their time guarding the Hong Kong border. And with Hong Kong itself scheduled to be given back to China in 1997, continues the argument, what possible role can there be for Nepalese highlanders in Britain's service?

Though these approaches do have some factual basis, they are wide of the mark. The Gurkhas are rich in heritage and tradition but hardly a remnant of empire reduced to police duties linked only to a British presence in Hong Kong. As for the purported insult to Nepal of having its men serve. . . . That seems best left to the individuals concerned, not armchair political philosophers.

Gurkha service in the British Army did originate in the colonial past. Impressed by the qualities of the Gurkhas during their campaigns against them between 1814 and 1816, the British raised four battalions as part of the Honourable East India Company armed forces. From that time the Gurkhas continued in service, proving especially

A GURKHA SOLDIER'S OATH

In the presence of Sri Sri Pashupati Nath of Nepal, having touched my Regimental Flag, the Mahabir Swami Flag, the Battle Honours and Drums promise that:

"I.....swear that wherever I go or whatever I do, in peace or in war, I will to the best of my ability always guard the honour and good name of my Regiment.

"I also swear that I will, as a duty bound, faithfully obey all orders given to me by my officers and seniors.

"I also swear that I will honestly and faithfully defend my comrades and will commit no act which may cause them harm.

"If I should fail to honour my vows may God destroy me."



LEFT: Gurkhas seem to feel at home in any environment, from their native hill country of Nepal to the jungles of Malaya. Photo: Robin Adshead

loyal during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. In World War II Gurkha strength rose to a substantial 40 battalions, not including eight battalions in the Nepalese Army and other parachute, training, garrison and porter units. Casualties in the world wars exceeded 43,000.

Indian independence and the subsequent violence of partition proved a traumatic time. The ten Gurkha regiments of the British Indian Army were divided. Four regiments, each with two battalions, were transferred to the British Army, while the remaining six regiments went to the newly formed Indian Army. With force reduction over the years, the British Brigade of Gurkhas was whittled back to some 8,000 soldiers. The principal combat strength in 1987 lay in five infantry battalions representing the four regiments: 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (1st and 2nd Battalions), 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles (one battalion), 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles (one battalion) and 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles (one battalion). Providing support were The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, Queen's Gurkha Signals, Gurkha Transport Regiment and various depots and smaller contingents.

In contrast to reductions in the British Brigade of Gurkhas, Gurkha units in the Indian Army have continued to flourish. Due to their habitual state of tension with Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, China, the Indians are quite secretive about their order of battle. Sources differ, yet it seems clear that the six Gurkha regiments presently support a strength of more than 40 line battalions, or nearly 50,000 men. These maintain much the same traditions that they did under the British, and they have seen action in all of India's post-independence conflicts as

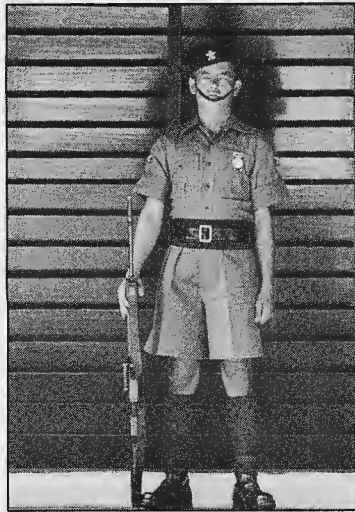
well as in various police actions such as United Nations duty in the Congo.

Gurkhas are also prominent in the Nepalese armed forces and have deployed to the Middle East as part of United Nations contingents. The precise ethnic breakdown of Nepalese forces, however, is vague. Here a distinction must be made. All Gurkhas are Nepalese, but all Nepalese are not Gurkhas. The British recruit from the Nepalese clans, or *jats*, which historically have been designated as "martial tribes." Technically, a Gurkha was one who served in the army of Prithwi Narayan, King of Gorkha (in central Nepal), a monarch who succeeded in conquering all of Nepal. In reality the term has expanded to include any of the highlanders who are selected for enlistment in the British Army. Each battalion, though, draws its recruits from a particular geographic area and certain *jats*. For example, 10 GR enlists its Gurkhas from the two large clans of Eastern Nepal, the Rais and the Limbus.

"British Gurkhas Nepal," the British force in Nepal, maintains two principal recruiting centers to screen applicants, estimated at more than 80,000 each year, and to process through the selected recruits. These centers, located at Pokhara in central Nepal and Dharan in the east, were established when Gurkha recruiting facilities in India were finally vacated in 1958. Besides recruiting, they serve to dispense Gurkha pensions. A transit camp in the Nepalese capital of Katmandu prepares the enlistees for transport to Hong Kong.

Indian recruiting practices, like the particulars of the Indian Gurkhas themselves, are vague, but are centered in the border areas. Since citizens of Nepal and India may pass freely between the two countries, Gurkhas who desire to join the Indian Gurkha

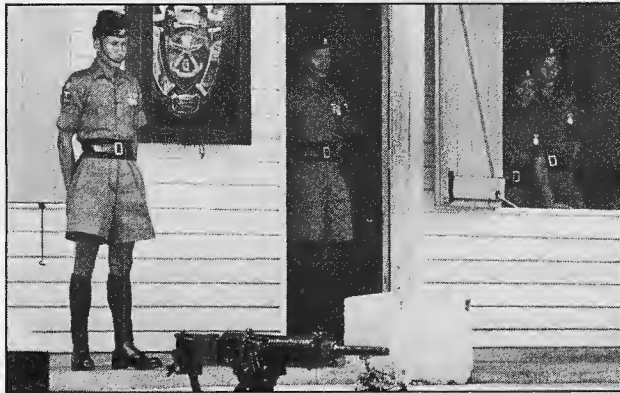
RIGHT: Soldier of the 6th QEO Gurkha Rifles on guard duty. Photo: Robin Adshead



FAR RIGHT: Gurkhas taking a break from patrolling in Malaysia. Photo: Robin Adshead



BELOW: Standing watch at the Regimental Quarter Guard of the 6th QEO Gurkha Rifles. Photo: Robin Adshead



regiments simply cross over to a depot and enlist. India also recruits from its own large resident Nepalese population. Interestingly, one of the complaints of the Gorkha National Liberation Front has been that India does not, in its distribution of post-service benefits, adequately distinguish between Gurkhas of Nepalese and Indian citizenship. In other words, what is sufficient and appropriate for a hillsman from a relatively undeveloped country such as Nepal may not be what is needed for Gurkhas resident in India.

Besides the British, Indian and Nepalese armies, Gurkhas serve in two other forces which are much less publicized. The Sultan of Brunei maintains a Gurkha Reserve Battalion comprising Gurkhas who have left British service. Brunei, where the British maintain a jungle warfare center, is, in fact, a posting for a regular Gurkha battalion charged with various aspects of internal and external security. The Gurkha Reserve Battalion, in contrast, is reported to function as the "palace guard," the final line of defense for the Sultan himself. Officered by ex-British Gurkha Officers, members of the battalion are signed on for three-year periods at good pay rates. According to Gurkhas with whom I discussed the subject, a prospective recruit must be recommended based on his British Gurkha service.

In contrast, the second of the lesser-known forces, that of Singapore, is actually recruited by the British directly through their infrastructure in Nepal. Constituted as Gurkha Contingent Singapore Police Force, the unit is essentially an understrength battalion that serves as the "final sanction" guard force. Its headquarters and four guard companies are officered by Gurkhas, but the commander and 2IC are British. In 1985 plans were announced for the expansion of the companies, bringing the contingent closer to full battalion strength.

These forces are of considerable importance economically to Nepal. Officially, the country's leading sources of foreign exchange are jute, tourism and garments. Unofficially, though, the pay given to British Gurkhas alone must stand among these three. Even the roughest of calculations arrives at a payroll in excess of \$20 million. Furthermore, pensions paid to former British Gurkhas, 1985 figures show, come themselves to nearly \$10 million. By way of contrast, the most recent inflow from tourism was just under \$26 million annually. Thus, if revenues realized from the British Gurkhas are combined with what is earned in other formations, notably the Indian Gurkha regiments, soldiering surely ranks as Nepal's premier hard cash earner.

Is this an insult to the country? Some in

Nepal think so. In the May 1986 elections to Nepal's partyless *Panchayat*, or parliament, a number of radicals were seated who have since made an issue of Gurkha service in foreign armies. They have called for an end to the practice. For the moment, however, the forces of tradition and fiscal prudence continue to hold sway. It seems unlikely that in the near future Nepal itself will seek to terminate the tripartite agreement under which Britain and India are allowed to recruit Gurkhas.

For their part, the British have also affirmed that they desire a future Gurkha role in their military. A January visit to Nepal by John Stanley, the British secretary of state for armed forces, revealed that, while the number of Gurkhas would decline still further following the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese control, probably to about 5,000, the remaining battalions would be posted to Britain and elsewhere.

This is not as difficult as it might seem. Far from sitting on the Hong Kong-China border, as many sources seem to envisage, most Gurkhas spend their time engaging in training which could be relocated. A battalion does an assignment rotation which at present consists of four years in Hong Kong, two years in Brunei, two years back in Hong Kong and finally two years in Britain. Though formally stationed in these



locations, smaller units — or even the whole battalion — will deploy elsewhere.

To cite a common illustration, the British tour normally includes duty in Belize (Central America), the Falklands, or Germany. Likewise, units posted elsewhere will at any point in time have individual companies in spots such as Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Malaysia and Brunei. In March and April 1985, 10 GR itself arrived back in Hong Kong from Britain. But during the two years in the home isles, Corporal Gum Sher estimated that he was elsewhere nearly half the time, due to manning requirements which took him to Hong Kong for duty at the training depot (as well as military schooling there), to recruiting duty in Nepal, and to Belize.

To be sure, tours in Hong Kong provide excellent training. In contrast to the skyscrapers and bustle of Central, Wanchai and Kowloon, much of the territory is undeveloped and therefore offers good areas for many types of military exercises. 10 GR's schedule following its return to Hong Kong gives a glimpse of a more or less typical Gurkha training year.

Following block leave (a procedure that minimizes disruptions of training) in early January and battalion field training throughout February, the unit began to arrive at Burma Lines in the New Territories, Hong

Kong, in March. The main body arrived in late April. May and most of June were spent settling into the new quarters and preparing for internal security training and duties. June culminated with a battalion internal security exercise. In July, while serving as the frontier reserve for 2/7 GR, 10 GR continued internal security training, especially familiarization of personnel with use of the *Saracen* armored personnel carrier. The internal security training itself culminated in the August exercise Concrete Crisis, performed at the Close Quarter Battle Range (CQBR), touted as the most modern and sophisticated weapons range in the world. Half the battalion then took block leave. At the end of the month, border duty commenced, lasting until early October, when

the other half of the battalion took block leave before the onset of platoon testing. November saw battalion field firing and the Skill at Arms Meeting. The year finished in December with administration, parades, the induction of new recruits and other matters.

Other battalions were going through similar schedules. Even while on border duty, each company actually spends only a month (in some cases two) patrolling the frontier. For the rest of the frontier tour it is in reserve and carries on its normal training routine. In addition to internal security instruction, units regularly go through the Adventure Training Centre on the island of Ping Chau and conduct limited war training.

Continued on page 83

GURKHAS IN PRINT

• **IN GURKHA COMPANY.** By Lieutenant Colonel J.P. Cross. Arms and Armour Press, 2-6 Hampstead High Street, London NW3 1QQ, England. Distributed in the United States by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10061. 1986.

John Cross has used his 30 years of experience leading Gurkha troops to produce an in-depth and perceptive account of the British Army Gurkhas from 1948 to the present. In addition to covering the campaigns in which Gurkhas participated — Malaya, Borneo, Cyprus and the South Atlantic — the book looks at the difficulties of partition, recruiting, the battle against illegal immigrants in Hong Kong and life in a Gurkha regiment. **In Gurkha Company** is by far the best work on the Gurkhas in recent years.

• **BUGLES AND A TIGER.** By John Masters. Michael Joseph Ltd., 27 Wrights Lane, Kensington, London W8. 1986.

The Classic Collection reprint of Masters' original 1956 publication, this book is, so states the author, "a personal adventure." The first volume of a trilogy; it tells of his pre-World War II Indian years as an officer of the 2nd Battalion 4th Prince of Wales' Own Gurkha Rifles, one of the regiments ultimately integrated into the Indian Army. Good reading from either the adventure or military standpoint, it is particularly valuable for the clarity with which it explains both the Gurkha and British regimental systems. The book is apparently the original source for many of the most often repeated tales of Gurkha prowess.

• **GURKHAS.** By Sandro Tucci. Hamish Hamilton Ltd., Garden House, 57-59 Long Acre, London WC2E 9JZ. 1985.

Tucci is known for his superb photography and willingness to go where the action is to capture events. The result in

this case is one of the most superb pictorial books on the Gurkhas ever to appear. Printed in coffee-table format, it follows the British Gurkhas from their recruitment in Nepal through basic training and integration into the regiments. A good 27-page introduction by Gurkha authority J.P. Cross, himself a former British Gurkha Officer, contains useful information. Especially valuable is the insight it offers into the mechanics of partition, when the Gurkha force was split between the Indian and British armies.

• **GURKHA — THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF AN ELITE FIGHTING FORCE.** By Christopher Chant. Arms and Armour Press, 2-6 Hampstead High Street, London NW3 1QQ. Distributed in the United States by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10061. 1985.

Chant's book is particularly a history of the Gurkhas prior to partition. Only a short chapter details the activities of the British Gurkhas in the decades since 1947. The Falklands campaign, for instance, rates no more than a few miscellaneous lines. Nevertheless, the text and myriad photographs are useful for anyone who is not familiar with Gurkha history.

• **THE GURKHAS.** By Byron Farwell. W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110. 1984.

Farwell is an acknowledged master at turning out engaging treatments of British military history. Many readers are already familiar with, among others, his superb **Mr. Kipling's Army**. In **The Gurkhas** he again shows an eye for detail and meaningful anecdote. Thus, the book has appeal beyond military circles and already has appeared in paperback. For the professional reader, its particular strength is that it looks not only at the history of the British Gurkhas but at all facets of their regimental procedure and activities, providing glimpses of Gurkha reality which often are glossed over.

WE could see very little as we crouched low on the hard-baked earth of the dried paddy and peered tensely into the hot, black Cambodian night.

The last trace of a moon occasionally flickered through the clouds that covered the sky and echoed back the distant rumble of artillery. Off to the east beyond Siem Reap, which was only 20 kilometers from where the 480-man unit of the *Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste* (ANS) waited to cross the National 6 Highway, lightning silently stabbed the earth.

The highway, which blocked our path, linked Siem Reap with Sisophon. It sat on a raised earth bank some two meters high, appearing as a thick, dark scar dividing the darkness of the night sky from the deeper blackness of the earth.

A whispered command passed among the men and, like a ripple spreading through a pond, troops stood up and prepared to move out. Two columns moved toward the shadowy forms of the lead scouts already on the road, who hissed at the men to hurry across. Most were only able to slightly quicken their pace, kicking up clouds of choking dust invisible in the dark; the fatigue and strain of the long march through hostile territory were showing on all of us. A few quick steps and we were up onto the road—really no more than a raised dirt track that quickly vanished into the night in both directions. A few more steps and we were across and down into the flat paddy on the other side.

Here the ground was still wet, covered with a thin slippery layer of mud that clung to our boots in large lumps or sucked the sandals from our feet, which caused the pace to slacken.

Voices rose as men talked softly, telling each other that the worst dangers were already behind them. All that was left now was a march of a few hours to reach secure cover before a halt for rest was called.

The column had moved about 150 meters from the road when suddenly two loud shots barked out from behind. There were a few moments of silence, followed by the report of a third round. Because they came from the direction of the road we had just crossed, they seemed to be of no threat to us at all. One of the scouts had become nervous and fired at imagined shadows, we thought. Other than a slight start at the first two reports and a feeling of annoyance at such gross stupidity, there was little or no reaction from the column as it continued to walk on.

Then there was a loud CRACK, followed by a second, then dozens of cracks all sounding together as the darkness was splintered by burning lines of red tracer bullets flying in all directions, some ploughing into the mud, others tumbling away into the night. Instantly everyone started to run, the mud pulling at our feet and slowing our escape like a slow-motion nightmare.

We were caught in a Vietnamese ambush, out in the open with no cover at all, with no option but to run as fast as possible out of the killing ground and hope to sur-

CAMBODIAN KILLING GROUND

Expanding the War Against Vietnamese Invaders

Text & Photos by Peter Douglas

vive. I have never felt such an awful feeling of dread. Running as fast as I could, slipping and stumbling as tracers snapped past my head, I caught glimpses of what was happening around me. All about me men were running, their shouts drowned out by the explosions of the RPG rockets the Vietnamese were firing into the fleeing mass.

Somebody close behind me started to return the Viets' fire, the rapid barking of his AK assault rifle making a different sound than the deafening, smacking cracks of the incoming rounds the ambushers were pouring into our ranks.

Cooking pots clattered as they fell from backpacks. Everyone was bent over running very low, trying to take giant strides. The tracers passed so close to the ground they cast a red glow across the earth as they raced past. Behind, the line of muzzle flashes sparkled from the ambush party in an even line along the road.

Lieutenant Te Kow urged me to run quickly, advice I hardly needed as I was already running for all I was worth. So many rockets were exploding that it sounded like a thunderstorm directly overhead.

After the first few men had fired back at the Vietnamese, the incoming fire shifted and flew higher, just over our heads. A man dived behind a small bush to seek cover. Shouts warned him not to stay in the killing ground unless he wanted to remain there permanently, at which he jumped up and ran on. The firing seemed to last for a very long time but could not have been more than one or two minutes.

