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The Journal of Professional Adventurers

JANUARY
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COVER: Elite Soviet Spetsnaz troops are operating within U.S. borders — but our government wants it kept a secret. Who are these highly trained, ultra-secret operatives, and what's their mission here? SOF takes a close look at one of the world's toughest — and least known — covert military forces, beginning on page 56. Photo: courtesy of the authors

COVER INSET: SOF contributor and experienced Africa vet Bob Jordan recently double-timed to Mozambique to secure the release of missionaries held by RENAMO, Mozambique's democratic resistance force. Mozambique's communist FRELIMO government, as well as liberal media around the world, had reported the incident as a brutal kidnapping. Jordan brings you the true story, beginning on page 82. Photo: Bob Jordan

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown



Criminal Justice

WHAT passes for justice in New Jersey is criminal. During the past three years over 69,000 firearms, mostly rifles and shot-guns, have been seized by police in New Jersey. The firearms weren't seized from felons who used them in the commission of a crime or from the illegal arsenals of terrorists, but rather from law-abiding citizens acting in accordance with their Second Amendment rights.

Honest citizens have found themselves the victims of zealous officials bent on restricting citizens' rights. Interstate truck driver Lukey Schafer was taken from the hospital where he was being treated for injuries received in an accident and arrested for illegal possession of a firearm. Police had found an unloaded shot-gun in his truck, which is permitted by federal law. At police barracks he was left chained to a pole for nearly six hours. When he asked if he could phone a lawyer, he was told by police, "You've been listening to too many TV programs." Police have yet to decide if they will prosecute Schafer.

The zealots in New Jersey, for the most part, aren't the rank and file law enforcement officers themselves, but the brass who direct their efforts. In a letter from the Middlesex County prosecutor's office to police chiefs in that jurisdiction, Prosecutor Alan Rockoff ordered that, if a policeman responding to a domestic dispute sees or is told about a weapon in the house, "that weapon must be seized" and the weapon "shall not be returned. . . . until the Prosecutor's office is ordered to do so by a court of competent jurisdiction."

But so fervent are the authorities

that sometimes even a court order is not obeyed. In April 1985, Stan Gurski was called home from duty with his Army reserve unit for an "emergency." He arrived to find state and local police, the BATF, the FBI and a bomb squad, as well as the media, who had been summoned by the police. Gurski was arrested for violations of the state's firearms laws. A jury found Gurski innocent of all charges but, despite that and a court order, several of Gurski's guns have not been returned by authorities.

New Jersey officials not only confiscate firearms but also go to extraordinary lengths to keep citizens from obtaining them. One woman applied for a firearms identification card, which she finally received some five years later, on the day she moved out of the state. The delay was caused by a police chief who didn't think women should have firearms. In another case, a police officer applied for a permit to purchase a handgun. The process, which by law must be completed in 30 days, took over a year.

These cases and others like them are being brought to light by the New Jersey Coalition of Sportsmen. They have publicized the abuses and taken their case before the legislature. Their efforts deserve wider attention, and SOF is researching an article for a future issue.

Justice, as any reasonable person will tell you, is the finding of the truth. Thanks to efforts by the New Jersey Coalition of Sportsmen and the NRA, the truth about abuse of New Jersey citizens' right to keep and bear arms is starting to come out. We can only hope that in the end, the result will be justice for the law-abiding people of New Jersey. ✎

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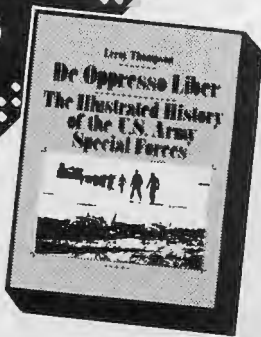


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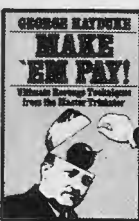
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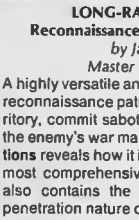
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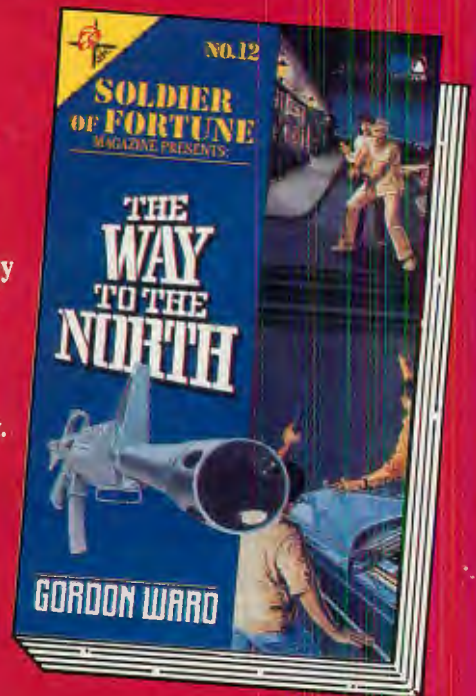
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SOLDIER of FORTUNE



STINGING IVAN...

Sirs:

"The Sting That Kills" (SOF, September '87) about the mujahideen Stinger antiaircraft missiles was very informative and entertaining. But I have one question. Will the mujahideen receive any more missiles? They only got 150 Stingers and the mujahideen will certainly run out of missiles before the Soviets run out of aircraft.

Steven Litel
Fulton, Missouri

To our knowledge, the U.S. will continue to supply Stingers to the mujahideen.

PILOT ERROR...

Sirs:

In reference to the article "Contra Air" beginning on page 34 of SOF, October '87. On page 36, the photograph under Cobel and Cooper showing the individual to be the author John Piowaty is in error. The pilot is John McRainey, not Piowaty.

S. Houseman
Reno, Nevada

CORRECTION...

A weapon was misidentified in the October SOF. The mujahid on pages 68-69 is actually carrying a British caliber .577 Model 1858 rifled musket. This even got by Technical Editor Peter Kokalis, who offers the feeble excuse that he's never humped the bush with a 19th-century muzzle-loader.



FLAK



CORRESPONDENCE ON CORRESPONDENTS...

Sirs:

The article "Bayonets at Binh Thai" (SOF, October '87) by Charles Henderson was most enjoyable, brought back a lot of old memories and was for the most part accurate in depicting what went down.

However, the reference to George MacArthur as bureau chief in Saigon is incorrect. For that matter, there never was a Chief of Bureau of the Associated Press in Saigon, let alone MacArthur. The title was Chief Correspondent and the man who held it at the time was Ed White, the best one of them all. MacArthur wasn't even in-country when Binh Thai was fought. He didn't arrive until about a year and a half later.

Also, it's only a technicality, but Eddie didn't actually write the story. The way that went down was that photographers would describe an action and turn notes over to a correspondent who'd write it. Correspondents who carried cameras usually, although not always, gave their film to photographers if they were working together. In any case, Eddie's story was "written" either by White, Peter Arnett or John Wheeler.

That is not to denigrate Adams, who was a fine, gutsy photographer, but rather to keep the record straight about the activities of newsmen, particularly those of the combat variety, in Vietnam. It's a much misunderstood record as it is.

Bob Poos
Arlington, Virginia

Bob Poos is a former SOF managing editor and was a correspondent for the Associated Press in Vietnam.