We kept running until we plunged into an area of low scrub and people fell to earth to catch their breath. The young officers were

CAMBODIAN CORRESPONDENCE

Photojournalist Peter Douglas is a former Royal Marine Commando and arctic warfare specialist. He has covered combat in Afghanistan and Lebanon as well as Cambodia.

shouting, trying to restore order and organize a defensive perimeter. Completely shattered by the exertion, I stopped. Despite all the confusion of the sudden contact, Lt. Te Kow had remained by my side, guiding my flight and seeming genuinely more concerned for my safety than his own.

I sat on the ground and gasped for air as rivulets of sweat ran down my face and dripped off my eyebrows, nose and chin. I could hardly believe I was still alive.

Welcome back to Cambodia (renamed "Kampuchea" by the rebel communist government), this time with a unit of the *Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste* (ANS) on a resupply mission into central Cambodia. The last time had been with a commando assault group of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) on a mission to blow up a bridge.

The current war in Cambodia is seldom reported on because few journalists have been able to witness the war. The Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh does invite in a few selected Western journalists, but they are kept well away from any trouble spots and leave with little sense of how the war is being fought in the interior of the country.



The Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in 1978, ostensibly to topple the Pol Pot regime which had murdered some two million of the Khmer people in the previous three years. Some 140,000 men of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) have been in occupation ever since. Their numbers certainly equal and possibly even exceed those of the Soviets in Afghanistan. In January 1979 Vietnam installed the Heng Samrin government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), but this government failed to win recognition by the United Nations, leaving its legitimacy in doubt.

Vietnam has announced it will withdraw from Cambodia by 1990 and has been conducting what it claims are annual troop withdrawals. These claims are dismissed by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), which is the government in exile recognized by the United Nations. (It was forged from a tripartite alliance of the communist Khmer Rouge and two non-communist factions: the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and the *Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste* (ANS).) The coalition government says the so-called withdrawals are no more than troop rotations, much as Soviet troop rotations in Afghanistan are sometimes portrayed as withdrawals, a view with which many Western diplomats agree.

Cambodia has a largely rural population of some five million. At one time it was considered the rice bowl of Southeast Asia, able to produce enough rice to feed its own people and have a substantial surplus for export. Many Khmers fear that Vietnam wants to turn Cambodia into a colony and thus gain access to its agricultural potential as a means of boosting its own ailing economy.

LEFT: Portrait of young *Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste* (ANS) soldier, armed with an AK-47.

BELOW: ANS soldier in Tonle Sap area with RPG-2 and rounds. Highly reliable, short-range RPG-2s are favored weapons for close-quarter jungle clashes; a common complaint about more powerful RPG-7 is that unless it hits something as solid as a tree, it sometimes fails to detonate.



These facts have been given considerable assistance from the Vietnamese government's policy of settling Vietnamese peasants in Cambodian territory. In some areas, Vietnamese settlers form as much as 20 percent of the local population. It is estimated that as many as 158,000 Vietnamese have been settled in Cambodia

through "sister province" arrangements and special "development villages."

Vietnam maintains a standing army of over a million men, of which 40,000 are in Laos, 140,000 in Cambodia and nearly half a million on its own northern border with China. With so many men under arms, Vietnam is finding it hard to keep its own labor-intensive agricultural economy running. Inflation is averaging 50 percent a year and agricultural output per capita is lower than it was 10 years ago.

During the 1984-85 dry season, the PAVN launched a series of attacks against all the CGDK camps along the

Thai/Cambodian border. Between

November 1984 and

March 1985 all the resistance

border camps were over-

run by PAVN and

PRK forces of some

80,000 men

backed by T-

54 tanks and 155mm howitzers.

After these successes, Vietnam started to implement its K6 plan — the sealing of the entire 600-kilometer-plus Thai/Cambodian border. This was to be achieved by building a minefield along the entire border, buttressed in many places by either bamboo or wire fences and large-scale deforestation.

In carrying out this mammoth task, the Vietnamese rely, to a large degree, on conscripted Cambodian civilian labor. These civilians suffer badly from the harsh conditions of work. Western aid workers believe that as many as 60,000 die each year from tropical diseases such as cholera, dysentery and malaria, as well as from the mines themselves.

In Kampong Chnang Province there is even a policy, very much like the American one during its days of involvement in Southeast Asia, of "protected hamlets," whereby villages are surrounded by barbed wire, an armed militia is installed and a curfew is imposed on the villagers each night. All this to try to keep the villagers divorced from the resistance, but in many cases they are still one and the same.

It was the very reverse that the CGDK had suffered during the 1984-85 dry season that spurred it to pursue a new strategy of mobile guerrilla warfare which carried its forces much farther into the interior of Cambodia.

Indeed, Son Sann (former prime minister

of Cambodia, now the premier of the CGDK and the

leader of the KPNLF)

admitted that the

chain of border bases

had been a strategic

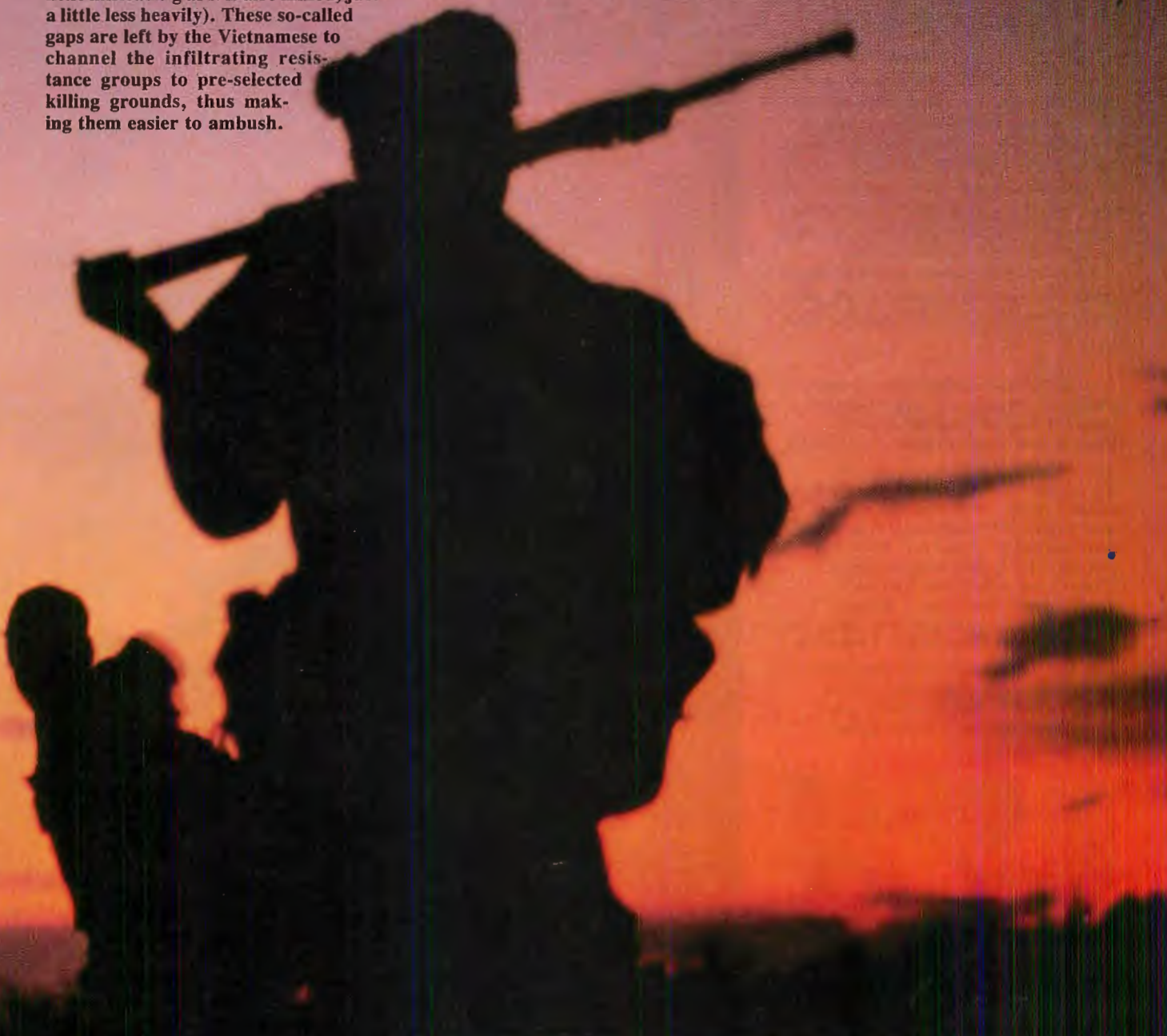
error similar to the

French Maginot

Line.



When I was with the KPNLF in the rainy season, the land was extensively flooded. The first stage of our journey took us through a gap in the border minefield (although to call it a gap is a little misleading as it is also mined, just a little less heavily). These so-called gaps are left by the Vietnamese to channel the infiltrating resistance groups to pre-selected killing grounds, thus making them easier to ambush.



FAR LEFT: Demolition team of Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) 215 Battalion goes into action under a bridge close to Ph Sala Krao on National 6 Highway, the main road link between Siem Reap and Sisophon. Vietnamese company position is only a kilometer away.

LEFT: Mission accomplished! Demolition team of KPNLF blows bridge on National 6 Highway. Now for a nice long walk back to Thailand.

RIGHT: ANS trooper with bottle of intravenous fluid dangling from his RPG-2. Troopers often drink IV solution when they run out of fresh water, and keep empty bottles to use as canteens.



The belt along the Thai/Cambodian border is very heavily patrolled by the PAVN to a depth of some 20 kilometers.

I was with the KPRLF's 215 Battalion, led by Commander Khem Sophoan. He had been in the regular army during the Lon Nol government as a military instructor. During the Pol Pot regime he was a rice porter. Like many Khmers, when the Vietnamese first arrived he was pleased to see them, but as time passed and they showed no sign of withdrawing, he became disillusioned with their presence and joined the resistance.

Having made our way cautiously through the minefield into the forested country beyond, which was all under water, we marched in very good order for several days before reaching some dry ground, where a secure base camp was established.

From this point scouts were sent out to purchase food from villages, which delivered the supplies the following day. While

RIGHT: Portrait of ANS soldier, central Cambodia. He carries a Type 56 assault rifle (with bayonet removed) over his shoulder and, slung, a folding-stock AK-47.

BELOW: Phung Sophan, 26, and her four-month-old baby. Ex-wife of Khmer Rouge member, she joined ANS column after Vietnamese confiscated her property and threatened to arrest her. She hoped to join her sister in Thai refugee camp. Villagers had named baby Kham Sat, meaning "unfortunate one." Soldiers played with child to keep it from crying and compromising their position to Vietnamese.

BOTTOM: ANS soldier with RPD. This robust old weapon is much favored for firefights in deep forest, and ANS would like more of them in its battle against Vietnamese invaders.



the village headmen were with us, the KP/NLF medic dispensed free medical supplies as part of the hearts and minds policy of the KP/NLF. There was evidence of an intelligence infrastructure maintained permanently inside the country by the KP/NLF and from which updated information about the depositions of the Vietnamese forces in the area was obtained. We also linked up with men of 252 Battalion of the KP/NLF. They were to be responsible for one of the diversionary attacks while the prime target, a bridge, was attacked.

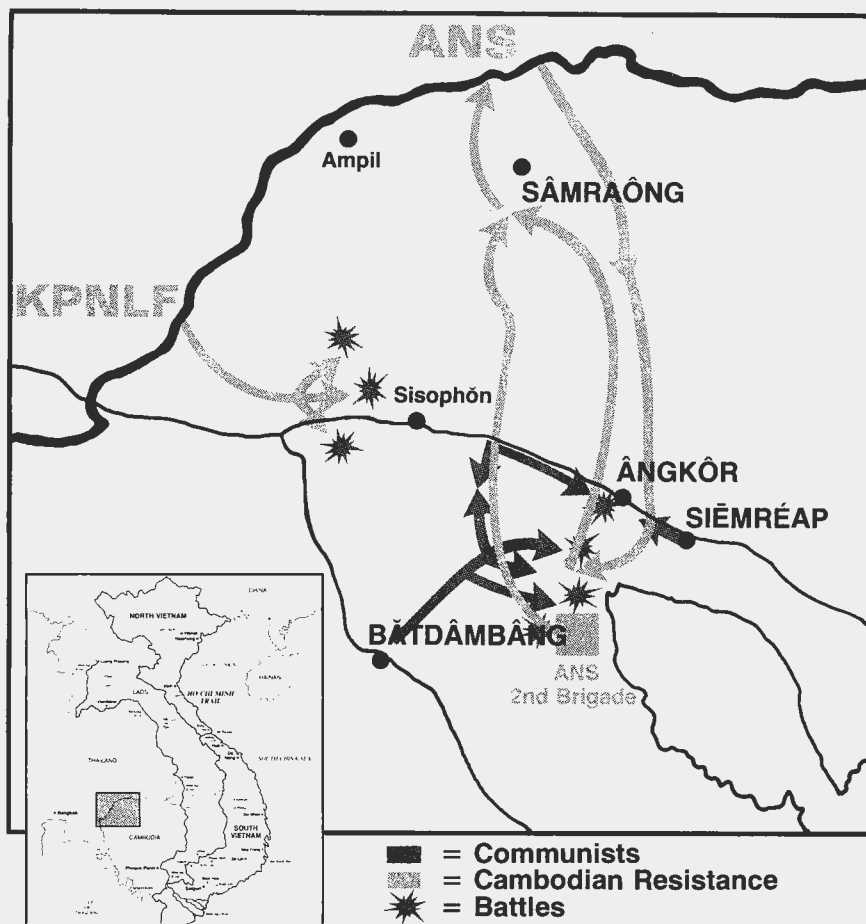
As the demolition team prepared the plastic explosive charges, Commander Khem Sophoan held a final briefing and last rehearsal, laying out the ring charge as everyone made themselves totally familiar with their exact role in the operation. The plan called for two diversionary attacks: one 10 kilometers from the bridge, against a PAVN company position to prevent them mounting a follow-up operation and cutting off our line of retreat; the other an attack on a PAVN company position one kilometer from the bridge at Sala Krao. This second attack was to stop immediate reinforcements rushing to the bridge. The bridge itself was to be attacked by 1 Commando of 215 Battalion.

The PAVN was spread too thin to defend all the bridges all the time, so they varied which bridges were to be defended each night. At the time that Commander Khem Sophoan held his last parade, shortly before dark, he could not have known whether the bridge was going to be defended that night or not. If it was, 1 Commando would have to launch an attack from out of chest-deep water; win the firefight, forcing the defenders off the bridge; lay the charges and destroy the bridge before making an escape back through deep water.

The signal for the diversionary attacks to begin would be either the start of the firefight at the bridge or, if undefended, the explosion when the charges destroyed the bridge. The operation called for careful timing on the part of the two diversionary attack forces. The approach march to the bridge would be 16 kilometers, all through progressively deeper water, with the same distance having to be covered after the attack to retreat.

With the last of the late afternoon sunshine, we set off for the attack. The commando unit soon passed through a village, where the villagers pressed gifts of rice cakes on the men. Beyond the village there was an area of tall grass which was crisscrossed by bullock cart tracks, but in this wet season they were more like canals.

Night closed in, but a relentless pace was kept up in order to adhere to the timing of the plan. Hour after hour of wading through murky water was required before the column was clear of the tall grass and into open paddy. The sky glowed a lighter shade above the town of Sisophon, shimmering across the empty expanse of water between us. Occasional flares arched up into the sky from army posts outside the town.



New strategy of mobile guerrilla warfare brings Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) forces deep into Cambodian interior.

After many hours of marching through the flooded paddy fields a brief halt was called. Despite the darkness of the night, clouds were reflected in the now still water that stretched away in every direction as far as the eye could see. Behind and in front of me were the dark shadows of the commando raiding party. The silence seemed all the more intense after the noise of sloshing through water. Everybody was tired from the effort of crossing so many kilometers of wetlands. All along the line men tried to find a spot to sit on a paddy dyke, which was fractionally above the water line in a few places. Most of us just sat down anywhere, with legs still submerged and feet buried in the soft mud of the paddy itself. A soft breeze drifted across the endless lake we were sitting in and began to chill us in our soaking wet clothes. I drew long deep breaths to ward off the weariness already setting in.

The recon section had gone on ahead of us and we waited for its report. About 10 kilometers away the sky was suddenly laced with tracers, some racing along the horizon, others rising almost vertically into the sky. There were frequent flashes as well, where rockets were exploding, but all of this was too far away to be heard.

Radio messages soon established that this

was a PAVN ambush on one of the KP/NLF patrols setting out from the base camp. I wondered whether this compromised the plan of attack and whether it would be cancelled. Further reports came in and Commander Khem Sophoan opted to continue. Twenty minutes later we were on our way again.