MERCYS OR MURDERERS IN SURINAME?...

Sirs:

The article by Patrick Chauvel, "Mercs in Suriname" (SOF, June '87), is dangerously misleading. To depict a band of terrorists led by mercenaries as "heroes" when they are responsible for the deaths and kidnappings of dozens of innocent civilians and have caused thousands more to flee their homes in fear, is not only irresponsible journalism but borders on aiding and abetting these criminals.

These "heroes" receive their financial support from foreign private interests abroad who desire to overthrow the current government and install a puppet government of their own choosing. They seek to disrupt the political process that has been set in motion to ratify a new Constitution and to give the Surinamese people an opportunity to elect their own democratic government. The election is scheduled for 25 November 1987.

This article is in serious error on two important points. There have been no "executions" by Surinamese government forces of innocent civilians and no confirmation of such actions by Amnesty International. There are no Libyan advisers, military or otherwise, in Suriname.

While I understand that articles about the adventures of mercenaries make more interesting reading than articles about free elections, I would hope that your readers would agree with me that a political solution is better than a military one. I encourage these mercenaries to go home and find a better way of earning a living.

Arnold Th. Halfhide
The Ambassador of Suriname
Washington, DC

We contacted Patrick Chauvel concerning Ambassador Halfhide's letter. He reiterated the point that, to his knowledge, executions of Surinamese civilians had taken place. His source was a French doctor, Michel Bonnot, who was working inside Suriname treating civilian villagers and refugees. In one instance, Bonnot heard shots from a neighboring village. When he arrived, he found 14 bodies. One survivor, a nine- or 10-year-old



child, said that an hour before the shootings, they had heard the noise of a helicopter. Thereafter, a number of Surinamese and white soldiers (as Chauvel explained, to a bush negro child, "white" could be anyone from a Vietnamese to a Libyan) entered the village and started shooting. They later headed toward the Surinamese government-held town of Albina.

According to Chauvel, photographs and a video of the massacre were made; Dr. Bonnot later held press conferences in Holland where he displayed his evidence.

Could the rebels led by Ronny Brunswijk and their British mercenary advisers have committed the crime? Chauvel says absolutely not. During his trips into Suriname, he found the relationship between the rebels and the local civilians to be good, with no advantage to be gained by such an act. Chauvel also said that Bouterse had broadcast an earlier message warning the locals to move out of that area.

Ambassador Halfhide's statement that there are no confirmations of human rights violations by Amnesty International is blatantly false. According to Rona Weitz with AI in Washington, DC, their office has recorded numerous human rights violations — including executions of civilians by government forces — in Suriname.

We fully agree with Ambassador Halfhide's sentiment that political solutions are better than military solutions. That's if there's a true

representative vote from the electorate, rather than a stage-managed, rubber-stamp facsimile of an election. We await the results of 25 November; watch for a Sunname update in an upcoming issue.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT...

Sirs:

In response to certain allegations made in your articles, "Soldiers of Misfortune," I'd like to set the record straight on points where my name has been mentioned or my reputation questioned.

In part one, author Pierre Duvall alleges that:

1. I received \$25,000 for a similar contract.
2. I did not return unused expense money.
3. That I would be party to "milking a client."

I will state that I have never received \$25,000 for a similar contract and would not have informed Mr. Duvall if I did so. I have always strictly accounted for salaries or expenses with either receipts or the release of funds on dual signatures with the client or his representative. I have never "milked a client" or would I condone those or associate with personnel who would. It was also stated that I recommended an employee who was a user of drugs and alcohol. As I consider such personnel in the

business with those problems nothing more than garbage, I would never recommend anyone for employment if I had previous knowledge of such use.

Some other notable quotes are: "Foti wanted too many guarantees (backups)" and "he wanted too much money." There would be no such thing as too many guarantees in a contract such as this. I believe it's called planning for contingencies. I like to live to spend my money. There's no such thing as too much money in any contract. Perhaps there are people, due to their backgrounds and inability to adapt to a civilian environment, who will work for next to nothing. I am not and neither will most professionals in the business. I am able to supply prospective employers extensive professional and personal references from previous clients and working associates which verify my expertise, experience and my reputation for total honesty, accountability and integrity with employer funds. As Mr. Duvall says, "Double cross too many people in the business and pretty soon you're out of it, or dead." I have been a regular and freelance soldier, instructor, bodyguard and security consultant since 1967. After extensive combat experience in three major wars, minor wars, and high-threat level tasks or personal security positions in many locations, I am still in the business and alive.

SOF Magazine usually has a good standard of journalism and professional competence but rarely gets its stories from actual merc operations. Due to the fact that SOF scooped the competition I am surprised that the magazine did not attempt to verify the information from other personnel. I would hope that this would be the case in the future.

Robert Foti
New York, New York

ONE UP ON CALIFORNIA COMMIES...

Sirs:

I had the most exhilarating experience of my life the other day. The local communist sympathy group, "Monterey Pledge of Resistance," held a "peace march" from Santa Cruz to Monterey followed by a large rally, which

Continued on page 102

AFRICAN MERC COMBAT MANUAL

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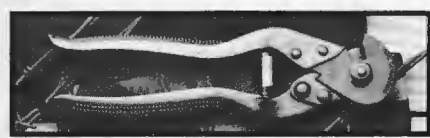


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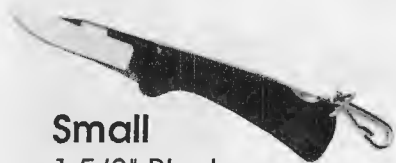
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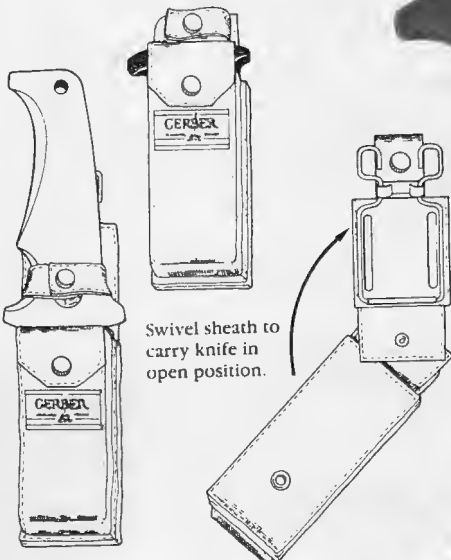
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Dustoff Association

Dustoff Association's 1988 Annual Meeting/Reunion will be held 19-21 February in San Antonio, Texas. Membership is open to all officers, WOs and EM Army Medical Department personnel, aviation crew members and others who are or have been engaged in or actively supported in any capacity Army aeromedical evacuation programs in war or peace. Contact Dustoff Association, PO Box 8091, Wainwright Station, San Antonio, TX 78208; or call Joe Madrano at (512) 659-4237.

281st AHC

Former members of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company, stationed at Nha Trang, are planning a 1988 reunion. Unit members, SF personnel or other interested parties should contact Duane Brudvig, 8208 Sumter Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445; or call (612) 425-0759 for more information.

NINTH ANNUAL SOF CONVENTION...

It's not too early to make your plans for attending the 1988 *Soldier of Fortune* Convention, coming 14-18 September at Las Vegas, Nevada. We were SRO at last year's gathering, so make your bookings early. Watch for our full-page convention ad next month for all the details and pre-registration information.

BULLETIN BOARD



SOF AND YOU...

1988 marks the 13th year of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine. Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown and the SOF staff extend to you, our half-million readers around the globe, our deepest appreciation for your support not only of SOF, but also of the thousands of men and women around the world who carry on the battle for freedom — often in the face of nearly insurmountable odds.

This new year, take a moment to think about the troops in the trenches — from the contras down south to the mujahideen in Afghanistan to UNITA in Angola — whose only present may come in the shape of a Soviet-supplied AK round or Hind attack helicopter. If you're thinking about New Year's resolutions, resolve to write your political reps in Washington and express your firm support for freedom fighters around the globe. Make 1988 your year to get involved — or by 1998 you may be counting your money in Russian roubles.



Oops! This PLF doesn't even qualify for a three-point, feet-butt-head arrival. At least the Screaming Eagle in the background may have it easier — if he ever gets down. Photo was taken by PFC Gerald Smith at Ft. Campbell during a brigade-sized training jump prior to the 101st's deployment to Vietnam in 1966-67. Thanks to Daniel D. Kelsch for sending it in.

FRANCE: 1 LIBYA: 0...

The 14-year-old war between Chad and Libya is heating up, as we reported in our November 1987 Bulletin Board. Now it seems France, which once administered Chad as a colony, is stepping more visibly into the act.

French military forces have long assisted Chadian troops in terms of training and supplies (and, we suspect, in providing a bit of in-the-field advice) and by asserting that France would come to Chad's aid if Libyan forces invaded that country. Otherwise, France has maintained a low public profile in Chad when it comes to military matters.

In early September 1987, however, French forces reportedly shot down a Soviet-made Libyan TU-22 bomber flying near the Chadian capital of N'djamena — and did it with a U.S.-supplied Hawk surface-to-air missile. And if that weren't enough to unravel Khadaffi's turban, some 2,000 Chadian troops invaded Libyan soil for the first time when they attacked and destroyed the Libyan *Matan as Sarra* air force base; this coming after Chad had pushed most of the Libyan forces out of their country in August.

Don't be surprised if you start reading about terrorist attacks on soft French targets around the world. It's the only way Khadaffi knows how to strike back.

HONOR ROLL...

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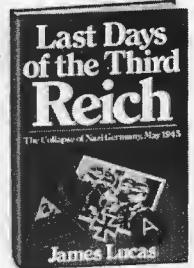
John D. King, C.W. DeSpain, Lee Koslowski, Antonio de la Cruz — in memory of Major Fernando Rivas Dominici USAF — killed in action over Libya.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to these people and the numerous other donors who requested their names not be printed.

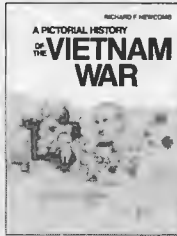
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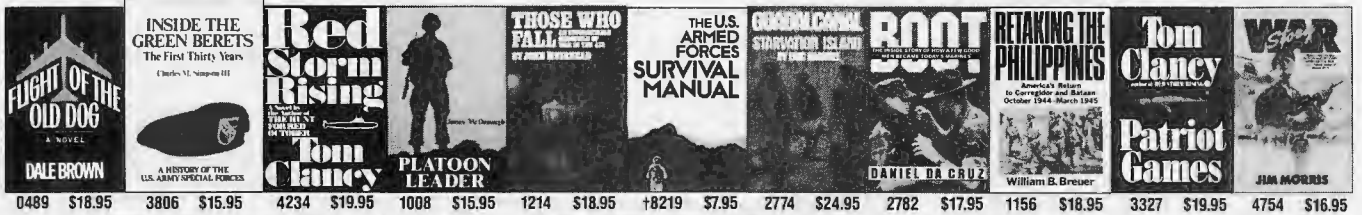
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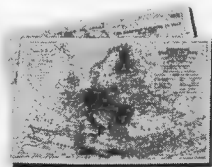
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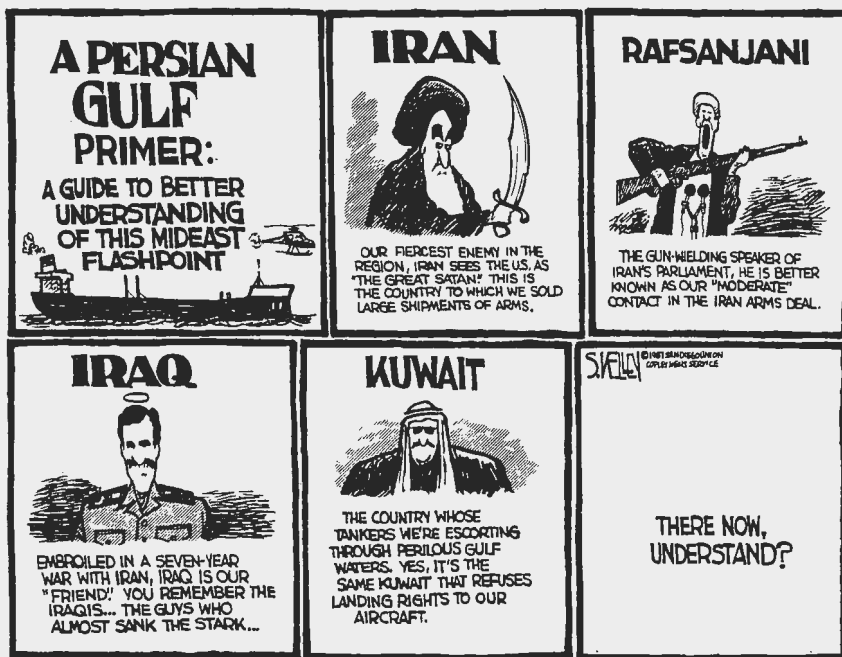
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CONTRAS STILL KICKING...

In light of the so-called Central America peace initiative, we don't know what the future will hold for the Nicaraguan Resistance fighting to free its country from the tyrannical grip of the Soviet-supported Sandinista government. While there are still supplies in the pipeline, however, the freedom fighters continue to successfully strike telling blows against Sandinista military forces.

Rebel units belonging to the 15th of September Regional Command and led by commanders Canario, Comelio and Palestino of the Nicaraguan Resistance's Army Northern Front attacked the Sandinista military garrison at La Patriota in Matagalpa Province at 0400, 8 September 1987. This attack, which lasted two hours, took place within the Sixth Military Region of the Sandinista army. Sandinista casualties were estimated at 13 dead and 10 wounded; captured supplies and equipment included three RPK light machine guns and eight AK-47s with a total of 20,000 rounds, one RPG-7 and 27 rounds, two Makarov pistols, a set of military maps and 66 pairs of military boots.

It may not be the Normandy invasion, but it'll do.

FIBER AND HANOI JANE...

This may be old news by now, but it's good news nonetheless. Nabisco, whose cereal products have graced breakfast tables for eons, decided that Hanoi Jane Fonda and her exercise video should also grace the back of their shredded wheat cereal box. Imagine a former POW having to stare at that in the morning! Well, the hue and cry went out in October of last year, led by ABC radio's Bob Grant in New York. We followed up on it, and the very next day Nabisco announced: "The Nabisco Shredded Wheat sales promotion involving the offer of an exercise video cassette featuring the actress Jane Fonda has been cancelled and will not be renewed. There will be no additional production of packages mentioning the promotion or any advertising of the promotion."