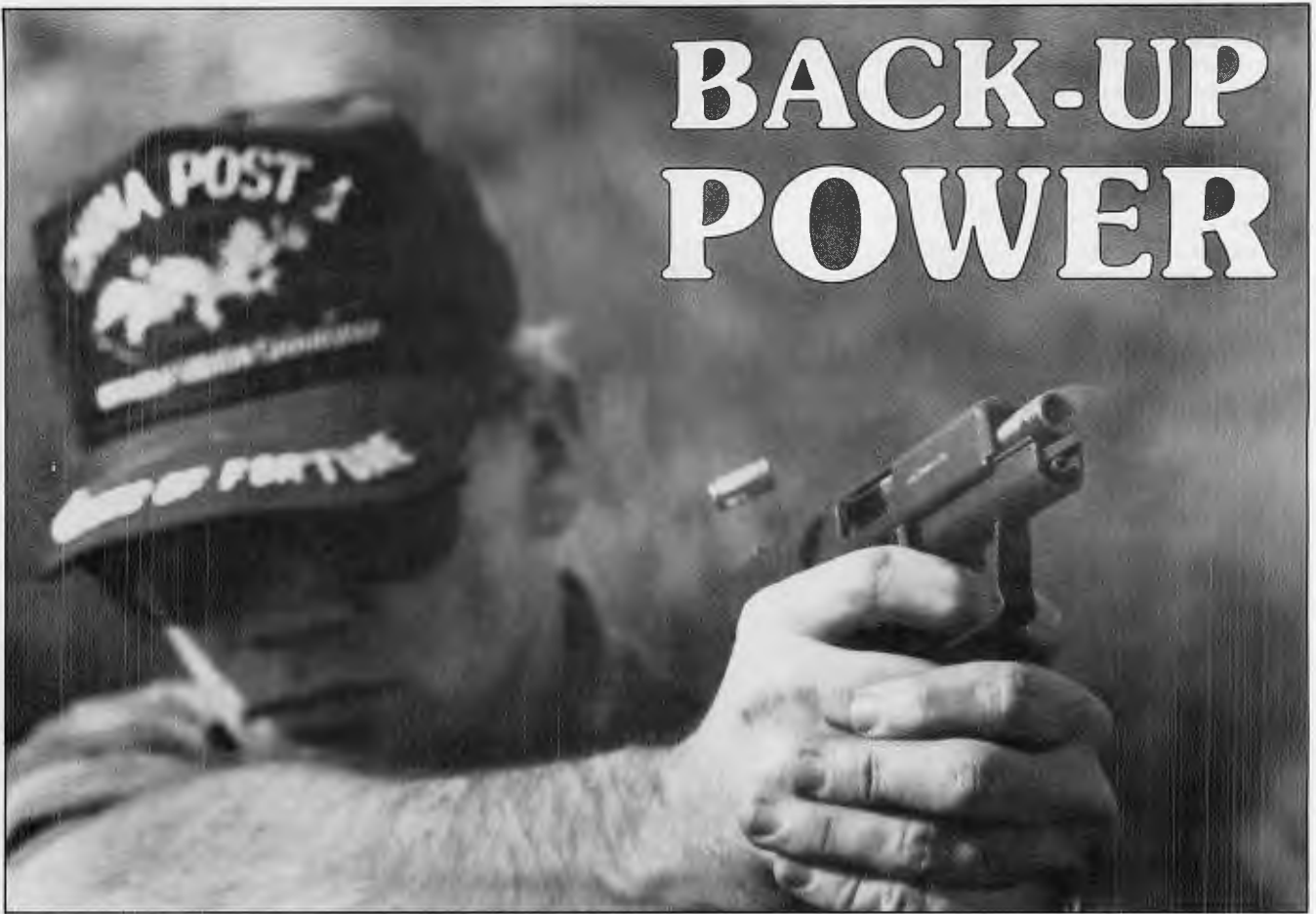
The water level started to rise as we closed with the target. Within an hour we were steadily moving through waist-deep water. Each step was a real effort, with feet sinking into the soft mud. Another hour and we were up to our chests in water and moving very slowly, both because of the depth of the water and in order to make as little noise as possible.

The commando raiding party was stretched out in a long snaking line. Ahead I could see the heads and shoulders of groups of men on either side of the column. We had linked up with the recon sections which were there to guide us to the target. Visibility was restricted as we passed through more and more tall reeds growing out of the submerged paddy dykes. These became denser as we moved on. Soon we were weaving through solid banks of them.

Without warning, the raised causeway, on which sat the national highway, loomed up dark and menacing in front of us. Already some men were out of the water and fanning out along the road. A lieutenant was pushing men along the road as the security

Continued on page 78

BACK-UP POWER



BELLY guns, pocket pistols, or back-ups. By whatever appellation, the objective remains the same — to provide additional insurance coverage for those who walk in harm's way and depend upon a large, major-caliber handgun as their primary defensive weapon. These compact and very concealable "second" guns are inevitably chambered for inadequate, or at best marginal, calibers such as the .22 LR, .25 ACP, .32 ACP, .380 ACP or .38 Special.

Bulky wonder weapons created for military consumption and stuffed with as many as 18 rounds into their submachine-gun-sized magazines flow out of factories in a never-ending stream. Is there no one willing to design and produce a truly compact semi-auto pistol in a truly effective chambering? Must lilliputian pistols be forever bored for lilliputian calibers? I think not.

Sirkis Industries, Limited, of Israel has just introduced a unique and innovative compact pistol chambered for the popular 9mm Parabellum cartridge. Overall length is 6 inches and that beats Smith & Wesson's Model 469 Mini-Gun by almost an inch. The SD9 pistol, as it's called, is only 4.375 inches high and 1.125 inches thick — a significantly smaller package than anything else currently available in this caliber. While its 24 ounce total weight, empty, is actually 2 ounces less than the S&W Model 469, the SD9 feels heavy in the hand because its mass is concentrated into such a small package.

Modern, cost-effective techniques have been used to fabricate every component of the SD9. Both the frame and slide are welded, heavy-gauge, sheet-metal pressings. The slide has been bent into a square shape with a sheet-metal bar welded on top to hold the front and rear sights and to cover a cut that holds the bolt in place. The fixed, blade-type front sight is 0.165-inches thick. The open, square-notch rear sight can be adjusted for windage zero only by drifting it in its dovetail on the slide. These low-profile sights are adequate and, in fact, better than those usually fitted to pocket pistols. A steel block welded to the front of the slide serves as a barrel bushing and a stop for the recoil spring guide rod which rests under the barrel and is held at the rear end by the barrel extension/feed ramp into which the barrel itself has been press-fit. Only 3.149 inches in length, the barrel has six grooves with a right-hand twist.

The breechblock (bolt), a separate component machined from bar stock, is held to the slide by means of a rectangular protrusion on its top surface that mates with the cut in the top of the slide. It has a loaded-chamber indicator pin that projects through a hole in the backplate.

Operation is by unlocked, pure blowback — a method rarely employed with the 9mm Parabellum cartridge, which can develop chamber pressures of 35,700 CUP (Copper Units of Pressure) and more. To insure that the unlocked slide and breechblock will not recoil rearward away from the barrel (held

SD9 felt recoil is minimal and target reacquisition proceeds rapidly.

rigid to the frame by a removable pin) until pressures have dropped to safe level, the slide and breechblock must have a substantial mass and the recoil spring system must require a considerable application of force before compression can commence. Since the SD9's guide rod is only 2.5 inches in length, it was necessary to use three nested recoil springs, each of different coil diameter. As a consequence, the slide is somewhat difficult to retract when chambering the first round. Far too shallow, the slide's cocking serrations should be cut more deeply.

The trigger and firing mechanism are equally unusual. Every shot is fired by a double-action pull on the trigger, a black plastic molding thrust forward after release by a spring-loaded pin attached to the frame. There is no hammer. When the trigger is pulled it drives a steel push rod on the right side of the frame to the rear. The end of this push rod rides in a cam slot cut into the frame and engages a cocking lug on the bottom of the firing pin. When the firing pin is pushed rearward by the trigger's push rod, it compresses a drive spring inside its hollow interior and attached to a small guide rod fitted to the breechblock's back plate. After the drive spring has been fully compressed, the frame's cam slot forces the push rod downward and out of engagement with the firing pin. This releases the firing

Sirkis Compact SD9

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

pin, which flies forward under the force of the compressed drive spring. The forward thrust of the drive spring is stopped by the head of its guide rod before the firing pin's nose protrudes through the breech face. Thus, the firing pin's impact on the primer is completed by its own forward inertia. After ignition, the firing pin is thrown back to a safe resting position by a small coil spring wrapped around its nose.

When the trigger is released, the rear end of the push rod moves up once again in front of the firing pin's cocking lug by means of its spring (a single strand of uncoiled wire) and the frame's cam slot. A manually operated thumb-safety mounted to the frame's left side blocks the firing pin's cocking lug and prevents its rearward travel when pivoted upward. It also locks the slide. A squared, sheet-metal trigger guard has been welded to the frame.

The slide rides on rails located on the frame's exterior. A steel leaf spring with its end bent into a claw serves as the extractor and is held to the breechblock by a single slotted screw. The ejector is fixed to the left side of the frame. When the slide and breechblock reach the end of their rearward travel, they are driven forward by the compressed recoil springs to strip another round

BELOW: Compact Sirkis pistol is fistful of dynamite chambered for popular 9mm Parabellum cartridge.

BELOW RIGHT: Sirkis pistol field-stripped. Note unique push rod on right side of frame which draws the firing pin back against drive spring when trigger is pulled rearward.

from the magazine and chamber it.

The detachable, box-type, single-column magazine has a six-round capacity. With one up the spout, this provides a total of seven rounds — more than enough for the intended scenarios. Of all-steel construction, the magazine's floorplate cannot be removed and disassembly is in the Colt M1911 manner. There are six indicator holes on each side of the magazine's body. Loading is a chore as the follower can be depressed only with great difficulty. There

is no hold-open device. A steel strap, riveted to the rear of the magazine well and bent into a hook at the heel, serves as a magazine latch. Slap the magazine smartly when inserting or it may not engage the latch.

The black polycarbonate grip panels wrap around the front and rear of the magazine well and play no small role in this pistol's unorthodox appearance. Swept inward at the upper rear to accommodate the palm of the hand, the human engineering here is excellent, although there is no room for the small digit of a normal-sized hand.

Both the magazine and breechblock have been salt blued. The barrel, barrel pin, trigger push rod and loaded-chamber indicator pin have been left in the white. All other components, including the slide and frame, have been phosphated (more commonly referred to as "parkerizing").

While by no means complicated, disassembly procedures are every bit as unconventional as the pistol itself. Withdraw the magazine and retract the slide to clear and

Continued on page 73

CHRONOGRAPH RESULTS: SIRKIS 9MM PARABELLUM PISTOL

Instrumentation: Oehler Model 33 chronotach with Skyscreen III detectors. All measurements in feet per second (fps) from 3.149-inch barrel. Ambient temperature: 75 degrees F. Instrumental velocities taken 10 feet from muzzle.

Ammunition	Average Velocity	Standard Deviation	Low Velocity	High Velocity	Extreme Spread
Black Hills 115-gr. JHP	1,033	7	1,023	1,044	21
Black Hills 115-gr. FMJ	1,014	10	996	1,031	35
Black Hills 125-gr. Lead RN	942	10	928	958	30
Federal 115-gr. JHP	999	19	978	1,045	67
Spanish ("FNT 1952")	1,035	14	1,012	1,054	42
Portuguese ("FNM-83-5")	1,042	22	1,010	1,070	60
IMI SMG (black-tipped)	1,144	28	1,105	1,180	75
Yugoslav ("PPU60 KAL 9mm")	1,043	35	975	1,112	137



VIETNAM is a country as beautiful as it is treacherous, and as fascinating as it is deadly. While it has been plagued by war and revolution, it is a country that is steeped in legends of demons and sleeping dragons. Its topography is dotted everywhere with strange geologic configurations, and the country itself is permeated with hundreds of intriguing mysteries relating to its past.

One of the most intriguing of these mysteries lies along Highway 19, high in the mountains of the Central Highlands. Highway 19 is a vital link that runs across the center of Vietnam, linking Qui Nhon, located on the South China Sea, with Pleiku, located on the other side of the country next to Cambodia. Halfway between these two cities the road winds up into the mountains and meanders through a place called the Mang Yang Pass.

Deep inside this pass the air is cool, without benefit of a breeze, and immense shadows are cast onto the sides of the mountains, seemingly coming from nowhere. The interior of the pass is quiet and still, and along the pass, whispering in the winds, are the ghosts of foreign soldiers from battles long since past.

On 30 May 1970, I was en route by helicopter from An Khe along Highway 19 to Mang Yang Pass. In only four more days my tour of duty would be over and I would be returning home. But before I left, I had one final mission. For one last time I was going back into the mountains surrounding the pass.

I had been in those mountains and inside the pass many times. The first of those missions had been almost 10 months before, and I will never forget that mission. Our

intelligence reports had indicated that a North Vietnamese heavy weapons company was positioned somewhere inside Mang Yang Pass, poised to ambush a convoy of American gasoline trucks that was scheduled to roll through the next day. Our task was to confirm or deny those intelligence reports.

We left An Khe early in the morning, traveling in armored personnel carriers, and by midmorning we were at the base of the pass. As we moved along this road, which carved through the middle of several mountains, our vehicles dropped into a lower gear. At each turn our small column would slow to a nervous crawl and then speed up again.

Immediately into the pass, we were at once swallowed up by the presence of the mountains. Towering over the road was a 60

SOF VIETNAM

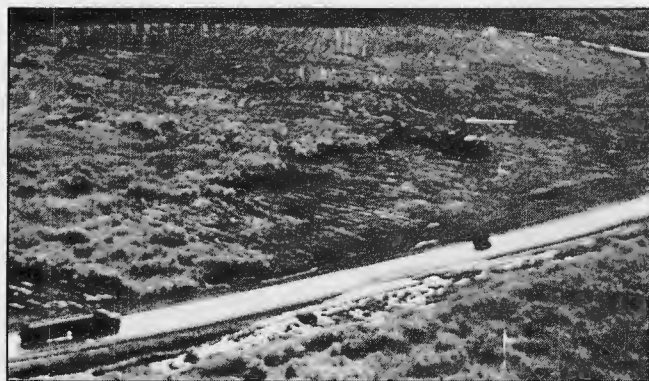
GRAVEYARD IN THE CLOUDS

GIs Honor France's Forgotten Heroes

Fifteen years after crushing French defeat in Central Highlands, Route 19 (now Highway 19) along "Ambush Alley."

Text & Photos
by James Martin Davis

Photo from armored gun truck as convoy proceeds up Highway 19 toward Mang Yang Pass in Central Highlands.



PAYING HIS RESPECTS

James Martin Davis served in Vietnam as a Military Intelligence team leader for the 4th Infantry Division in 1969-70. He left the Army after the war to become a special agent for the U.S. Secret Service. Now an attorney in Omaha, Nebraska, Davis is a freelance writer in his spare time.

Author, right, just before departing to reconsecrate French cemetery on Mang Yang Pass.





High above Mang Yang Pass, buried standing up and facing France, are the remains of 2,000 soldiers of *Groupement Mobile 100* killed by the Viet Minh in June 1954.

Mang Yang Pass seen from the air.

degree tree-covered slope extending upward into the sky on our left. To our right was a steep drop-off that eventually leveled out into a field of elephant grass that extended away from the road until the trees and entangling growth gave way to the huge vertical wall of the mountains.

The steep slopes and jagged cliffs on both sides of the pass were spectacular, with thick forests, primitive rock formations and lush vegetation in innumerable shades of green. Hundreds of feet above us, spilling out of the luxuriant growth, were a half-dozen waterfalls located all along the face of the mountains. As deadly as this place was, it was hard not to be hypnotized by the awesome beauty of it all.

Midway into the pass our armored column slowed down again, but this time only long enough for our team to dismount on the run and plunge off the road and down the sides of the drop-off to our right. As we reached the bottom of the drop-off, we assembled and began moving toward the mountain.

It seemed like it took endless hours to hack our way through the 8-foot-high elephant grass until we reached the small stream at the base of the mountain. Tired and covered with perspiration, we took a quick cigarette break and then spread out to make our way up the jungle-covered slope of the mountain wall.

For several hours we noiselessly investigated these slopes, all the while moving up the side of the mountain. By noon we had reached a ridge line far above the road below, and we began to follow this ridge line to the summit. As we continued our upward

journey, the surroundings began to change, as the colors no longer were the same, and the air turned colder. The trees suddenly disappeared and now the rocks and boulders became nonexistent. As we reached the top, a death-like silence hung over the mountain.

When we came over the ridge line none of us expected to see what we did. All around us was a huge rolling plain, in contrasting shades of green, that seemed to stretch for thousands of yards in all directions. Spread throughout the surface of this mysterious-looking carpet were thousands of small 3-foot-square patches, like a gigantic checkerboard, one right next to the other, that ran in rows as far as the eye could see.

Our soldiers fanned out and walked slowly over this bizarre landscape, acting as though they were in a trance. Except for the rows and rows of small squares which seemed to be everywhere, there was nothing else present except an old road that came from nowhere and led to the same place.

It didn't take us long to sense that there was something quite different about this location. We were in the middle of a war zone, yet this place was unbelievably quiet and peaceful. In moments it dawned on us that, high on top of this mountain, this strange and beautiful grassy knoll was consecrated ground. Even though we saw no crosses nor headstones nor monument, we realized we had stumbled upon a graveyard.

None of us could determine who was buried there, why the plots were so small, or even why a cemetery would be located so far up, and so far away from civilization. We continued to look for clues. We remained on top of that mountain exploring unsuccessfully for almost an hour before we headed back down to complete our mission.

For days thereafter my mind kept returning to the mystery of that mountain. I was determined to find out what this was above the Mang Yang Pass, and what it was doing

there. In the following weeks, I talked to the local Vietnamese, I talked to Montagnard tribesmen and even went so far as to have parts of a book written in French translated for me.

From the fragments of information I collected, I could piece together most of the answers to my questions. The top of that mountain, so high and so far from civilization, was indeed a graveyard.

On top of that mountain, without crosses or headstones or even a common marker, lay the graves of some 2,000 soldiers, mostly French, all killed in the early summer of 1954. These soldiers were carried to the top of that mountain, far from the battlefield, and were then buried, standing up, in deep graves filled with lime, over which the grass has never grown. Each of these soldiers was positioned in his grave so that for all eternity he would be facing in the direction of France.