We'll give Nabisco a few points for pulling Jane off the shelves; but of course they only did it because of public outcry and the promise of negative publicity. Too bad they didn't stop to think about that in the first place.

NAVY "TERRORISTS"...

If a Soviet *Spetsnaz* or Third World terrorist team tried hard enough, there's little doubt they could enter just about any restricted U.S. military or civilian facility here

or overseas, blow it up and vanish. We know that and, more importantly, so do the bad guys. Enter the Naval Security Coordination, or "Red Cell," Team. The mission of this secret Naval force is to test the security of restricted areas, conduct mock terrorist attacks and occasionally snatch a hostage or two. Based upon their after-action reports, security will supposedly be beefed up.

Although their work is no longer classified, few details have been made public. In 1985, for example, Red Cell commandos infiltrated the Naval base at Norfolk, Virginia, and planted simulated explosives on the roof of the command center. Later the team returned, conducted "raids" against aircraft and ships in dock, captured the base CO's home and took hostages. In another incident, Red Cell members walked, unchallenged and in broad daylight, aboard a nuclear attack sub berthed at New London, Connecticut. In California, Red Cell managed to park a truckload of mock 500-pound bombs in a hangar housing experimental aircraft at Point Magu.

The story's the same overseas: an admiral taken "hostage" in Naples, Italy; a "suicide"-team ramming of the U.S.S. *Kitty Hawk* as it steamed into Subic Bay, Philippines; and a major exercise in Japan.

Films are made of Red Cell attacks and used in briefing involved parties afterward. Hopefully, the program will lead to a strengthening of base security. Next time around, it could be Colonel Khadaffi's boys come a callin'.

COMMANDO RELEASED...

For two years, South African Defence Force Major (then captain) Wynand du Toit languished under the not-so-tender mercies of the communist Angolan government. Du Toit was captured during a reconnaissance mission inside Angola (see "Recce Commando," SOF, January '86), and subjected to brutal torture. Word comes that du Toit was exchanged in early September 1987 for 106 Angolan prisoners of war; a Frenchman, Pierre André Albertini, who had refused to testify at a terrorism trial; and suspected Dutch gunrunner Klaas de Jonge. Some countries, at least, don't forget their POWs.

Welcome back, major. ✕

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"The rarest and most valuable knife of the Vietnam War."

In this, the 20th Anniversary of the main buildup of American forces in Vietnam, The American Historical Foundation is proud to pay tribute to the Americans of all branches of the military who served our country in the Vietnam War.

Each service branch is being honored through the special issuance of a museum-quality military fighting knife authentic to the Vietnam War. The tribute announced here honors the United States Marine Corps.

The combat scene, etched and plated with genuine 24-karat gold, permanently records a vertical envelopment, supported by Marine Air. The Leathernecks in the assault, the ultimate weapon of the Corps since 1775, are accurately detailed down to the flack jackets and green-side-out helmet covers.

Rarest and Most Valuable

This 11" fighting knife was originally created for the "Special Operations" missions of MACV-SOG. Called the "SOG Bowie," it was the only fighting knife issued to troops in all four military service branches in Vietnam (SOG was a joint service operation). It is known as "the rarest and most valuable knife of the Vietnam War."

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What also makes this special is that it is benchmarked by the Murphy Combat Knife Company, established in 1938

and well known for supplying knives to American military men. Murphy was the first to make this knife since the Vietnam War, and this series marks the first commemorative versions ever made. And this is the only SOG Bowie ever made in the U.S.A.—important to American veterans and collectors.

The butt and crossguard are precision cast from a hand-engraved master, mirror polished, plated in pure 24-karat gold and antiqued to highlight the detailed English scroll pattern.

The gold-plated, cloisonne enamel symbol of the U.S. Marine Corps proudly forms the focal point of the polished, deluxe leather grip.

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But the beauty isn't just skin deep. This is a real, battleworthy, military knife — strong enough to pierce a car door. A full quarter-inch thick, the distinctive, 6 1/4" blade is hardened and tempered of the finest high-carbon stainless steel to RC57-59. For extra strength, the thick tang runs the full length of the grip, contoured with finger grooves to prevent slipping in combat. It is even fitted with a Marine Corps scarlet parachute cord wrist thong.

To display and protect the investment value of your knife, a furniture-finished solid mahogany display case is available. Lined with Vietnam-era woodland leaf-pattern camouflage, it measures 14" x 3" x 6".

Limited Edition of 2500

Only 2500 of this knife are being made — only one for every one thousand Americans who served — to assure

importance and value as a collectible. The limited edition serial number is engraved on the reverse of each blade and inscribed on the Certificate of Authenticity. For an additional \$19, the knife can be personalized with your name, service serial number, dates, etc. engraved on the blade reverse.

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Please personalize my knife, at \$19. Send the Engraving Form.

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SPEWING bullets at the then amazing rate of up to 1,300 rpm, the terrifying sound of its fire ripped through the hearts of every Tommy on line with the British 8th Army. Introduced on the field of battle by Rommel's Panzer Grenadiers at Gazala in the African desert during May of 1942, the MG 42 soon earned a sobriquet as "Hitler's Zipper." Although far from perfect, it is generally conceded to be one of the finest weapons to emerge from World War II.

In tactical concept it was to be identical to its predecessor, the MG 34 — the world's first General Purpose Machine Gun. Less than ideal, the MG 34 had demonstrated itself to be overly dust sensitive and a complex machinist's nightmare whose production never fulfilled the ever-increasing demand.

Development on what was to become the MG 42 commenced in 1937 by the Johannes Grossfuss firm in Döbeln, Saxony. A designer at Grossfuss, Dr. Gruner, proposed a unique method of operation that was accepted although the company had no previous experience in the design or manufacture of small arms. Production commenced in 1942 and by the end of the war approximately 400,000 had been assembled. While the overall length remained identical to the MG 34 (48 inches), the MG 42's weight was reduced to 25.5 pounds, more than a pound lighter.

In contrast to the handsomely finished milled forgings of the MG 34, the MG 42 is conspicuous for its extensive use of stamped sheet-metal and assembly by riveting, spot and fusion welding, brazing and other methods not requiring specialized skills. Components and accessories were fabricated by many subcontractors, but assembled by five manufacturers: Grossfuss (factory code: "bpr"); Gustloff-Werke, Suhl ("dfb"); Maget, Berlin ("cra"); Mauser-Werke A.G., Berlin ("ar") and Steyr-Daimler-Puch A.G., Steyr, Austria ("bnz").

The method of operation is best described as short recoil, gas assisted and roller locked. The bolt group consists of two subassemblies. The bolt body contains the actuator stud which operates the feed mechanism, bends for engaging the sear and a spoon-shaped piece of sheet-metal that drives the "bump"-type ejector forward. The bolt head holds the firing pin, ejector, spring-loaded extractor and the two locking rollers.

When the bolt group travels forward, propelled by the multiple-strand recoil spring, as the bolt head moves into the barrel extension, the rollers enter cammed slots which force the rollers outward into their locked posi-



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Hitler's Zipper



Soldiers of the German Wehrmacht drag their tripod-mounted MG 42 under a fence in the Soviet Union during World War II. Photo courtesy Peter G. Kokalis

tion. The rollers' outward motion is accelerated by wing-shaped extensions on either side of the firing pin housing. After the rollers have shifted aside into the locked position, the firing pin and its housing are free to move forward and strike the primer.

Gas pressure developed in the chamber forces the bolt head, and the barrel to which it is locked, rearward. Gas traveling forward strikes the muzzle booster, called a *düse*, and is reflected rearward to impinge against the barrel face and give further energy to the barrel's rearward momentum, and thus the bolt group as well. After 8mm of free travel, the rollers hit cam paths in the receiver which force them inward and the bolt is accelerated away from the barrel. Complete unlocking takes place after 21mm of travel, at which time a spring-loaded plunger on the left side of the receiver returns the barrel to its forward position and the empty case is extracted. When the bolt body strikes the buffer in the buttstock, a sliding protrusion at the end of the body is pushed forward to drive the spoon-like portion of the ejector into the front ejector rod, pivoting the empty case around the extractor and out

the ejection port in the bottom of the receiver.

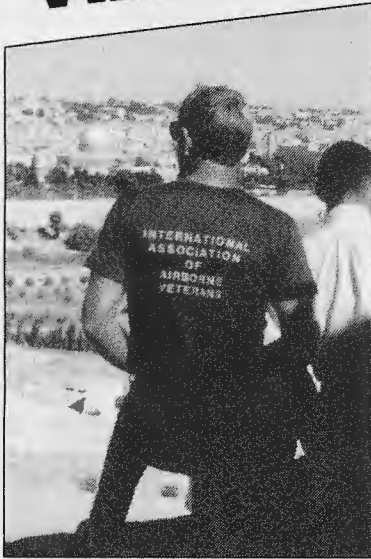
The actuator stud on top of the bolt body is not spring-loaded, and before you lower the top cover, you must flip the feed arm over to the right as far as it will go to avoid damaging these components. As the bolt reciprocates, the actuator stud (riding in the feed arm's channel) pivots the feed arm which operates a lever attached to the belt feed slide. There are two sets of feed pawls connected to the slide. When one set is moving out and over a round in the belt, the other is pulling the belt inward. Dividing the belt load between two sets of pawls reduces stress on the feed mechanism and produces a smoother belt flow.

The MG 42's trigger mechanism is the best in the business and was incorporated intact on the Belgian FN MAG 58 GPMG. The cross-bolt safety operates directly on the sear and can be manipulated only after the bolt has been retracted. Pushing the cross-bolt all the way to the left will expose the letter "S" (Safe) and engage the safety catch against the heel of the sear. Moving the cross-bolt all the way to the right will expose the letter "F" (Fire) and disengage the safety catch from the heel of the sear. These positions were reversed on the MAG 58. There is no provision for semiautomatic fire.

Because of its high rate of fire, the trigger mechanism has a spring-loaded



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sear trip attached to the top of the trigger. The front of the sear passes through this sear trip and a T-bar at its end restricts the sear trip's forward rotation. When the trigger is pulled the sear trip descends, allowing the front of the sear to rise while the rear end is lowered, releasing the bolt. As long as the trigger is held back and ammunition remains, the bolt will continue to reciprocate back and forth. When the trigger is released, its front end rises, taking with it the sear trip as well as the front end of the sear. As a result, the rear end of the sear is lowered even further. The sear trip now projects into the bolt's path of travel. The bolt's rear bent shoves the sear trip backward. This frees the front end of the sear and permits the sear spring to drive the rear end of the sear upward to grab the bolt's front bent with full face engagement in one sudden, sharp movement.

The sear trip fulfills two important functions. It keeps the sear in a low position until the final moment of engagement with the bolt, which reduces wear and chipping on the two mating surfaces. It also prevents the trigger mechanism from being placed on "safe" when the bolt group is forward, as the sear could be damaged if the operator attempted to retract the bolt with the cross-bolt in the safe position.

Early MG 42 buttstocks were wood. These invariably split and will be encountered with repairs by wire binding, so later stocks were fabricated from high-impact plastic.

MG 42s were first equipped with a straight, finger-grooved retracting handle. Most will be found with a T-shaped cocking handle which is easier to grasp from the prone position.

The unprotected rear sight has a folding leaf with an open V-notch and can be adjusted for elevation only, from 100 to 2,000 meters. The front sight, also unprotected, can be adjusted for windage zero by drifting its blade in the folding base after loosening its retaining screw. An antiaircraft ring sight, rarely encountered, can be mounted to the receiver and used in conjunction with a folding antiaircraft rear sight permanently attached to the rear sight base.

Because the bolt head's rollers lock into the barrel extension, the MG 42's receiver serves as little more than a structural frame for holding the reciprocating parts. The front portion, in essence a ventilated barrel jacket, is open across its entire length on the right side to permit barrel changes. With the bolt retracted, just push the barrel catch forward and away from the jacket. The chamber end of the barrel will swing out and can be removed by raising the muzzle end of the weapon. This takes no more than six seconds. The four-groove barrels are 21 inches in length with a right-hand twist.

The flash suppressor, threaded to the front of the barrel jacket, has little effect on muzzle climb. Retained by a spring-loaded, sheet-metal rod pinned to the front sight's base, the flash suppressor also acts as a container for the *düse*.

The non-adjustable bipod can be attached to the barrel jacket at two locations. When mounted up front, close to



MG 42 in action. Photo courtesy Peter G. Kokalis

the muzzle, it provides the greatest hit potential but the least lateral mobility. Mounted 11½ inches to the rear it offers the gunner the ability to quickly engage flanking targets at the expense of controllability. The bipod folds to the rear even after the legs are extended. When placed on the ground, the gunner should pull the weapon to the rear away from the bipod. If the MG 42 runs away as a result of insufficient sear-to-bolt engagement (an all-too-common occurrence after half a century of worn parts stuffed into fatigued receivers), the machine gun will pitch forward, collapsing the bipod and firing into the ground directly in front of the muzzle.

Whenever possible, the MG 42 should be fired from the tripod, which unfortunately is now so rare as to be worth almost as much as the machine gun itself. These tripods sell for about \$2,500. Non-restricted transfer MG 42s range in price from \$2,500 to \$4,000, depending upon condition. There are at least 50 accessories for the MG 42, ranging from belt-filling machines to esoteric items like a periscope firing device. Most are of little practical consequence to anyone but collectors.

Disassembly of the MG 42 is not difficult. Lift the top cover and clear the weapon. Move the bolt forward into battery under control. Depress the locking catch under the receiver and rotate the buttstock 90 degrees to the right. Remove the buttstock and buffer group from the receiver. Pull out the recoil spring. Pull retracting handle to

the rear and slide the bolt group out the back of the receiver. Lift up the retracting handle's latch and pull this component to the rear and away from the receiver. Remove the barrel in the manner described. Unscrew and remove the flash suppressor. Lift up the flash suppressor's retaining rod and drop the *düse* down into the barrel jacket until it can be completely withdrawn. Lift up both the top cover and feed tray. Turn their retaining pin so the flat side is down and withdraw the pin from the left. Separate the top cover and feed tray from the receiver. Remove the cotter pin from the trigger mechanism's retaining pin. Push the retaining pin out to the right. Pull the trigger mechanism to the rear and swing it down and away from the receiver. Remove the ejection port dust cover. To disassemble the bolt group, pull the rollers outward and rotate the bolt body 90 degrees in either direction to separate it from the bolt head. All the internal components can then be removed. All carbon residue and copper gilding from the bullet's jacket must be scrapped and removed from the *düse*. Reassemble in the reverse order. Make sure the bolt group is assembled so that the actuator stud on the bolt body and the ejector rod on the bolt head are both topside.