The soldiers buried here were the troops of a highly mobile force called *Groupement Mobile 100*, or GM 100, as it was more commonly known. It was one of the best units of its type in the French-Indochina war. Most of its troops were battle-hardened veterans of the Korean War, where they had been attached to the 2nd U.S. Infantry Division. In Korea, fighting with the United Nations forces, they had distinguished themselves alongside the Americans at Wonju and Arrowhead Ridge. At the conclusion of the Korean conflict in July 1953 they were transferred to Indochina.

In February of 1954, *Groupement Mobile 100* was sent to An Khe, located along Route 19, to keep that vital road open and to protect the Central Highlands. For months they sustained heavy casualties fighting an

Continued on page 75



THEY stormed off the landing craft ramps shouting, their faces smeared with camouflage paint, SA-80 rifles at the ready, green berets squared. A rattle of simulated fire broke the morning quiet.

The first assault wave of 42 Commando, Royal

Marines, had landed on Norwegian soil at Rekkevik Bay near Larvick, a coastal town southwest of Oslo. Blue Fox, an integral part of NATO Exercise Northern Wedding, was underway. Simultaneous landings were taking place at other beaches, including two Battalion Landing Teams of U.S. Marines.

As first light appeared over the surrounding

mountains, Rekkevik Bay looked calm, its surface disturbed only by the ripple of a passing school of fish. Shattering this pristine silence was the deafening wop-wop-wop of belly-heavy Royal Navy Wessex choppers. Forming a circular rendezvous pattern in the recently harvested fields, the

choppers picked up assault groups from an LZ behind the beach and ferried them to their inland objectives.

While the "bootnecks" (Royal Marines) struggled up the beach under the weight of their heavy Bergen rucksacks and weaponry, more assault waves formed offshore near the HMS *Intrepid*. Other naval and civilian



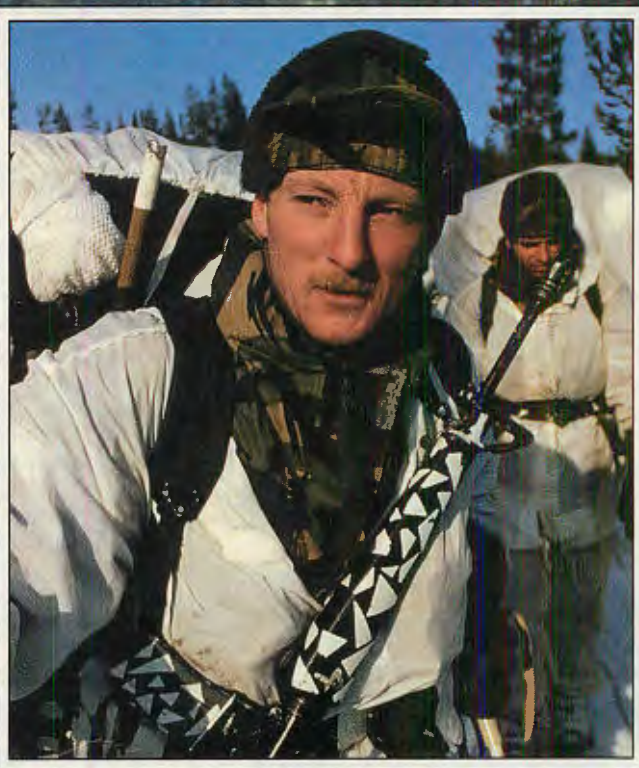
42 COMMANDO

Royal Marines Attend NATO's Northern Wedding

by Howard R. Simpson

craft took part in the exercise as well. Beachmasters with yellow flags guided an LCM (landing craft, mechanized) ashore to debark a heavy recovery vehicle. Metal landing mats were laid on the damp sand. The Dutch flag snapped from the halyards of the next wave

Among Royal Marines' varied duties is defense of NATO's left flank. Here they practice their winter warfare skills in frozen Norway. **INSET:** M16-armed Royal Marine is well-trained for winter warfare. **Photos:** Sygma



WRITING HIS WAY TO ADVENTURE

As a war correspondent for the U.S. Information Agency, foreign service officer, newspaper columnist and novelist, Howard R. Simpson has written about topics ranging from the fall of Dien Bien Phu to international terrorism, and from locations as diverse as Saigon and the south of France. His reporting on the Royal Marine landing in Norway marks his third article for *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*.

of landing craft as Royal Marines of the Netherlands Navy came ashore.

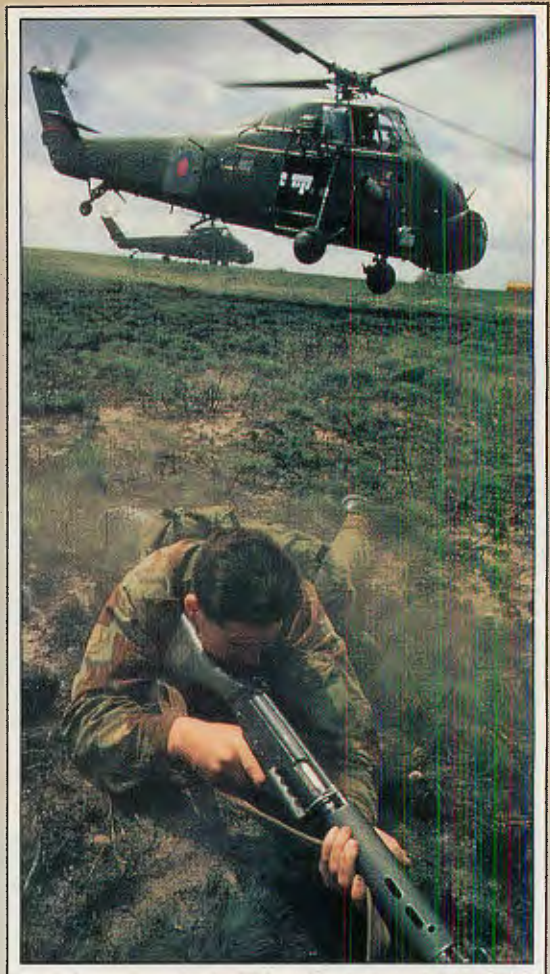
No landing is easy — even during an exercise — but the speed with which sections of 42 Commando cleared the beach marked them as professionals with a clear understanding of how dangerous a clogged beachhead can be.

An offshore revving of engines heralded the arrival of A Squadron, the Life Guards, with their Scorpion light tanks. The LCMs grounded and the stubby armor rattled down the ramps onto the beach spouting smoke and yawing up onto the hard-surface road to provide support for the advancing Commandos. More landing craft followed with the light 105mm guns of the 29th Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, and a team of U.S. Marine forward observers, identifiable by their visored camouflage caps.

A sizable civilian audience formed on the high ground above the beach. Groups of pipe-smoking Norwegian oldsters were discussing the show, pointing out incoming landing craft and the speeding Rigid Raider boats with their 140-horsepower outboards. Some local women had come out to pour hot coffee for members of the beach party.

Facing 42 Commando and the other units of the Allied amphibious force was the Norwegian 1st Division. The day before, I visited the 1st Division.

Patrolling into the future, Royal Marines suited up for chemical warfare. Photo: Sygma



Royal Marine takes cover after exiting Royal Air Force helicopter. Photo: Sygma

Assembled for the start of Blue Fox, the division was an amalgam of Regular and Home Guard units with a leavening of supporting detachments, including a U.S. Army electronic warfare section and Company B, 2nd Battalion, 116th Infantry, Virginia National Guard.

Finding the 1st Division was no easy task. The hilly, forested area provided good cover. Rifle companies, artillery and armor were hunkered down well off the main roads and protected by automatic weapons positions

constructed of pine logs camouflaged by green branches and cuttings of blue-tipped heather.

The Norwegians pride themselves on their organization for total defense. Everything from bakery trucks to fishing boats has its place in the national defense plan. For days prior to the exercise, army teams had been visiting schools and kindergartens to brief

teachers and pupils on Blue Fox and warn of the dangers inherent in explosives, while farmers were told of their right to compensation in the event of property damage.

Two tall, longhaired MPs armed with Konigsberg AG-3 assault rifles (manufactured in Norway by agreement with Heckler & Koch) tipped me off to the proximity of division

PER MARE PER TERRAM

Formed in 1943 following the reorganization and renaming of the 1st Battalion, Royal Marines, 42 Commando has a long and distinguished history and continues to play an important role in the defense of the realm. The unit's battle honors include the capture of Belle Isle from the French (1761), the American War of Independence (1775), the Crimea (1850), China (1857) and Egypt (1882). During World War I, the battalion served in France and Flanders and took part in the Gallipoli landings. In World War II, as 42 Commando, the unit fought in the Burma-India theater from 1943-45.

Following World War II, it saw service in Hong Kong and the Mediterranean, Malaya, the Near East, the Far East and various training missions throughout the world. Eight deployments to Northern Ireland have kept 42 Commando in fighting trim. In 1978 it assumed its specialized role for mountain and arctic warfare, a role that has taken it to Norway on numerous exercises. In 1982 the Commando saw action in the Falklands, "yomping" to victory at Mount Kent and Mount Harriet and contributing to the retaking of South Georgia and South Thule.

The Royal Marines' history of success is due in part to their cohesion and esprit de corps. This spirit is cemented by the fact that officers and men share the common bond of extremely tough training.

Potential marines spend eight months at the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre at Lympstone in South Devon, England, learning standard military subjects with an emphasis on self-reliance. After the basics comes commando training. Here the emphasis changes to teamwork. Training is in weapons, tactics and the special survival skills all marines must learn. Training culminates in three exercises designed to test how well marines have mastered their trade. The first is a six-mile endurance course with rifle and equipment over rough country that must be completed in 80 minutes. The second is a 30-mile march across the moors in eight hours and finally a three-day exercise designed to test skill and resourcefulness.

Once fully trained, the new marines go on to serve in a variety of units within the corps. Marines not assigned to one of the three battalion-sized commandos may find themselves onboard Her Majesty's ships, providing security for installations on Diego Garcia, running anti-illegal immigrant patrols in Hong Kong, or serving in the elite Special Boat Squadron (SBS).

True to their motto "On sea, on land," individual marines and small groups are serving in the Sinai, Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Brunei, Canada, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Thailand, Uganda, the United States and Zimbabwe.



TOP: Signallers from 42 Commando, Royal Marines, set up their gear after landing at Rekkevik Bay. Photo: Commando Forces News Team

ABOVE: Royal Marine Commandos prepare to attack after river crossing. Photo: Commando Forces News Team

headquarters. Talking my way past them with the aid of my NATO accreditation card, I entered a cool forest of birch and pine.

Camouflaged Volvo and Mercedes trucks were dispersed over the rocky terrain. Fast-firing 20mm guns protected the headquarters area from low-level air attack. Dry wood was stacked near low-slung tents with smoke dispersers on their dulled metal chimneys. (You can't fight and survive in

Norway without heat — dry wood, emitting a minimum of smoke, is as precious as ammunition.) A helicopter was concealed at the edge of a nearby clearing. Its skids were fitted with ski racks and a special pad for snow landings.

A G-2 officer left his maps to explain the disposition of the division's screening force, made up in large part by Home Guard units. The Norwegian Home Guard is a tough, all-weather force with extensive field experience and an irreplaceable knowledge of local terrain. Numbering over 90,000, they are

trained to be in position and operational in a maximum of four hours. The Guard is currently being equipped with the Carl-Gustav recoilless anti-tank gun and modern anti-aircraft weapons.

Leaving the bivouac area, I passed a Norwegian rifle platoon moving south. The long blond hair of the Norwegian "ola-dunk," or GI, would bring tears of frustration to the eyes of most Marine drill instructors, but the men I watched that morning moved through the forest with easy confidence. They were nothing less

Putting training to the test. Royal Marines go ashore from assault ship HMS Fearless during Falklands campaign in 1982. Photo: Commando Forces News Team

than a war party of contemporary Vikings preparing to defend their homeland.

Blue Fox amphibious operations involved a U.K./Netherlands force of 4,500 and 5,000 U.S. Marines. Northern Wedding itself involved 35,000 men, 150 ships and submarines and hundreds of aircraft from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, West Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. Lasting from 29 August to 19 September 1986, the NATO exercise included aircraft carrier battle group operations, reinforcement convoy operations, sea control operations in the Baltic and Baltic

approaches, and maritime air and submarine operations. Amphibious landings in Norway and Denmark brought the exercise to a close.

Recent Soviet military buildup on the Kola peninsula close to Norway's Arctic border gave Northern Wedding special significance. The nearly completed Soviet airbase there will be able to accommodate the new, long-distance Blackjack supersonic bomber, expected to be in production by 1988. The

Blackjack will have a combat radius of 4,535 miles and its armament is expected to include cruise missiles. Development is also underway in the Soviet naval base at Gremikha, east of Murmansk, to accept their



new Typhoon class submarines, capable of firing long-range nuclear ballistic missiles.

Add to this new array of force the standing strength of the Leningrad Military District (which includes the Kola peninsula) of eight to nine motorized rifle divisions, two additional mobilization divisions, a naval infantry brigade, an airborne division, an air assault brigade and the Northern Fleet's Spetsnaz (special forces) Brigade and you have a formidable force of over 100,000 men

constituting a major threat to NATO's left flank.

Not ones to be taken by surprise, the Soviets "participated" in their own way in Northern Wedding. An unusually large force of Soviet air, surface and sub-surface craft were continually in the area. Additionally, 10 Soviet intelligence-gathering ships, three Krivak-class frigates and a number of sub-surface contacts confirmed the Warsaw Pact interest in the exercise. Long-range Bear and shorter-range Badger aircraft conducted recon missions over the Allied fleet.

Despite the crowd of curious onlookers, Blue Fox proceeded according to plan. Within hours of the landings, most objectives had been secured. The bridge at Bommestad, an important communications link, had been captured from its Home Guard defenders. Actually, this particular operation didn't exactly go according to plan. Minutes before a joint U.K./Netherlands heliborne Commando force was to have taken the bridge, a seemingly innocent civilian sedan with U.K. plates and filled with scruffy-looking tourists pulled to a stop to ask directions. When the Home Guard sentries approached to offer

assistance, they found themselves facing armed and determined members of the Royal Marines Special Boat Squadron, whose motto is "Not By Strength — By Guile."

Preparing to leave the beachhead for the luxury of the Allied Press and Information Center in Sandefjord, I stopped to talk briefly with a young "bootneck" of 42 Commando. Marine Seymour from London told me he had his sights set on becoming a noncommissioned helicopter pilot in the Air Squadron. When I asked him why he'd chosen to become a Royal Marine Commando, his answer was simple and to the point:

"I wanted to be one of the best." ✕



SUB-CALIBER military training rifles are nothing new. Shortly after 1900 a number of British Lee Enfield rifles that had been used in the first trials were converted to .22 LR for target shooting and training. Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) rifles were produced in this caliber up to the early 1950s. Before, and during, World War II, Germany manufactured two .22 LR training arms — the DSM 34 and KKW — which closely resembled the 98k service rifle in both weight and configuration and were principally used for indoor practice. Harrington and Richardson designed for the U.S. Marine Corps a .22 LR semiauto known as the Model 65, which weighed nine pounds and was supposed to simulate the handling characteristics of the M1 Garand. More recently, a .22-caliber air rifle looking very much like the Hakim was developed for the Egyptian armed forces by Anschutz. There are many other examples.

There is also an alternative. Rimfire conversion kits were developed and produced by Heckler & Koch for the FN FAL, G3, HK33 and MP5. A .22 LR conversion kit for the M16 series was adopted by the United States and issued in limited quantities as the M261. A somewhat similar unit, the Atchisson MK.II, is available to the public but requires extensive modification before it will operate with any degree of reliability.

Assault rifle look-alikes that are chambered for .22 LR were not developed for the military but for public consumption. They are a relatively recent phenomenon. Mitchell Arms, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 2101 East 4th Street, Suite 201A, Santa Ana, CA 92705) imports four rifles that more or less resemble the military-issue assault rifles they are designed to emulate. Manufactured by Armi Jager in Loano, Italy, all are semi-automatic, fire from the closed-bolt position and operate by means of unlocked, pure blowback. There are models representing the world's two most ubiquitous assault rifles — the Kalashnikov and M16 — and the Israeli Galil and French FA MAS as well.

Mitchell's AK-22 (Model AP 80), Galil-22 (AP 84) and MAS-22 (AP 85) are generically similar. All use the same magazine and feature internal component interchangeability (trigger group, bolt group and recoil spring assembly). The M16/22 stands apart. Let's examine it first.

Both the M16/22's upper and lower receivers are aluminum castings with a black anodized finish. With an overall length of 38.5 inches and a barrel length of 21.5 inches, this rifle's external appearance closely duplicates the M16 service rifle. The black plastic buttstock, pistol grip and handguards mimic those of the M16. Even the T-shaped cocking handle on the carrying handle has been retained. Spring-loaded ejection-port cover, bird-cage flash suppressor and bayonet lug complete the subterfuge.

A 15-round, single-line, detachable box-type magazine slips into a dummy M16 20-round magazine cast as part of the lower receiver. A screw attached to the magazine

SOF FIREARMS

ASSAULT RIFLE LOOK-ALIKES

Combat Copies in .22 Rimfire

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



Galil-22 with optional bipod that can be attached to any number of rifles.

follower rides in a slot on the magazine's left side and pushes up an automatic hold-open. Unfortunately, this screw is mounted too high and locks the bolt rearward while one round still remains in the magazine.

Our M16/22 test specimen's trigger featured a fairly crisp let-off after seven pounds of pressure were applied, with just the slightest trace of creep. A simple cross-bolt safety must be pushed to the right to fire the rifle.