Non-disintegrating, 50-round MG 34/42 belts, with or without a starter tab, should be loaded links up in the MG 42 after the bolt has been retracted and the weapon placed on "safe." Stay away from WWII vintage ammunition. Firing WWII-era MG 42s is dangerous enough without compounding the problem with trashy five-cent ball.

More MG 42s have self-destructed in the hands of U.S. collectors than any other machine gun. In almost every instance the problem can be traced to premature unlocking. MG 42s will frequently unlock before the barrel has completed its recoil and while chamber pressures are still murderous. There are two solutions. If you can locate the so-called rate-of-fire device for the West German MG3, it will prevent premature unlocking. Inserted into the bolt body with its large end inside the curled ends of the ejector rod, this spring-loaded plunger forces the firing pin housing forward and increases the resistance to unlocking. By also reducing the rearward acceleration of the bolt, the cyclic rate is dropped to about 900 rpm.

These devices are not easy to find and there is a simpler correction. Take an M1911A1 .45 ACP recoil spring and remove 1 inch of the coils. Fold the ends in and install inside the bolt body. It really works.

Continued on page 88

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statement of eligibility, which must be returned within 21 days of receipt or alternate winners will be selected at random. All federal, state and local laws apply. Sales taxes, licenses and any options are the responsibility of winners. No substitutions except as required due to availability. All prizes will be awarded.

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EDGE COMPANY KNIVES: GUARANTEED FOR LIFE



LIKE the Star of Bethlehem the brilliant flash illuminated the sky. It was bright and blue and it was, to all who saw it, an omen of peace. It was Christmas Eve and, as the star cluster burst above the jungle, its gentle pop signalled to those along the perimeter that a night patrol would soon be trickling in through the wire.

Earlier that afternoon I'd returned to base camp at Pleiku. It had been months since I'd been back, and when I arrived it was too late for a mess hall meal, so I had to settle for a can of C-rations. Even though I had missed my chance for a hot meal, I at least had the opportunity to shave, take a quick field shower and then try

to relax for the night.

When the star cluster first lit up the sky, I was on top of a sandbagged bunker nursing a canteen cup partially filled with warm scotch. It was 1969, and this was how I was spending my Christmas Eve. In spite of the calendar I didn't feel much like celebrating. My left shoulder was hurting to the point of nausea. Two weeks before I had been blown up and off an armored personnel carrier by a land mine, and I had landed with the full weight of my body on that same shoulder. I fidgeted back and forth atop those sandbags in a futile attempt to get comfortable, and even the scotch did little to numb the pain.

The discomfort that troubled me

that night was not only located in my body but was concentrated in my mind as well. For me the holiday season had opened in the middle of November near An Khe when two squads of enemy sappers penetrated our fire-base, detonating satchel charges under helicopters, inside our field hospital and in the nurses' quarters. Even with the intense light coming from the white phosphorus rockets cooking off from the exploding helicopters, it was impossible to distinguish the enemy's silhouettes from those of our own troops. The sappers had weaved in and out of our own positions at close proximity and were fanatical in their determination to destroy equipment, kill our troops and not be taken alive.



I WAS THERE

by James Martin Davis

Illustration by Jeff Velarde

In-Country Christmas

"I was astounded when I saw them because I didn't know any of them were still alive... These men had stared death in the face — and yet in their eyes there was no hatred, no bitterness, no depression or despair ... just the simple expression of being here and of doing their duty."



When it was over, none were, but a dozen helicopters were incinerated, a score of Americans had been killed or wounded, and two American nurses would never be allowed to celebrate Christmas again.

Shortly thereafter I was ordered south to Ban Me Thuot, where I spent Thanksgiving on an intelligence mission of sorts, under triple-canopy jungle near the Cambodian border. I returned in time to spend my birthday and the next three days sick and feverish on a cot under a mosquito net in an isolated Special Forces camp. With these events so recently seared into my memory it was easy to wish for "peace on earth," but it was more difficult to wish "good will toward men."

Tonight was Christmas Eve, and while I knew my family would be thinking of me, I knew others would not. Back home there was bickering, confusion and dissension about our role in Vietnam. Most of us over here were all too familiar with that dissension, but our 18-hour days permitted us little time for political debate. We were constantly occupied with more basic concerns — like staying alive. Over here there was no time to debate the war. There was only time to fight it.

On Christmas Eve few people back home wanted to think about our soldiers. How unfortunate, I thought, for Christmas is a time of peace, and there's no one who wants peace more than soldiers. Sitting atop these sand-

bags on this warm and pleasant night, I wished so badly that all the factions back home would try to appreciate what it meant to be a soldier during this season of peace.

While there is something basically unholy about war, there was nothing unholy about our soldiers. War is a brutal business and killing is the most brutal aspect of that business — no one knows that better than soldiers. For, while our troops may have taken lives, they saved lives as well. The duty of a soldier is to serve both God and country, and for Americans the two have never been mutually exclusive. In six months of combat I had never wit-

Continued on page 87

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MOST of us give little if any thought to the folding knife we carry every day in our pocket. More often than not, such knives are "freebies" — usually gifts from a friend or relative — and are carried regardless of any particular merits of the knife itself.

But what if you were to go out and buy a pocketknife; one you could carry comfortably, with a feeling of social responsibility and confidence? When I was first confronted with such a scenario by the SOF staff, the question seemed easy enough to answer. As it turned out, it wasn't so easy. Here's why.

When you look at pocketknives available on the current market, you quickly discover that there are a lot of them out there. They come in virtually every size, shape and price range, with features ranging from titanium handles to interchangeable blades. Some are large and bulky, while others are small, even delicate. Some have blades made from good-quality steel, some are hard to sharpen, and others won't hold a decent edge. So what started out as an innocent question had to be recast into the following line of investigation: "What folding knife would I buy if I were looking for the largest folder I would carry in my pocket every day?" These criteria immediately excluded the larger folding hunters that are carried in a separate pouch on the belt, as I was specifically concerned with pocket carry.

In addition to these criteria, I wanted a good quality knife, one that was durable, well-made and had a blade that could take and hold a good edge. I wanted a knife that was devoid of gadgets and gimmicks, and to top it all off, a knife that represented good value for the money. Armed with these stringent guidelines, I set out on my search and, to my surprise, found several pocketknives that filled the bill and then some. While the recommendations that follow are not the only folders that give good service and value, here are the ones I like, and why.

Spyderco of Golden, Colorado, has a nifty line of knives that they call their "Clipit" series. Spyderco Clipits are very well-made, very robust and, for all their strength, not bulky. They measure a mere 5/16-inch thick through the handle and are made entirely of stainless steel (blade, pins, locking mechanism, springs and even the handles). This stainless-steel construction gives a large measure of strength and corrosion resistance and obviates any concern about handle scales loosening over time.

Spyderco's knives are available with two different edges: One is the conventional beveled edge, the other a rather unusual serrated edge that has limited effectiveness for whittling and scraping



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Fold 'em Up, Move 'em Out



ABOVE: Folding pocketknives of choice for serious blade connoisseurs — Gerber Fieldlight (left) with molded synthetic handle and Spyderco Clipit (right) with aggressive serrated edge. Photo: Tom Slizewski

BELOW: Spyderco Clipits are 100-percent stainless steel and have two blade options: serrated (top) and conventional beveled edge (bottom). Photo: Tom Slizewski

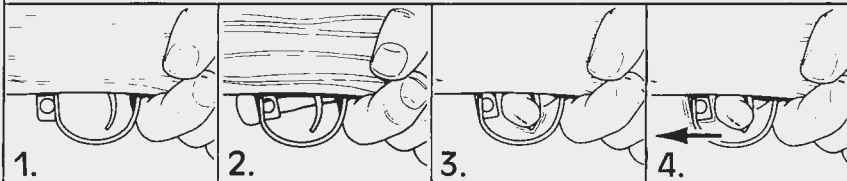


but is devastatingly effective for slicing and slashing organic material such as leather and flesh. Clipits are also equipped with a 7/16-inch-wide spring-steel belt clip (held in place by three small Phillips-head screws) which enables you to carry the knife in a variety of ways and places such as on the belt, inside the trousers or on your boot.

The basic Clipit folder is 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches long when closed, 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches long when fully opened, and weighs in at an acceptable 4 ounces. Also available is a larger version called the "Police Model," which is 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches long closed and 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches open. This knife really doesn't qualify as something small and dainty, and its weight of 6 ounces removes it from the featherweight category. Usually a knife this size is too bulky to carry unobtrusively on your person, but the slim design of the Clipit

PRODUCT WARNING AND RECALL NOTICE

Safeties on M1As/M14s, M1 Garands, and Beretta BM-59s



If you own an M14 type rifle, an M1 Garand type rifle, or a Beretta BM-59 rifle, a certain quantity could contain safeties that can be disengaged by applying an abnormal amount of force to the trigger, thus overriding the safety. The guns will not fire when the safety is overridden in this manner, but they will fire when the trigger is released and pulled again under normal pressure.

If you possess a Springfield Armory, Inc. M1A, M1Garand, or Beretta BM-59, you are urged to perform the following inspection procedure. (Note: before beginning, be sure to unload rifle and point muzzle in a safe direction):

- 1 Begin test procedure with safety in normal "off" position (see figure #1);
- 2 Engage the safety (see figure #2);
- 3 Using one or two hands, pull the trigger very hard, then

release it. Repeat this procedure several times (see figure #3);

4 If at any time during this test procedure you detect any forward movement in the safety, remove only the trigger group and return it to Springfield Armory, Inc. (see figure #4)

WARNING: If during the above test procedure the safety moves forward on your rifle, you are urged to remove only the trigger group and return it immediately to Springfield Armory using either of the following procedures:

A. Write to Springfield Armory requesting special mailing label, shipping container, and return instructions. Write to:

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B. Or, call Springfield Armory on this Toll Free number and request return instructions: 1-800-223-5708. Illinois residents call collect: (309) 944-5631

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Some M1A bolts manufactured by Springfield Armory, Inc. might not function reliably. If you have a Springfield Armory M1A bolt with any of the following identification markings, contact Springfield Armory, Inc., as outlined in steps A or B above to arrange for replacement.

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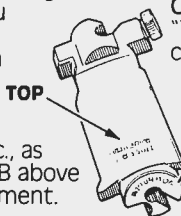
- A. No numerical or alphabetical characteristics on either top or back of bolt (completely unmarked);
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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

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Safety and instruction manuals available from Springfield Armory. Always wear eye and ear protection when using any firearm.



allows it to lie flat and to carry comfortably in a hip pocket or boot. Even so, the Police Model is probably the largest lockback folder that most people would want to carry for everyday use.

As far as performance, Spyderco Clipits take and hold a good edge. My personal favorite is the Police Model with the non-serrated edge, but if ripping and slashing are what you have in mind, the serrated edge deserves a second look. Prices on Clipits vary from about \$50 to \$90 retail, although mail-order buffs will find them for about \$28 to \$50 from The Cutlery Shoppe (Dept. SOF, Suite 3, 7512 Lemhi, Boise, ID 83709; phone 1-800-231-1272). These are good folders that will give good service.

Gerber's Fieldlight weighs a scant 2¼ ounces.

My next choice comes from Gerber, the legendary blade people in Portland, Oregon. They've come up with a real gem in the pocket-carry-folder category called the "Fieldlight (SSIII)." This lockback folder is 3 7/8 inches long closed and 7 1/16 inches open. It is 7/16-inch thick through the handle and weighs a scant 2¼ ounces. Friends, that's light! Gerber achieves this light weight in part by using a molded synthetic handle that is dimensionally stable and extremely tough. A stainless-steel blade opens and closes like it was greased, and locks up as solid as a bank vault. The pivot pin is 1/8 inch in diameter and will likely last several lifetimes. This Gerber folder takes and holds an excellent edge and is the easiest knife of its size to carry that I have ever seen.

In my opinion, the Gerber Fieldlight is the handiest and easiest to carry of all the pocket folders I tested. It also comes with a high-quality black ballistic nylon sheath. Besides, this Gerber folder is 100 percent made in the U.S.A. and has a reasonable suggested retail price of \$29.50. Once again, mail-order mavens will find a measure of relief price-wise from The Cutlery Shoppe, but a piece of equipment on the order of the Fieldlight with a retail price of less than 30 bucks qualifies as a bargain in any man's army.

Shop around and check out the various folders before you buy. There are others on the market that will give good service. The two I recommend here will certainly do that and more. Spyderco offers innovative, strong knives that give good value and performance. Gerber's Fieldlight is pure quality and a bargain to boot. Either way, you won't go wrong with one of these in your pocket. ✕

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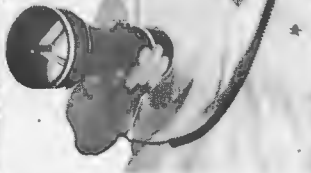
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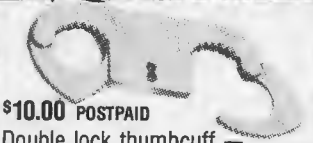
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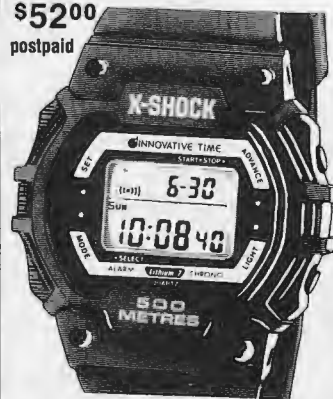
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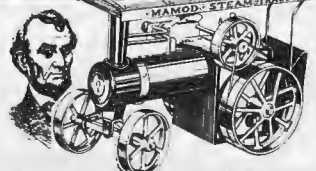
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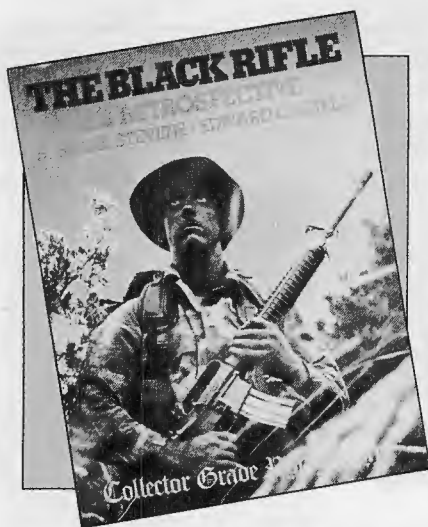
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THE BLACK RIFLE — M16 Retrospective. By R. Blake Stevens and Edward C. Ezell. Collector Grade Publications, Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 250, Station "E," Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E2, Canada. 1987. 400 pages. Hardcover. \$47.50. Review by Peter G. Kokalis.