Both sights simulate those of the M16. The round, post-type front sight with protective ears is adjustable for elevation zero only. A plastic, flip-up peep aperture has been attached to the carrying handle and can be adjusted for windage zero by turning a dial on the right side of the handle.

Disassembly is in the M16 manner. Re-

move the magazine and clear the chamber. Drift the rear retaining pin out to either the left or right. Pivot the lower receiver away from the upper receiver. Pull the charging handle and bolt group out the rear of the upper receiver. No further disassembly is necessary. After cleaning, reassemble in the reverse order.

All three of Mitchell's other rifles have blued, sheet-metal receiver bodies and dummy gas tubes. The AK-22 has a barrel length of 18 inches, an overall length of 34 inches and weighs 4.9 pounds, empty. Although the Galil-22's barrel is just ½-inch longer, the overall length stretches to 38.5 inches while the weight goes down to 4.8 pounds, empty. The bullpup MAS-22's barrel remains 18.5 inches in length, but the overall length is a very compact 28.5 inches and the weight, empty, drops to 4.5 pounds.

Furniture on these rifles consists of European walnut with a urethane epoxy coating.



LEFT: MAS-22, compact and attractive — with excellent handling characteristics. This simulation of the French FA MAS infantry rifle is author's favorite.



Both the Galil-22 and MAS-22 have bird-cage flash suppressors. The AK-22 is equipped with a muzzle nut only, but carries a cleaning rod under the barrel. All of them have Kalashnikov-type sheet-metal receiver covers. The AK-22's is ribbed in the Soviet AKM manner. A 20-round, single-line, detachable box-type magazine is common to all three and has been enlarged for esthetics only. A magazine loading tool is supplied with each rifle.

Trigger pull weights were consistently 3.75 to 4 pounds, again with only the slightest trace of creep. A sheet-metal, Kalashnikov-type selector lever has been mounted to the right side of the receiver on the AK-22 and Galil-22. Push down to fire. An M16-type safety lever on the left side of the MAS-22's receiver must be rotated rearward to the upper position to release the trigger. Rotate forward to lock the trigger. There is a manual hold-open only, which is a square notch cut into the safety lever on the AK-22 and Galil-22 and a notch in the retracting handle's slot on the MAS-22's gas tube.

All three have round, post-type front sights, adjustable for elevation zero. They are protected by open ears on the AK-22, a hood with a hole to insert a sight-adjustment tool (not provided) on the Galil-22 and the carrying handle of the MAS-22. Attached at the rear of the upper handguard, the AK-22's sliding-ramp, tangent-type rear sight, adjustable for windage zero, has an open U-notch and elevation increments of 50, 80 and 100 meters. Both the Galil-22 and MAS-22 have plastic, flip-type, peep-aperture rear sights, adjustable for windage zero. Surrounded by a sheet-metal protective box on the Galil-22, the rear sight unit is fixed to the cast aluminum, black anodized carrying handle on the MAS-22. An M16-type dial, mounted to the right side of the MAS-22's carrying handle, adjusts horizontal drift.

Disassembly procedures are the same for the AK-22, Galil-22 and MAS-22. Remove the magazine and clear the chamber. Make sure the hammer is cocked. Push in the bolt stop/cover latch and lift off the receiver cover. Push the cup-shaped, recoil-spring holder forward about an inch and lift off the bolt stop/cover latch. Relieve pressure on the recoil spring and withdraw the recoil spring assembly to the rear. Retract the bolt fully rearward and lift it up and out of the receiver. No further disassembly is re-

Continued on page 74

CENTER: AK-22, shown with optional scope mount and tip-off scope, is more than accurate enough for slaying empty beer cans.

LEFT: M16/22, at first glance a close duplicate of the M16 service rifle.



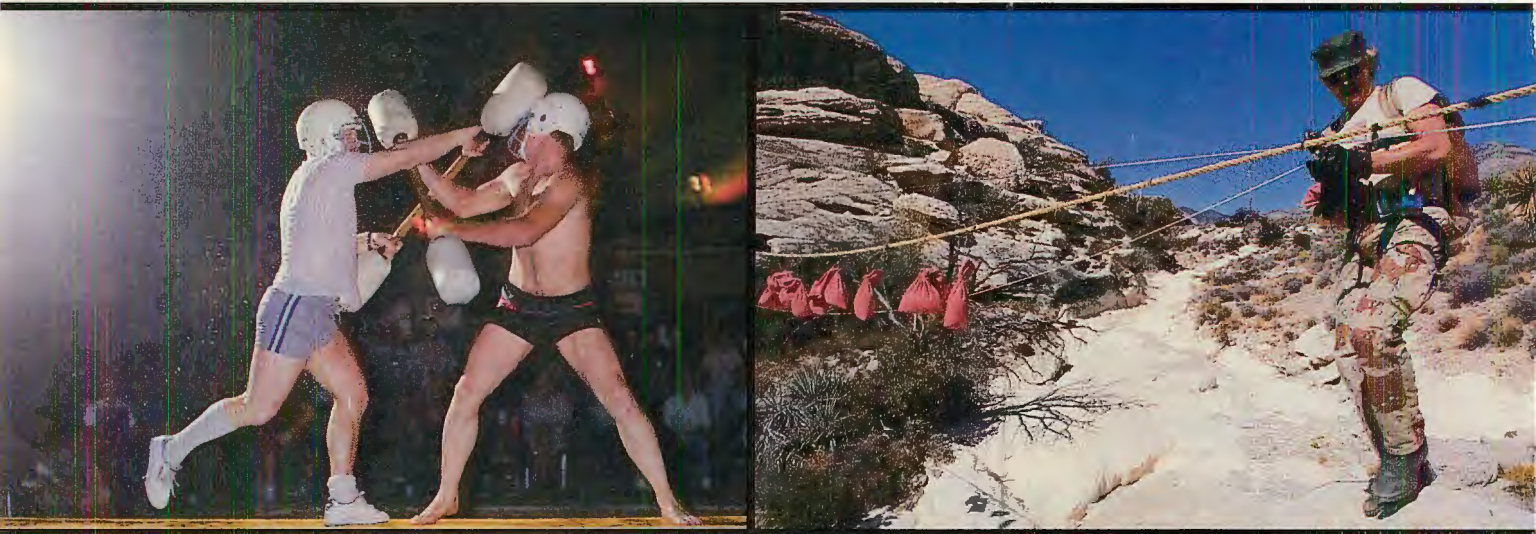
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Honduran Special Forces air assault teams receive free-fall instructions at 10,000 feet over Honduras from U.S. Army Special Forces.

SOF CENTRAL AMERICA

HALO INTO HONDURAS

Rangers Drop on Nicaragua's Doorstep

Text & Photos by Paul Larkin



ABOVE: Honduran air assault troops prepare for static line jump from rear of Chinook at 1,500 feet.

BELOW: Returning from their field posts in El Salvador and Honduras, Special Forces members continue to train. Here they prepare for a night parachute jump. LZ is located just across Panama Canal from Fort Davis.

BOTTOM: Troops of 5th Infantry Battalion take instruction from U.S. Special Forces in field medicine techniques. Special Forces also tutored Hondurans in combat use of light arms and mortars, demolitions and counterinsurgency pursuit.

THE C-141s had been in the air for more than 10 hours when they finally reached the drop zone and began disgorging their consignments of paras.

Within minutes, scores of U.S. Army Rangers from Fort Lewis, Washington's 2nd Battalion 75th Infantry were plunging toward the earth thousands of feet below in a classic HALO (high altitude, low opening) insertion. As the ground rushed up and their chutes finally popped, the stifling heat removed any doubts that they weren't in Washington anymore. Off in the distance was the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. Below was Mocerón.

Mocerón is located just 27 kilometers above the Nicaraguan border on the Atlantic side of Honduras and, as the rainy season

begins in June, it's hot, humid, wet, and crawling with the sort of things you want to step on but not in. Temperatures soar to over 100 degrees F daily, and downpours each afternoon and evening are not the cooling kind you can get in the Pacific Northwest. In short, it provided the perfect setting for a test of 2nd Battalion's quick-response and insertion capabilities.

Not told their destination until airborne, the Rangers from Fort Lewis were in the air for more than 10 hours before dropping into Mocerón shortly after dawn.

Earlier in the night their flight of C-141s had made an aerial rendezvous with Rangers from the 75th Infantry Headquarters Regiment, followed by another flight of C-141s loaded for a full-scale heavy equipment drop by the 27th Airborne Engineering Battalion from Fort Bragg.

All this mobilization came under the heading "The Second Phase of *Ejercicio Cabanas 86*," a month of field exercises, working, and training with Honduran troops — and making a strong point of the United States' preparedness and commitment to the region.

The first phase had been constructing a 4,100-foot runway at Fort Mocerón and presenting it to Colonel Amaya Maya, commander of the Honduras 5th Infantry and head of their Special Forces units. The airstrip provides quick access for large aircraft to the region, which is known as the Mosquitia.

It's an area where both civilians and soldiers are on the move. Large numbers of Miskito Indians have moved across the Honduran-Nicaraguan border into Honduras, where the expatriate bases of KISAN, the Miskito Indian arm of the Nicaraguan contras, are located. Nicaragua's Zelaya Province on the other side of the border, from which the Miskito refugees come, is, perhaps surprisingly, largely English-speaking and Protestant (a legacy of British influence in the Caribbean) and ethnically, religiously, and culturally quite distinct from the rest of Nicaragua. Historically it has enjoyed considerable auton-



COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHER

Paul Larkin has nine years experience as a photojournalist. Based in Colorado, he has covered insurgency and combat in Central America since 1981. Previous assignments have taken him to El Salvador and Guatemala.



ABOVE: Honduran soldier from 5th Infantry Battalion practices claymore mine placement as part of demolition instruction received from U.S. Special Forces at Mocerón.



LEFT: Colonel Amaya Maya, commander of Honduras 5th Infantry Battalion at Mocerón and head of its Special Forces Units, awaits arrival of first flight of airborne U.S. Army Rangers.

LOWER LEFT: After parachuting in and deploying to positions, further securing area around Mocerón, first night was spent in relief-in-place exercises. By dawn, last company of U.S. Army Rangers was moving off to bivouac areas; its previous stations were taken over by fresh Honduran troops.



omy, something the Sandinistas decided to end after they came to power in 1979.

The Marxists' attempts to impose greater centralization helped sow the seeds of revolt. KISAN fighters are constantly on the move. For the present the objective is not to take and hold territory in Nicaragua. That would be premature. Their object at this stage is to impair the Sandinista government's ability to govern, challenge its authority, destabilize it and ultimately strip away its legitimacy.

For the Honduran military, the object is to make sure the Sandinistas do not use the revolt as a pretext for striking north. The

airstrip guarantees that Honduran (and if necessary U.S.) reinforcements can quickly move into the area if the need arises.

However, at dawn on 5 June last year, the Mocerón airstrip was back in U.S. possession. An hour after the first contingent of Rangers had HALOed in and taken the field from its Honduran 5th Infantry "defenders," Operation *Cabanas 86* was in full swing, with nearly 1,000 troops and a massive airdrop of heavy equipment delivered within hours. The stage was set for a month of testing the limits and abilities of the Rangers.

With the Honduran "defenders" of the Mocerón runway were U.S. Green Berets, members of the Special Forces 7th Group, 3rd Battalion, from Fort Davis, Panama. They'd been in Mocerón for almost two weeks, carrying out one of the three main missions assigned to Special Forces by instructing the troops of Honduras' 5th Infantry in the finer points of internal defense. The other two missions of the Special Forces — unconventional warfare and direct attack — are not (officially anyway) part of their assignment in Central America.

Green Berets are training El Salvadorian troops as well as Hondurans, and the Salvos' instruction emphasizes counterinsurgency. Teaching the tactics that effectively counter the guerrilla movement in their country give the Green Berets ample opportunity to tutor their Salvadorian students in unconventional warfare and quickly see the results of their instruction.

Honduras, unlike El Salvador, has neither a limit on the number of advisers nor an internal insurgency, but training in Honduras benefits from the experience instructors bring with them from El Salvador. The Hondurans' training focuses on conventional patrolling, instruction in air assault and the use of light weapons, mortars and the Red Eye surface-to-air missile.

For the Green Berets the mission to Mocerón was a "homecoming" of sorts. In April 1980 the Special Forces completed a five-month medical aid program in the region — for the Sandinistas. (Back then Carter was still in the White House and we were trying to be their pals.) It included performing 200 major surgeries, delivering 152 babies, providing medical aid to 9,500 patients and distributing over 30 C-130-loads of food and medicine.

Ejercicio Cabanas 86 provided Rangers and Special Forces with a chance to practice their respective missions in a foreign environment. And while they hone their skills, these elite soldiers also impart some of their experience and goodwill to our allies in a region critical to America's interests. ✖

Dawn found U.S. Army Rangers on way to rendezvous after being relieved by Honduran troops earlier that night. Twenty-four hours earlier these guys were jumping out of perfectly good C-141s after a 10-hour flight from the States — and here the sun was rising again and they hadn't stopped yet.



"PLATOON"

RETURN FIRE

Internal strife? There was none. Man, we loved each other. Can you understand that? We were bonded together in combat and in blood. We would have died for each other . . . and many did.

Equally disturbing to me was the dangerous and not-so-subtle political message of "Platoon." Through inference and innuendo the viewer is told that we had no business in Vietnam, the war was unwinnable, that we didn't know why we were there. Sorry Oliver, but that won't wash. We knew why we were in Vietnam. What we didn't know was why our government wouldn't let us win it. In fact, what we won on the battlefield our government gave away at the negotiating table.

Jim Gaertner
1st Air Cav.
23rd Infantry Div.

To present combat without context is a classic anti-war technique.

War certainly is waste. But it is more than that. It is also about sacrifice, values, purpose.

A filmmaker is not obliged to give context. It is perfectly legitimate to choose a narrow focus. But he should not then pretend to a cosmic message such as the narrator's conclusion that in Vietnam the enemy was us.

War is hell, and "Platoon" does hell well. That is a considerable achievement. What "Platoon" does not do, despite its pretensions, is tell us anything more than that.

Charles
Krauthammer
Columnist,
Washington
Post

Vets from every corner of the United States answered our call to comment on Oliver Stone's film "Platoon." Counting only those who served in Vietnam, 60 percent of our readers didn't like the movie, 25 percent liked it, 11 percent liked it but had reservations about its accuracy, and four percent didn't express a clear opinion. Space restrictions prevent us from printing all the responses, so if you don't see your letter here it doesn't mean your comments weren't worthy — they just didn't fit. Our sincere thanks to all who responded.



Soldier from Co. B, 1st Bn., 5th Inf. (Mech.), 25th Infantry Division, waits with M60 during ambush patrol near Cu Chi. Photo: Dept. of Defense

"Platoon" was a disgrace. And after all the kudos heaped on Dale Dye, no one bothered to mention that the GIs in the film were wearing flak jackets. Never once did I see a GI wearing a flak jacket. The actors also had punk-rocker haircuts, earrings and . . . Hallelujah Jane Fonda . . . a Nazi flag flying from an APC. Even in the "Fucked-up 4th" that crap would have lasted about two seconds. So much for Dale Dye and SOF's resounding "time-capsule-like authenticity." And why hasn't SOF blasted this film like the liberals blasted "Rambo" and "Red Dawn"? Maybe Oliver Stone isn't the only one interested in a few pieces of silver.

Sgt. Thomas E. Ragland
4th Infantry Div.

I think that the greatest accomplishment of this movie is its realistic portrayal of combat and what combat does to ordinary human beings. War is one of the most horrible experiences a human being can endure, and this movie shows the consequences of living through this as no other movie has.

Robert J. Brewer
4th Infantry Div.

I had to smile when reading your notice soliciting observations on the movie. You stated, "Preference will be given to those who served in Marine or Army infantry," and I understand why.

However, I was a scout dog handler who scouted for a variety of units from ARVN to MP to engineers. For us the hardships were there, the weather as miserable, the mosquitos bit as hard, the leeches clung the same, the pain was as sharp, death as real.

The point of my rambling is that the Vietnam soldier has become what tunnel-visioned vets and biased Hollywood producers have chosen the vet to be. Lines have been drawn depicting Marines as straight to the finish, while U.S. Army troops are pot-smoking hippies.

The two groups are then slashed to grunts and REMFs. Didn't happen that way. It's not that easy. The Vietnam experience wasn't black and white and it sure wasn't "Platoon."

Jim Harding
212th MP Scout Dogs

Mr. Stone's self-admitted anti-war sentiments are paraded before the unsuspecting public via the movie's various moralizations and never-again-isms, resulting in just another liberal hearts-and-minds piece. "Platoon" is first a political statement. It hopes to influence future U.S. foreign policy by making the inevitable but isolated atrocities of the Vietnam War the sole determinant from which to judge the morality of it and future wars. This makes for a superficial and shortsighted rationale. The message Stone imparts is that we were the enemy and had no business being there. The application for today is Nicaragua and anywhere else the

cause of freedom demands the selfless sacrifices of one person for the good of others.

Christopher E. Williamson
101st Airborne Div.

I served with the 25th Infantry Division during this time and believe Stone has accurately shown the early demise of the U.S. military. After the '68 Tet Offensive, the change in the military and its personnel was dramatic. We were no longer winning nor could we win in many people's eyes, and from this a lot of frustration arose. Drugs became prevalent, random violence occurred toward civilians and our fellow men, and the biggest problem of the war began — the questioning of its leadership.

William Nutter
25th Infantry Div.

When the anti-Americans want to deliver a message, they take every isolated instance of evil, put it all together in one ball of wax and feed it to the general public as gospel truth. This is exactly what "Platoon" does.

R. D. Patrick Mahoney
The New American
U.S. Army Special Forces

According to Oliver Stone, his movie "Platoon" is based on his personal experience while serving with the 25th Infantry Division. I too served with the 25th and I can assure you that during my tour of duty there wasn't a day that went by that we were not reminded of the consequences of committing atrocities. Stone burned his own ass as well as the unit that he served in by putting the atrocity scenes in the movie, because the only message he got across to me was, "My unit was made up of piss-poor leaders and scum."

1st Sgt. Angel Dela Cruz Jr.
25th Infantry Div.

I found some details of "Platoon" to be accurate but a lot to be pure nonsense. Stone's doped-up mind found a way to get back at America and all the real soldiers and veterans by taking every negative thing that he ever heard about Vietnam and putting them in a movie. He undoubtedly resents all veterans who served honorably.

As for the accuracy of Dye's part of the movie, I think he missed the boat on many things. Did he really serve out in the bush?

Charles C. Thurmond
Subteam 65, MACV Team 3

"Platoon" does give one the feeling of being in Vietnam. Probably due to the technical direction of Dale Dye. The content of the movie, however, is a foray to the borders of never-never land. Stone uses media methods worthy of the late Joseph Goebbels. For example, there was a My Lai Massacre, but it was an isolated, almost unique incident and Calley, Mitchell and Median were court-martialed for it. "Platoon" spends many minutes of film time on the village scenes, thus creating the impression that such behavior was a normal everyday occurrence in RVN. This is the basic grain-of-truth/bucket-of-bullshit propaganda technique perfected by the Nazis and widely used by the Soviets and their supporters.

This same technique is used to expound the whole laundry list of liberal myths about Vietnam — drugs, atrocities, officer incompetence, NCO sadism, rich-man's-war/poor-man's-fight, racism, battlefield superiority of the VC, etc. . . . Basically Stone shows you a tree and tries to leave the impression it's a whole forest. My own experience is contrary to "Platoon" regarding these points and others.

R. Kolkoski
101st Airborne Div.



This trench, which stretched for over half a mile, was discovered by members of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. Regt., 25th Infantry Division, during Operation Akron, May 1966. Photo: Dept. of Defense

I have to say that "Platoon" is the best and most accurate movie yet made about Vietnam. I served with the 25th Infantry Division from June 1968 to June 1969. I found the movie accurately depicted the attitudes and relationships of that period.

To many men, Charlie was an impersonal enemy, dangerous but respected. The real enemy, on the other hand, was the "lifers" who had more interest in their careers than in the welfare of their men. As an MP, I was in a position to see that well over half of the "fragging-type" incidents were never reported as such. If there was no suspect readily available, the incident was attributed to the enemy, for the sake of the victim's family and to keep from upsetting the brass in the Pentagon. Don't confuse a man's loyalty to his country with a willingness to accept bad leaders or to follow authority blindly.

Michael F. Meacham
25th Infantry Div.

I saw unnecessary roughness, hooches burned during search and clear or relocation, but never gang rape. No flat-out field executions either. No fingers or ears cut off the dead. Consider this: Your own buddies would call you out for being the prick who set the wrist watch ahead to shorten his turn on guard. What do they do when you start shooting down innocent villagers? That sergeants would've been disarmed and on the first bird to the rear to await court-martial.

Yet, if we get stereotypes from one of our own, then the sequel is surely to be stereotyped as well. I can see it now — the NCO killer goes home, gets spit on and called baby killer at an airport in Chicago, wakes up sweat-drenched and screaming in the middle of the night, can't find work, wears pieces and parts of his uniform everywhere he goes, walks around with the "thousand-yard stare" beaming out of a mind that is filled with flashbacks, becomes an alcoholic or addict, gets married and divorced, becomes a survivalist and finally kills someone, only to be shot down by the police as he sprays death from an UZI all over his or someone else's front lawn. Did I leave anything out?

I feel that if we can't get justice from one of our own then we're probably doomed to be stigmatized forever. Probably the only salvation left is to start talking. People want the real gut facts. Talk! Lay down a broad base of suppressive fire. In the end we'll have to cover our own asses.

Sgt. Jim Pene
Americal Div.

"Platoon" gave the viewer a division-sized helping of special effects, a brigade-sized load of stereotypes, a battalion-sized fascination with violence, and a company-sized pile of negative media images.

"Platoon" gives us legs a squad's worth of help in educating a REMF America about what it was like. This movie adds a sandbag to the psychological ruck of each eleven-bush now on patrol back in The World.

Michael P. Beringer
5th Div. (Mech.)

The image pictured us all as cold-blooded murderers and schizoids. In reality, the theme should have been from "St. Crispian's Day" — haunting images of the past:

*We few, we happy few,
We band of brothers,
For he today, who sheds
His blood with me
Shall be my brother. . .*

John Riggs
Spec. Ops NCOIC

"Platoon" may be somewhat true. When the U.S. 9th Division arrived in our AO, the U.S. advisers, myself included, and the Vietnamese were repeatedly fired on and had tear gas dropped on us. We became fearful whenever we heard that the Americans were to make a sweep of our area. We tried to work with them, but the "shoot the slopes" discipline they lived by made us keep our heads low. U.S. units had so much ammo, you know!

Bradley Adams
Adviser, ARVN
Rangers

To be sure, Oliver Stone's leftist views underpin the movie and skewer its portrayals. But nothing is minimized, detracts from or diminishes the overall effect.

Where else in any movie ever made have you seen — felt — small-unit combat recreated as in this one. Fear, panic, savagery, violence, the whole panorama was there. You've got to give the devil his due. Stone recreated combat as close as it can be done on screen. It may be duplicated, but it won't be improved.

My politics are as conservative as any SOF reader's, but I won't allow political persuasion to deny this movie. Vietnam will live with me until the day I die. At least apportioned, this movie is a legacy of what I, we, experienced.

William S. Ungerman
25th Infantry Div.



During Operation Makaha, soldiers from 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 25th Infantry Division, search a village suspected of harboring VC. Photo: Dept. of Defense

I think your reviewer was much too kind to Mr. Stone. He spent much of his critique expounding the technical accuracies of the movie. The average combat veteran of the Vietnam War could care less about a 1980 Tanto showing up on someone's web gear.

I think Mr. Stone betrayed his fellow Vietnam veterans by once again portraying us as drug-crazed, baby-killing, generalized fuck-ups.

No one in the media seems interested in the good things we tried to do for the Vietnamese people on a personal level. We burnt no villages, I saw no innocent civilians killed and we did not rape.

I'm sure there was an occasional joint smoked if the wind was right, but not a bunker full of guys blowing their brains away. Such actions would have brought a cadre of senior NCOs bent on applying the Uniform Code of Military Justice to the letter.

SSgt. Norman D. Cantrell
199th Light Infantry Bde.

I saw this so-called Vietnam movie and came away from it profoundly depressed and disgusted. Since then I have had many people ask me: "Did you really do stuff like that over there?" I try to explain that there may have been isolated incidents of the nature depicted in the film, but I get the impression that no one believes a word I say.

I hope that one day the American people will realize that their sons and daughters were truly heroes in a dirty, ugly little war that no one gave a damn about.

Boyce C. Wright, 1st Marine Div.

We are talking about the "willful act of murder" that was brought out in the film "Platoon" and aimed at all of us who served.

I did not kill innocent civilians and even refused a direct order to fire across the bow of a junk because my fire would have ended up in a friendly village that the boat officer did not see from his position.

Allen C. LoBean
Swift Boat Gunner's Mate,
U.S. Navy

After recently seeing "Platoon" with my son, I've once again found myself in the uneasy position of defending my role in Vietnam.

Once again I can see the doubt and suspicion in the eyes of those I love, and again I have to suppress my own fears and doubts in an attempt to escape the ghosts of my memories of Dak To and Hill 875.

"Platoon" is just one more opportunity for the Jane Fondas of our country to say, "We tried to tell you what was happening."

Charles R. Snay
173rd Airborne Bde.

By the time Stone gets around to making "Platoon II," Hollywood will have discovered a way to give scratch-and-sniff cards to go along with the movie. Can you imagine sitting next to a couple of little old ladies and smelling burning shit, a decomposed body, marijuana smoke (might not be coming from the card), a crispy critter, burnt gunpowder, a piss tube, or Nuoc Mam? Numba fuckin' one.

R.J. Flett
3/21 Infantry

I took my folks to see the movie "Platoon" last week and I must say that I've been getting strange looks from them ever since. My mother in particular kept glancing over at me through the whole flick. I couldn't figure out whether she was expecting me to have a nervous breakdown or to jump up and open fire. I neither had nor did.

I guess the thing that pisses me off most about this movie is its overemphasis on murdering civilians and friendlies. I was never a party to, nor did I personally witness, any such atrocities.

If this movie is nonfiction, it sucks. If it's fiction, it's better than the average war movie.

James Klock
9th Infantry Div. ✕

BACK-UP POWER

Continued from page 53

inspect the chamber. Remove the barrel pin by pushing it to the right or left with a blunt instrument. Pull the trigger fully rearward and hold it back to disengage the push rod from the firing pin's cocking lug. Push the slide forward and off the frame. Tap the slide on the palm of your hand to free the breechblock. Pull it rearward and out of the slide. Rotate the backplate 90 degrees and withdraw it and the attached drive spring and guide rod. Pull out the firing pin and its front spring. Pull the barrel rearward to remove it and the recoil spring assembly from the slide. Remove the two screws holding the grip panels in place. No further disassembly is required. After cleaning, reassemble in the reverse order.

Eight different lots of ammunition were fired through the SD9 in an attempt to assess its salient features and defects, if any. Commercial ammo included Federal's 115-gr. JHP (Jacketed Hollow Point) and three loadings from Black Hills Shooters Supply (Dept. SOF, 3401 South Highway 79, Rapid City, SD 57701): 115-gr. JHP, 115-gr. FMJ (Full Metal Jacket) and 125-gr. Lead RN (Round Nose). Military ball ammunition of four types, all FMJ, was also tested: Israel Military Industries' sub-machine-gun load with a black-tipped color code (distributed by Action Arms, Ltd., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124), Spanish Toledo Arsenal ball (headstamped "FNT 1952"), Yugoslav ball manufactured at Prvi Partizan Titovo, Uzice in 1960 (headstamped "PPU60 KAL 9mm") and 1983-manufactured Portuguese ball (headstamped "FNM-83-5").

There were no failures to feed or eject throughout the entire course of the test. However, except for practice, military ball should not be used in this pistol as in every case two to three hits were required to ignite the primer. Milspec primer cups are usually 4- to 5-thousandths of an inch thicker than those used to manufacture U.S. commercial ammunition. The SD9's drive spring does not thrust the firing pin forward with enough force to reliably ignite these less-sensitive primers. Increasing the strength of this drive spring would only increase the trigger pull weight required to draw the firing pin rearward. As our test specimen had a pull weight of approximately 16 pounds, an additional increase would be unacceptable. In any event, so what? There were no failures to ignite U.S. commercial primers and, with modestly priced ammunition as accurate and consistent as that provided by Black Hills Shooters Supply, who needs anything more — or less?

We lost an average of 100 fps with all the ammunition fired through the SD9's 3.149-inch barrel when compared to results obtained from a Browning High Power and its 4.7-inch barrel. Most submachine guns, with an average barrel length of about 8 inches, will yield only 200 fps more than the

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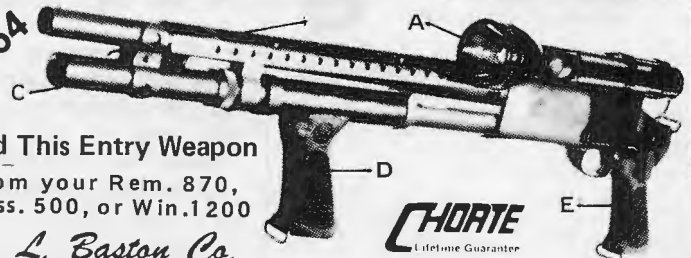
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SD9. Black Hills' 115-gr. JHP was the most accurate load, with an average velocity, 10 feet from the muzzle, of 1,033 fps and an amazing standard deviation of only 7 fps. At 21 feet this ammunition will dump six rounds into a 1.1-inch circle when fired from a strong Weaver hold. Spanish, Yugoslav and Portuguese military ball produced similar velocities but with far less accuracy. As expected, the Israeli black-tipped SMG ammo was about 100 fps faster. Our slowest loading was the Black Hills 125-gr. Lead RN. Its projectile, 10 grains heavier than the others, averaged only 942 fps, although the standard deviation was still just 10 fps. Complete results of the chronograph tests have been summarized in the table on page 53.

Hard primers excepted, the SD9 sailed through SOF's test and evaluation leaving little to criticize. Felt recoil was relatively mild with all loads tested, albeit slightly sharper with IMI's SMG round. Muzzle climb was moderate and target reacquisition times were normal for this caliber. The constant double-action trigger was initially irritating, but it can be mastered with practice. Most of the ammunition shot about 3 inches above the point of aim at 21 feet and somewhat to the right. The ejection pattern was consistently 4 feet to the right.

Imported by Armscorp of America (Dept. SOF, 9162 Brookville Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910), the suggested retail price of the Israeli SD9 is only \$329. Safe, accurate, robust and reliable, the SD9 is a fistful of dynamite. Those who must hide handguns in unobtrusive places are well advised to examine it closely. ✖

LOOK-ALIKES

Continued from page 63

quired. Reassemble in the reverse order.

Don't expect milspec performance from a plinking rifle. At 25 yards, using iron sights, these rifles will group within 1.1 inches using high velocity ammunition such as Winchester's T-22. Hyper velocity ammo, like Remington's Vipers, will open the group by only another .2 inch. Certainly not match-grade accuracy but still less than half the diameter of a beer can, the most probable target for rimfire, assault-rifle look-alikes.

We experienced two to three failures to feed with every magazine-full of ammunition fired through any of the four rifles. In all cases, the problem was magazine-related. The follower springs are marginal in compressive strength. Stretching them a few inches might help. Burrs inside the magazine body and lips need to be removed as they impede both follower and cartridge movement. Some of the magazine lips were spread too wide and need to be carefully compressed in a vise.

Rimfire ammunition in .22 caliber is notoriously dirty. Bullets are often lubricated with a waxy substance and unburnt



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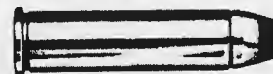
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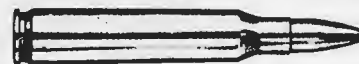
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particles of powder combine with carbon fouling to gum up the works. After 300 rounds, you had better be prepared to field-strip and clean the reciprocating parts. When ejected cases propel outward in slow motion and fall at your feet, you'll know it's time for a maintenance break.

A scope mount for the AK-22 or Galil-22, with dovetail mount for all tip-off .22 scopes, is available for \$29.95. A skeletonized folding stock for the Galil-22, fabricated from ABS plastic and complete with the long allen-wrench required for its installation, will set you back \$59.95. A slick little bipod with swiveling aluminum head and compact fold-away legs costs only \$29.95 and can be attached to any number of rifles.

When chambered for the .22 LR cartridge, take your pick of either the M16/22, AK-22, Galil-22 or MAS-22 for \$259.95. All are available in .22 rimfire Magnum for \$15 additional. The M16/22 is also chambered for the .32 ACP round.

Pleasure needs no further justification. All of these rifles provide a full measure of that ingredient, punctuated by irritating, although hardly life-threatening, stoppages. My personal favorite is the MAS-22. ✕

GRAVEYARD

Continued from page 55

elusive enemy.

The French had been battling in Indochi-

na since 1945, but by 1954 the tide of their war had turned against them. On 7 May 1954, almost all of Route 19 belonged to the communists. In order to save the mobile unit, the French high command ordered GM 100 to evacuate to Pleiku across 80 kilometers of what was then enemy-held road.

The evacuation of An Khe began at 0300 hours on 24 June 1954, when the entire unit left in a long convoy along Route 19. The unit was composed of three elements. The 43rd Colonial Infantry, comprising French and Cambodian soldiers, led the way. It was followed by the 2nd and then the 3rd Korea.

The convoys proceeded unhindered until 0900 hours, when the rear elements were ambushed. A short, fierce battle erupted. By 0930 the French had fought their way past the danger and rejoined the convoy.

By early afternoon the convoy had reached that part of the road that the Americans would later name, for good reason, "Ambush Alley." At 1420 hours an entire Viet Minh regiment hit the lead elements of the convoy and, at the same time, miles back, the rear of the convoy was also ambushed. In hours of fighting, GM 100 suffered hundreds of casualties, but they bravely struggled to hold their ground.

By late afternoon the entire column was surrounded by the enemy on all sides. The 803rd Viet Minh regiment continued to press the attack on what was left of *Groupe-ment Mobile 100*. Fighting was almost al-

ways hand to hand, with soldiers locked in combat alongside jeeps and trucks and in the ditches alongside the road.

By 1700 hours on 24 June, little more than half of the force remained. For miles along Route 19 lay burning trucks and vehicles of all types; dead men littered the road and ditches, and wounded men suffered alone in silence, afraid to scream out for fear of capture or worse. The decision was made to break out and try to link up with paratroopers from the 1st Airborne Group. Once joined, they would march on to Pleiku.

Forced to abandon their casualties, the remaining men began to withdraw at 1900 hours. After a long night march, and broken down into units of platoon size and smaller, the remaining men of GM 100 reached the 1st Airborne. What remained of the force arrived at Pleiku on 29 June. Of the original 3,198 men, fewer than 1,600 had escaped the ambush.

Six weeks later the French-Indochina war was over, and the dead of GM 100 and soldiers from other French units were buried high above the Mang Yang Pass. The battle had been so fierce and the burial took place so long thereafter that determining individual identities became impossible. The French, being forced to leave Indochina, were neither given time to make crosses or headstones, nor permitted to erect any monuments.

However, before they left they placed a small plaque alongside Route 19, miles away from the cemetery, at the site of GM

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100's final battle. This modest marker read, in Vietnamese and French: "Here soldiers of France and Vietnam died for their countries." The marker was placed at the spot where Mobile Group 100 met its fate.

Now, years after this battle, I was flying above this very same road, headed toward the final resting place of these French soldiers. We flew over a Montagnard village where the tribesmen below, clad in loin-cloths and smoking homemade pipes, waved up at us. After we passed their village, the terrain below began to grow rugged and the trees became more abundant.

We roared past LZ Schueller, an American firebase whose artillery blanketed the road, protecting American patrols in the surrounding jungle. At the gate of the firebase we could see a large sign that advertised "Pit Stop — Beer and Soda 25¢ — Security Free."

Minutes later we were over the approximate location of where GM 100 fought its battle. We could not locate the small plaque commemorating the spot because it no longer existed. When American troops first came to the Central Highlands in 1965, Route 19 was widened and asphalted, and became Highway 19. In the process, American engineers, knowing little of Vietnamese history, knowing nothing of *Groupement Mobile 100*, and unable to read either French or Vietnamese, plowed up and covered over that marker.

Several minutes later we were at the pass.

Our helicopter circled the area for a few minutes and then dropped down to insert us for our brief mission. We moved quickly away from our LZ, which was located alongside the cemetery, and the helicopter veered sharply away and disappeared. Our small team of seven fanned out in a diamond shape as we went over the ridge line and crossed over the hundreds of small patches.

At the very summit of the mountain across the old road, there was a small clump of trees. We hurried over to that tree line and Jerry Wilder from Plainsfield, New Hampshire, unloaded his cargo. It was a 2-foot by 3-foot masonite board sprayed white, with black stenciled letters all over its surface. While two other team members held the board up against a tree, Wilder withdrew a hammer and several large nails from his jungle fatigues and nailed the board to the surface of the tree. When he was finished, we all stepped back to admire this plaque which bore an inscription painted in black and in a language other than our own.

After taking only a few minutes to admire our handiwork, we called for the chopper. In our country it was a holiday, but for security reasons, we had no time for ceremonies.

Our little plaque wasn't much. We knew it wouldn't last forever, and it was probably foolish of us to do what we did. But to a man we all agreed that these soldiers so alone and so far away from their country deserved to be remembered and, by God, after all, it

was Memorial Day.

None of us knew enough of the French language or enough about French military tradition to draft a proper epitaph. All we could leave behind was a message that, when translated, reads:

Here for all eternity lies Mobile Group 100
Soldiers of France
Forgotten by most
Remembered by few
May they rest in peace.

The chopper quickly descended to pick us up and, as it whisked us away, I watched the top of the mountain and the Mang Yang Pass disappear. It was the last time I ever saw the pass or the top of that mountain.

As we left I began to have doubts and wondered if our efforts were even worthwhile. Perhaps, I wondered, our attempt to honor these soldiers was an empty gesture and nothing more.

Several years later, when I was a special agent in the United States Secret Service, I happened to be at an embassy party in Washington, D.C. There I met a minor French diplomat who had served in the Free French Forces during World War II. During the course of our conversation, I began telling him the story of *Groupement Mobile 100* and of those soldiers buried in unmarked graves so very far from France. Thoughtlessly forgetting that I was talking about his countrymen, and without noting the effect of the story on the man, I continued telling him about the plaque we had

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erected high up in the mountains and the inscription we had stenciled upon it.

When I looked up, I noticed the large man's eyes had turned moist, but his round, full face was beaming. He took my hand with both of his, shook it vigorously and said in his deep, rich voice, "Merci! Merci! Que Dieu vous bénisse!"

Then he turned quickly and proudly walked away. Perhaps, I thought, what we did that day was not a futile gesture after all. ✖

FULL AUTO

Continued from page 16

steel cleaning rod and a small brass oil can for \$225. New PPSH41 71-round drums are available for only \$50 each.

Machine-Gun Dreaming

How would you like a Soviet PK General Purpose Machine Gun for only \$1,395? Or a BAR for only \$695? Better yet, take your choice of these: Bren Mk I or II, \$795; 7.62x51mm NATO L4 Bren, \$1,100; Vickers, \$1,495; MP-40, \$795; Sten SMG, \$135; or unissued Soviet PPSH41 at \$595. And that's Canadian, not U.S., dollars. Sorry, U.S. residents can't have any of them. In semiauto-only, Canadian citizens can obtain them from Ontario Gun & Tackle (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1000, Matachewan, Ontario POK 1M0, Canada).

U.S. citizens can own any of these and numerous other classic machine guns sans the receiver and barrel. That's right, you can't have the barrel either. It seems that a provision in the new McClure-Volkmer Act aimed at stemming the flow of "Saturday Night Special" revolver barrels has been expanded by the pernicious wizards at BATF to include machine-gun barrels. Never mind that this was not the intent of Congress, the BATF has a long and infamous history of legislating its own will through published regulations that always push restrictions to the outer limits.

Ontario Gun & Tackle also sells individual components for the above firearms, and both parts and magazines for such things as the AK-47, Heckler & Koch G3, Sterling, M60 GPMG, M16, Soviet RPD, French MAT 49, FN FAL, Thompson, SKS, Lewis Gun, Ma Deuce, MG-34, MG-42, Browning 1919A6, AR-10 and SKS. A copy of their list is only \$1.00.

UZI Parts Kits

If you own a legally converted UZI, I advise you to avoid aftermarket bolts and barrels like the bubonic plague. I have more reports of unreliable performance from converted UZI carbines fitted with sleazy, junk parts than any other type of Title II conversion. Auto-Arms (Dept. SOF, 870 South Mason Road, Suite 104-730, Katy, TX

77450. Phone: 713-492-8718) has genuine Israeli government-issue UZI parts kits, in excellent condition, that include everything except the receiver for \$750 (with folding stock). These are not conversion parts and hence are perfectly legal (of and by themselves they will not turn a semiauto UZI carbine into a selective-fire weapon, nor were they designed solely and exclusively for that purpose). The barrels must be turned on a lathe to fit a converted UZI carbine. The grip assemblies have Hebraic selector markings. All components are phosphate finished (proper for a military-issue UZI).

Major components are available separately for the following prices: bolt with extractor, \$175; top cover, \$125; barrel, \$150; grip assembly, \$295; recoil spring, \$20; folding stock, \$65; and quick-detachable, IDF-issue wood stock (about 2 inches shorter than the Dutch-contract stock), \$100.

PARS International (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 420147, Houston, TX 77242) has new, IDF-issue web gear and can provide padded UZI slings for \$12 and IDF combat suspenders, pistol belt and two UZI magazine pouches, which hold five magazines each, for only \$65; complete.

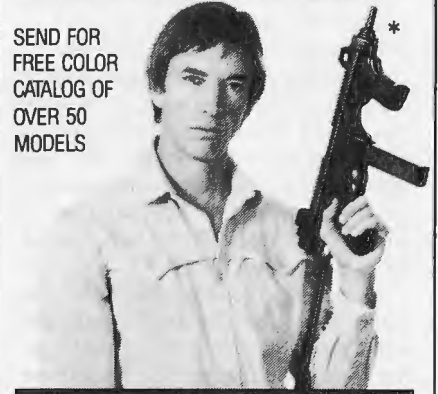
AP Ammo Ban

On 28 August 1986 the president signed Public Law 99-408 (100 Stat. 920), which regulates the manufacture, importation and sale of armor-piercing ammunition. This act defines the term "armor-piercing ammunition" as "a projectile or projectile core which may be used in a handgun and which is constructed entirely (excluding the presence of traces of other substances) from one or a combination of tungsten alloys, steel, iron, brass, bronze, beryllium copper or depleted uranium." It does not include steel shotgun pellets or projectiles determined to be primarily intended for sporting or industrial purposes. No one except licensed manufacturers and importers of armor-piercing ammunition may manufacture, import, sell or deliver armor-piercing ammunition.

Note, however, the expression "which may be used in a handgun," and that there is no reference to the possession or firing of such ammunition. Pursuant to the act, the BATF has published an initial list of projectiles considered to be armor piercing. They include KTW; ARCANÉ; THV; Czech or German-manufactured 9mm Parabellum ammunition with an iron or steel core; MSC .25 ACP ammunition; Black Steel Armor or Metal Piercing ammunition as manufactured by National Cartridge, Atlanta, Georgia; and 7.62x51mm NATO AP and SLAP (these latter two because some goon apparently produces a handgun in that caliber).

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Dangerous 9mm Ammo

I destroyed the barrel on my Sterling submachine gun the other day. As I've been preaching against the use of cheap military surplus ammo for years, it couldn't have happened to a more deserving person. Headstamped "H(broad arrow)N IIZ 9MM 44," the World War II British 9mm ball ammo I used is by now worth no more than its weight in scrap brass and is quite a bit more dangerous.

Unlocked, blowback submachine guns must be fed with reliable ammunition. If the propellant charge has gone sour, ignition of the primer may provide just enough force to drive the bullet into the bore but not out the muzzle. Recoiling forces will shove the bolt rearward far enough to pass the magazine well and return in counter-recoil to strip another round out of the magazine. Firing the second cartridge by means of advanced primer ignition will result in at least a bulged barrel and possibly more extensive damage to the bolt face, receiver and/or shooter. If a projectile lodges in the bore of a gas-operated weapon (to the rear of the

barrel's gas vent), no damage will occur, unless you're dumb enough to manually jack another round into the chamber.

There's a lot of 9mm garbage out there. Italian ball (headstamped "M38 9") has oversize case diameters by as much as .005 of an inch and won't even chamber in the closed-bolt Heckler & Koch MP5. Imagine what chamber pressures it develops when it's crushed home by the heavy bolt of an open-bolt burp gun. Spanish ball (headstamped "PS 1952") has consistently over-length cases. Some I have examined are dimensionally equivalent to 9mm Bergmann-Bayard (9x23mm). If you stuff it into the magazine, it will fire out of battery every time.

Stay away from all this trash ammunition no matter how attractive the price. ☒

KILLING GROUND

Continued from page 51

party was not yet far enough along it to deploy the sentries. The demolition team came up the bank and jogged off toward the bridge. Luck was with us; that night it was undefended.

Quickly, the demolition team set about its work. They went back down the bank and

into the water, which was much deeper here, with a firm current sweeping under the bridge. The charges were handed down to them and they swam out to the bridge supports and climbed up. Tins of plastic explosive were attached everywhere.

It was a difficult task but soon accomplished. The team swam back to the bank and clambered out. Once back on the road they made a hasty retreat to a safe point — still alarmingly close to the bridge.

Everyone was tense; a PAVN patrol could arrive at any second. A call went out to take cover and lie down. There was a three-second countdown, and the detonating plunger was activated. Silence, nothing happened. The plunger was tried a second time, still nothing. Two men doubled forward and vanished into the darkness. What seemed like several minutes passed before they came running back out of the darkness and threw themselves down. Again the three-second count before the plunger was activated, and again nothing but silence.

Then, just as Commander Khem Sophoan stood up to go and have a look himself, there was a bright orange flash and a terrific explosion as flames shot up into the night, lighting up all the men lying huddled along the bank. Large bits of timber and masonry began to rain down, splashing into the water and bouncing off the road all around us. Mission accomplished, we jumped up and started our withdrawal.

As we did so the diversionary attacks

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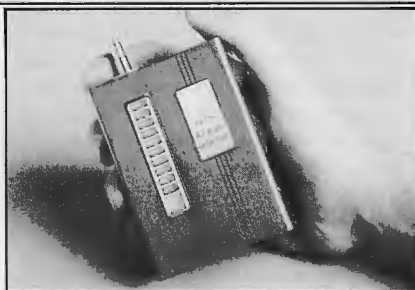
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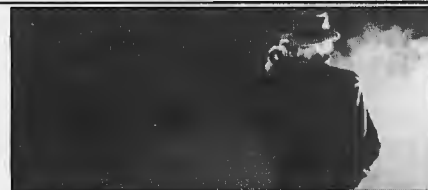
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started. The attack on the PAVN company position at Sala Krao, only a kilometer from us, was clearly visible. Tracers flashed to and from the PAVN base amid the explosions of many RPG rockets banging and thumping away. The diversionary attacks could only be brief, however, and we had to make as much ground away from the bridge as fast as possible before the PAVN was able to mount a follow-up operation.

The raiding party kept moving nonstop for the next seven hours before reaching a point where it was possible to catch two hours' sleep and to eat some rice before moving again. The mission had been successful and was typical of the type of operation mounted by the KPRLF in its new mobile guerrilla role.

On the return march the KPRLF column encountered a unit of the Khmer Rouge. The meeting was amicable, if not entirely relaxed. At one time there were often armed clashes between the communist and non-communist guerrilla forces, but these now appear to be less frequent (and usually due to the belligerence of individual commanders if they occur at all).

All three members of the tripartite military alliance of the CGDK rely on arms from China. There is also a limited amount of aid from the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Western countries, but most of this is restricted to the non-communist factions and is mostly of a humanitarian nature.

Cooperation among the CGDK members has improved to such a degree that they have even been able to mount joint military operations, some even of fairly large scale, such as the attack on the provincial capital town of Batdambang in April of 1986 — as a direct result of which Soviet advisers serving with PAVN in Batdambang withdrew to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia.

During the next dry season Colonel Prak Sen of the ANS, an ex-regular officer in the Cambodian Royal Army, set off with a column of men to resupply the ANS 2nd Brigade, which had penetrated deep into Cambodia to the Tonle Sap, the large lake which dominates the central part of the country. It was this column that was ambushed by the Vietnamese while crossing the National 6 Highway.

Not long after setting out from the Dong Rak escarpment on the Thai/Cambodian border, the column encountered what at first was thought to be a Heng Samrin government patrol. Happily, before any shooting started they realized it was not an army patrol but a group of seven deserters from the army.

Morale in the conscript Heng Samrin army is thought to be very low and desertions are not at all unusual. The Vietnamese do mount some joint operations with them but mostly restrict the role of Heng Samrin forces to that of static defense around fairly secure points.

The ANS closely questioned the deserters

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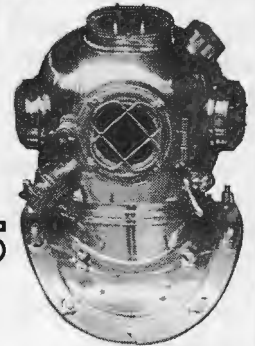
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to establish whether they were genuine. Having satisfied themselves that they were, the seven young men were allowed to join the ANS column and were very soon assimilated into its ranks, supplied with new camouflage uniforms and even trusted with weapons.

After a week of marching, in terrain now devoid of all water except at a few points, we reached the remains of a temple dating back to the height of the Khmer empire, more than a thousand years ago. Even then the Khmer feared invasion by the encroaching Vietnamese; a thousand years later, the age-worn walls of the temple were witness to just such an invasion. Part of the temple had been demolished and Colonel Yeoum Phoon of the ANS jungle warfare training school claimed that this had been done by a unit of Vietnamese soldiers while looting it of religious artifacts. Less than 40 kilometers away was Angkor Wat, the old capital of the Khmer empire.

The ANS column was able to move out across open country, winding between Vietnamese positions until it arrived close to the Tonle Sap, within six kilometers of its final destination. It was then that the PAVN launched a major offensive to stop the supplies getting through and to trap the column.

In order to escape as the PAVN moved in on all sides, the ANS made a series of swift moves and sustained some losses in the process. While crossing the Boeng Vein, a man was drowned. In repeated clashes with

PAVN reconnaissance patrols, several men were wounded. But by maintaining a punishing pace, Col. Prak Sen was able to extricate his men and bring them to the last physical barrier of their retreat north, the crossing of the National 6 Highway.

After the ambush the column re-formed and kept up the pace of the march. Several days and nights of fast, long marches followed before we were able to rest with any security. This we finally achieved on the banks of a river where fish were caught in abundance.

The column had not had to abandon the supplies in the course of evading the PAVN, and the goal of delivering them to the 2nd Brigade had by no means been abandoned. A base camp was established and we waited for the commander of the 2nd Brigade, Colonel Krouch Yeoum, to arrive with men to collect the supplies. This took some time to achieve, but in the end Col. Krouch Yeoum did arrive. He also brought some wounded to be evacuated, men who had been injured by the most effective weapon of the PAVN in the war being conducted in the forests of Cambodia — mines. These men were lucky: They had only lost part of their legs. Some of the new Soviet mines being laid will blow off both legs and are usually fatal.

There was a small gift for Col. Krouch Yeoum — a pipe. His last one had been lost during a clash with PAVN. It was soon lit, and he stood looking very content smoking.

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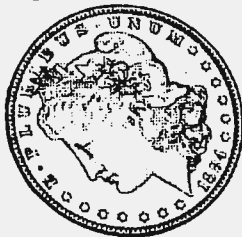
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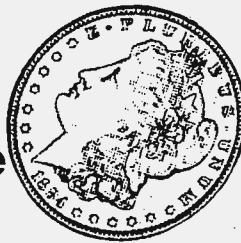
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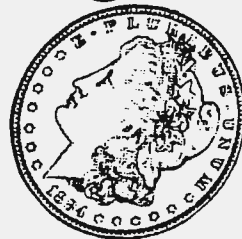
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Perhaps that feeling of contentment also had a lot to do with knowing that the pipe had arrived together with 100 RPG rockets, 25,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 50 mines and 168 10-kilo bags of rice and medical supplies, all of which were urgently needed by his men.

The supplies handed over, the two units parted. I headed north again for the last part of my journey. It was not very far to the Dong Rak escarpment on the Thai/Cambodian border, but it was very hazardous due both to the profusion of mines and the many PAVN patrols.

I was very surprised to see a young woman with a four-month-old baby in the column. Her name was Phung Sophan. She had been married to a member of the Khmer Rouge who divorced her. Shortly after that the Vietnamese arrived in the village where she was living and confiscated all her possessions for being the wife of a resistance member. They threatened to return and arrest her, which prompted her flight. Luckily, she met men from a KPRLF unit who were joining the ANS unit on its march north and they agreed to look after her. She was desperate to join a sister now living in a refugee camp in Thailand. On the march, soldiers took turns distracting the baby in order to keep it from crying and drawing PAVN patrols to our position.

The events I had witnessed were typical of the escalating war now being conducted in Cambodia. The conflict is not only a war of two seasons, the rainy and the dry, but also a war of two fronts, the border and the internal.

Of these two fronts both CGDK guerrilla forces and the PAVN realize that it is the latter — the internal front — that is all-important. The guerrillas seek to infiltrate to ever greater depth and to expand the sphere of their influence, while the Vietnamese plan to seek and destroy those forces before they are able to establish any solid infrastructure of support among the local population. Indeed, General L Duc Hnh, the commander of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, has said, "The place to build, consolidate and develop the people's right to mastery in order to defeat the enemies' schemes of controlling the population, carrying out sabotage operations and conducting rebellious and subversive activities is inland. A firm inland front will generate strength for the revolution in all respects and thwart all enemy schemes."

This statement could apply equally well to both the guerrilla forces of the CGDK or the regular forces of the PAVN. Neither side can afford to lose the struggle for control of the inland front. It is a place of sudden, frequent and bloody firefights fought at close range; where the closed, green world of the deep forest echoes and distorts the reports of assault rifles, RPD machine guns, M79 grenade launchers and RPG rockets.

At close range these vicious firefights sound like the approach of Armageddon, and farther off like a roll of distant thunder. ☒

BORDER LEGEND

Continued from page 37

was setting in the west, giving the Pacific Ocean a golden, sparkling, liquid-diamond appearance. To the south, the thousands of lights of Tijuana twinkled in the distance, made all the more brilliant by the black of night.

"You stand here and think you're in Acapulco, or Hawaii, or some other exotic tropical paradise," Stevens said. "From the top of these mesas, it's beautiful. We see some of the most spectacular sunsets in the country, right here. Under the cover of darkness, Tijuana looks beautiful, with all of its faults masked by darkness.

"It's just hard to believe that the cruelest form of human conduct is played out nightly in an area as beautiful as this. The contrasts are startling.

"Where else in the world do you have such beauty and such barbarity?"

Stevens buckled his web gear and returned to his unit. He descended from the beautiful panorama on top of the mesa into the bowels of the war zone — into Hell, as some Border Crime Prevention Unit officers have described the Otay River Bottom area.

In isolated sections along the river bottom, a mile north of the border, bandits wearing camouflage fatigues have randomly attacked illegal aliens in some of the most vicious assaults in recent memory. Besides assaulting, robbing and raping illegal aliens, these bandits, who were suspected members of street gangs in San Diego or Los Angeles, were slashing women's genitalia, often injuring them so severely they were left incapable of having children.

On that night there was no contact with bandits.

For Stevens there are parallels between working on the Border Crime Prevention Units and doing reconnaissance patrols in South Vietnam.

"There are some similarities," he said. "We're trying to help protect people from other violent people. During my second tour in 'Nam, which was the tour I enjoyed best, I ran recon. In 'Nam — and here — we had to be on guard at all times because you never knew when you'd be hit."

Stevens' first tour of duty in South Vietnam was during 1965 with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Iron Triangle and Bien Hoa. In 1967, his favorite tour, he was an adviser to the Vietnamese Rangers in the Mekong Delta, Can To and Phu Loi.

"I loved that tour because I lived with the Vietnamese," he said. "We got to see how the other half lived. We learned what our counterparts were up against in their villages, as well as in the field."

In 1970, in his third tour in Vietnam, he was assigned to the National Police as an adviser in Phy Quang near Saigon. That hitch ended abruptly when a convoy he was in was ambushed. He was medevacked with a serious leg injury. The driver of the truck he was riding in was killed instantly.

"I was lucky on that one," he said. "I only got shot in the leg."

Stevens received three Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry and one Purple Heart.

"I think I'm real lucky because I was able to apply my 11-B [light weapons infantryman] skills to my work stateside," Stevens said. "I'm proud of being a Border Patrol agent because we're protecting illegals from bandits while defending our borders."

"I'm going to patrol the canyons as long as the Lord will allow me." ✕

GURKHAS

Continued from page 45

To cap off the limited war phase, the Brigade Headquarters, constituted as Gurkha Field Force, may exercise a multi-battalion force in a limited war scenario, such as repulsion of a conventional incursion into an area of Hong Kong.

The result is a well-rounded force capable of meeting contingencies ranging from internal security duties to mid-intensity warfare. As if to make the point, 1/7 GR was one of the units committed when Britain's strategic reserve was needed in the battle to retake the Falklands in the summer of 1982. By all accounts it performed well. Far from being a quaint anachronism, the Gurkhas epitomize the manner in which a well-designed and well-run regimental system can greatly increase the effectiveness and capabilities of a military body.

Force for the Present

Spending time with a unit such as 10 GR is a unique experience for one who has been schooled in the American military system. While the number of battalions may vary, the regiment always exists. Its headquarters is constantly staffed by personnel drawn from its constituent battalions and thus has a continuing atmosphere of a reunion.



The Regimental Flag and Drums with Battle Honors of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles. Photo: Tom Marks

Having normally come in and out of the regiment for his entire career, the commander knows his officers and men well. Queen's Gurkha Officers, of course, remain constantly in the unit, while British Gurkha Officers are coming and going but always return to their regiment. The regimental commander attempts to guide the careers of his officers and seeks appropriate postings

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"It is in our interests to get young officers off so that they can keep us up to date on tactics and doctrine," 10 GR's regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel C.T. Newton Dunn, observed. "It's of benefit to them and of benefit to us. For example, I am now sending a young officer to be an instructor at the School of Infantry. When he returns he'll be able to give us the benefit of his experience."

British Gurkha Officers themselves choose the regiment either upon graduation from Sandhurst or later when openings appear. They are expected in their first years with the regiment to learn its traditions and customs, the basics of leadership and military proficiency, and the ins and outs of their Gurkha charges, to include the Gurkhali language. To assist them are the QGOs who form the hard core of experience and know the functioning of their units. They fall into just three ranks: lieutenant (QGO), captain (QGO) and major (QGO). Each battalion has but a single major (QGO). He is the commander's adviser on all Gurkha matters and exercises well-nigh supreme power over the Gurkha troops and QGOs. Each officer, in turn, whether a QGO or British Gurkha Officer, is assigned on six-month rotation an orderly who performs those functions the U.S. Army normally associates with the platoon or company commander's RTO (radio-telephone operator). He is not a servant but an assistant who takes care of many mundane matters while the officer goes about his own tasks. For the British Gurkha Officers, the orderly is often invaluable in learning and remaining proficient in Gurkhali.

Gurkha soldiers normally remain with the same regiment throughout their service. It is home. Soldiers serve 15 years and then leave with pensions. Those who make the rank of sergeant or warrant officer may serve up to 22 years; QGOs may serve longer.

New recruits are as young as 17. The enormous number of applicants who vie for the limited openings ensures that only a high caliber of individual is selected. Initial screening in Nepal is carried out by ex-Gurkha servicemen who make certain that prospective recruits are up to regimental standards. Virtually none of those who are finally picked and flown to Hong Kong for training drop out. Those who stagger, usually for reasons of illness or language difficulties, are in most cases recycled.

Nepal has changed considerably over the years, and the encroachment of modernization has affected even the most distant clans. In particular, the average recruit is much better educated than just a decade ago.

"The boys who come now are not like us," a QGO stated in an after-dinner discussion one evening. "They have education, are more worldly. Sometimes we get a problem with them, because they try to take advantage. But nothing has changed all that much. We get good soldiers."

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full-fledged members of the regiment, new Gurkhas are assigned to a nine-man section, the British equivalent of a squad. Battalion structure is similar to the American. Three sections and a headquarters comprise a platoon; three platoons and a headquarters make a company. A battalion, though, has four rifle companies in addition to the Support Company and Headquarters Company. In an interesting variation, the Regimental Band — bagpipes and drums — doubles as a machine-gun unit.

Weaponry is appropriate to light infantry missions. The Gurkhas are in the process of phasing in the new British 5.56mm rifle, the SA-80, and its companion machine gun, the Light Support Weapon (LSW). A test company is determining how to make best use of these, and is now dividing each section into two fire teams, each with three SA-80s and an LSW. It is planned that the band will keep the 7.62mm machine gun for sustained fire roles. Interestingly, there is no grenade launching capability, though the M79 grenade launcher is available for special missions. To beef up firepower, each platoon is equipped with 51mm light mortars; 81mm mortars are fielded by the Support Company.

It is not the weapons, however, that are crucial. It is the regimental structure that creates a much more cohesive unit than is possible under the American system of individual replacement. Being a Gurkha in the British Army increases the bonds. The troops stick together not only for reasons of race and language but also because most are tucking away as much money as they can for retirement and do not seem to fritter away their pay in typical soldier's fashion. On their savings and pensions they can lead a fairly comfortable life in Nepal. Though they are by no means hermits and are known to enjoy a party as much as the next man, it is noteworthy that many Gurkhas, judging from training notes I examined, volunteer for group adventure training during block leave. Similarly, sports of all sorts are favored off-duty pastimes. Gurkha runners have achieved considerable success in both British military and Hong Kong open competitions. One set of statistics, which compared 2/2 GR to a battalion of the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR), even found that only 11 percent of the Gurkhas smoke, as compared to nearly 77 percent of the British unit. Cost was given as a major reason for the Gurkha abstinence.

Lest they appear immune to vices, it should be interjected that Gurkha soldiers are only human. In classic soldierly fashion, one private I questioned said he hated the army because "it is like a prison." Others in both Nepal and Hong Kong complained about inadequate pay. The soldiers are keenly aware of relative purchasing power, and all enjoy the higher rates they earn while stationed in Britain. Still, while Gurkha pay is, indeed, about half that received by a British soldier, most troops did not find it a major problem. Pay is received free and clear. Everything, from food to uniforms to

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transportation home on tri-annual leave, is paid for by the army. Furthermore, in Nepalese terms, Gurkha salaries are princely. As is often noted — accurately — the average British Gurkha rifleman makes more per month than the Prime Minister of Nepal.

This, of course, means nothing to a soldier attempting to afford a bar girl in Wanchai or a stereo purchased at the China Fleet Club. But such diversions, as most Gurkhas will readily volunteer, have never been what being a Gurkha is all about. They are bound to intrude increasingly as individuals no longer see travel and duty in quite the same light as their predecessors. Regardless, for the moment, such individuals are clearly a very small minority. To most who join, the rewards are ample — a chance to serve, to see the world and share adventure, and to leave honorably with an income guaranteeing a measure of security in Nepal.

"I'm very impressed with the Gurkhas," observed 10 GR's training officer, a member of the Royal Anglian Regiment on secondment. "They are thoroughly and utterly professional. You join because you want to be a soldier."

Professionalism is indeed what the Gurkhas are all about. It is because they are so good at their profession that Britain goes to extreme lengths to keep them in its service. Searching for a single incident that lays out the Gurkha approach, the essence of their particular concept of service which makes them so successful at the profession of arms, I recall a conversation with 27-year-old Corporal Narrain Kumar Limbu. As we stood that dark night on the China border and chatted, I asked him why he had enlisted. A Gurkha for nine years, he answered, "I like to visit in all countries."

That much I had heard before. I probed a bit more. As a soldier, he would probably get to do a great deal of traveling, but wasn't there the possibility that a war might rudely interrupt his itinerary? Did he ever worry about fighting? Came the answer, softly, yet quick as a flash, the Gurkha philosophy of soldiering in a nutshell — "No worry. If get any chance to fight, worry. But no worry now." ❧

IN REVIEW

Continued from page 23

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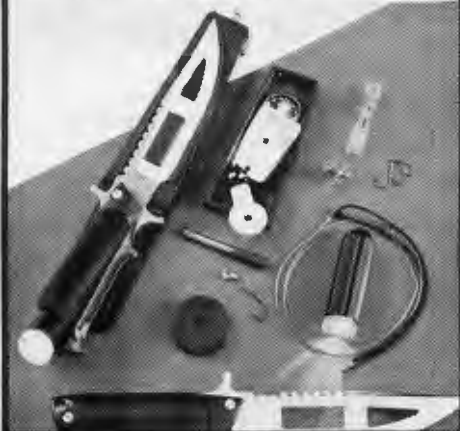
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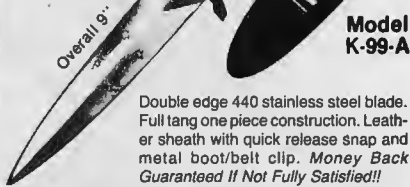


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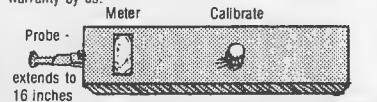
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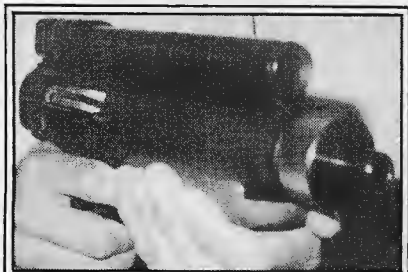


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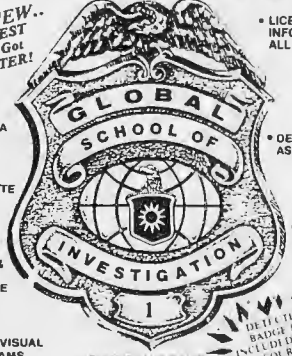
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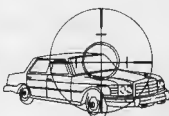
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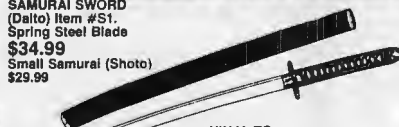
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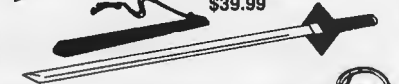
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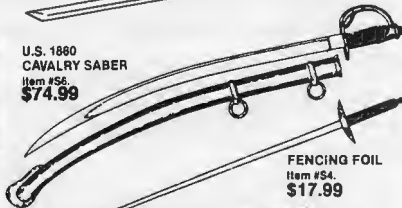
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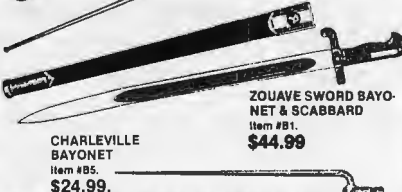


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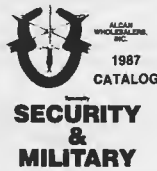
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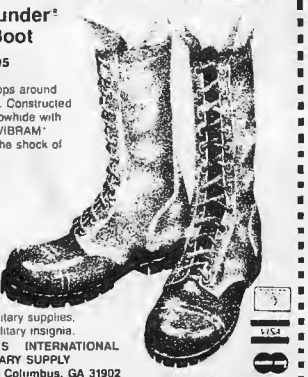
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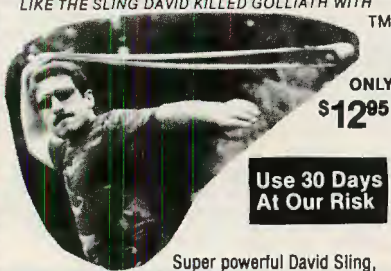
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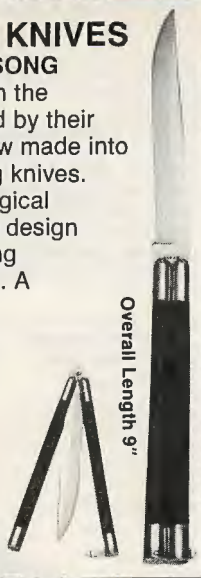
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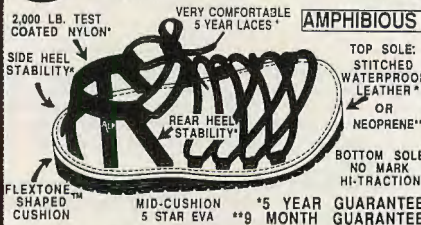
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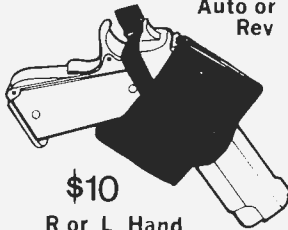
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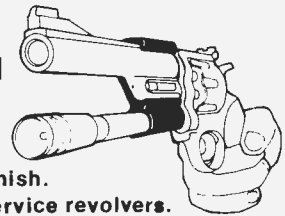


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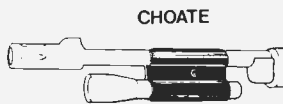
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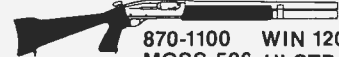
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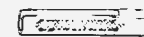
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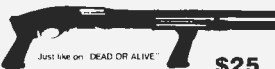
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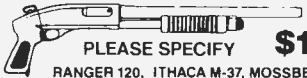
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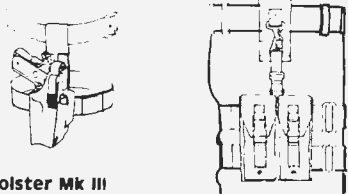
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