NO infantry rifle has ever engendered the maelstrom of malevolence and dispute encountered by the M16. Three decades after the AR-15's inception, its detractors remain bitter and enraged that it was ever adopted. At the heart of this controversy will for-

IN REVIEW



The array of books available in the field of military small arms is almost bewildering. Unfortunately, few, in spite of their luxurious format, are worth much more than the paper they're printed on. Separating the wheat from the

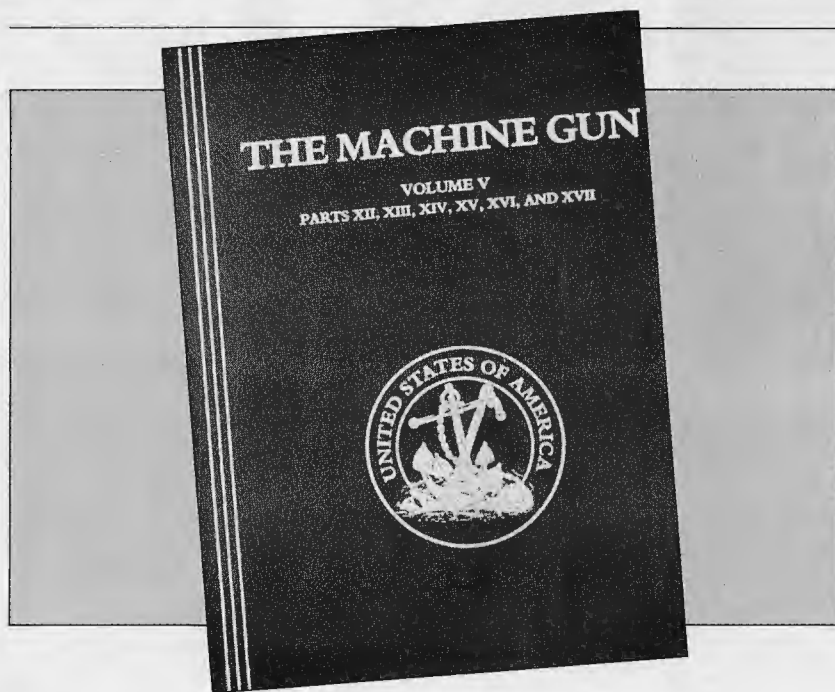
chaff is a necessary, although often tedious, part of the SOF Technical Editor's job. The following are two of the most noteworthy weapons books published during 1987.

ever remain the M16's caliber. All the other criticisms leveled against this rifle, justified or otherwise, were no more than frostings on a cake of hatred against the Small Caliber High Velocity (SCHV) concept. Throughout our history, America's military forces have extolled marksmanship training with high-powered rifles and were dragged, kicking and screaming, from .58-caliber muzzle-loaders to the .45-70 Trapdoor and down through a succession of ever lighter .30-cal. projectiles.

It mattered not one whit to the big-bore buffs that studies after World War II by S.L.A. Marshall, Donald L. Hall and Norman Hitchman all confirmed

that the ranges at which rifles were used to engage enemy targets rarely exceeded 300 yards and that SCHV weapons would produce more kills at these distances. Antipathy toward the "pipsqueak" 5.56mm cartridge and the rifle for which it was chambered was no less than instinctive for the true believers.

Stevens and Ezell have set themselves a monumental task — and have succeeded. Every aspect of the M16's agonizing ordeal, from the field of battle to the halls of Congress, is examined in explicit detail. Not a single element of the "Black Stick's" tortuous evolution is left unexplored. The



THE MACHINE GUN, VOLUME V, Development of Full Automatic Machine Gun Systems, High Rate of Fire Power Driven Cannon, and Automatic Grenade Launchers by the United States and Her Allies, Following World War II, Korean Police Action, and

the Vietnam Conflict. By Colonel George M. Chinn (USMC, Retired). R.A.M.P., Inc., Dept. SOF, 231 McCroskey Road, Harrodsburg, KY 40330. 1987. 748 pages. Hardcover. \$89. Review by Peter G. Kokalis.

IN 1952, Colonel George M. Chinn's highly renowned four-volume series on the history, evolution and development of the world's machine guns, originally prepared for the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, was published. That same year, automatic weapon development in the United States was officially terminated. After all, the United States had exclusive possession of the atomic bomb — all conventional weapons systems appeared to be obsolete. But the cruel reality of Korea and Vietnam was to demonstrate otherwise, and small arms development has continued in the 35 years since the first publication of Chinn's monumental work.

In Volume V, every significant development subsequent to 1952 is covered in exhaustive detail and illustrated with an excellent assortment of photographs and technical drawings. There are fascinating chapters on the 7.62mm GAU-2B/A Minigun, the 5.56mm XM214 Microgun (the so-called "GE Six-pack"), the 7.62mm FN MAG 58 (M240), the 5.56mm M249 SAW (FN Minimi), Hughes chain guns in calibers 7.62mm, 25mm and 30mm, and more than 60 other weapon systems up to 70mm in cali-

rain-the-bore issue, dirty tricks in the arctic tests, lethality in Vietnam, the Army's famous "one-time buy," the rifling twist controversy, the Army's disputed bolt closure device, the ball powder and cyclic rate problems, maintenance problems in Vietnam and the Ichord Report — all these and numerous areas never before publicized, such as problems with case hardness and gas tube fouling, weave the most complete picture ever constructed of what was to become the most tested, most reliable, most battle-proven and most widely distributed 5.56mm rifle in the world. Accompanying this fascinating text are 441 photos and drawings of every variant, dead-end prototype, clone, accessory and ancillary of the M16 system ever designed or produced.

Be advised that reality is more complex than demagogues would lead you to believe. Villains and champions are not easily assigned to most of the disputes surrounding the M16. Those seeking simple answers to the M16's complex development and history will not find them, here or elsewhere.

Without doubt, Stevens and Ezell have fashioned the ultimate work on the M16. **The Black Rifle** is a required addition to the library of all those who own, collect and shoot the M16 or any of its derivatives — and those who abhor it as well.

ber. Most interesting is the section on 40mm grenade launcher machine guns, which have had an important impact on modern infantry tactics. Painful failures, such as the 7.62mm M219 and .50-cal. M85 are honestly described, although in a few instances the text was apparently provided by the manufacturer, as only Maremont would dare to classify the dreadful M60 GPMG as "a superior gun." There are a few errors: typos sprinkled throughout the text, the FN MAG 58's sear motion incorrectly described, and a photo of the Rodman 5.56mm SAW captioned as the "Calibre .50 General Purpose Machine Gun."

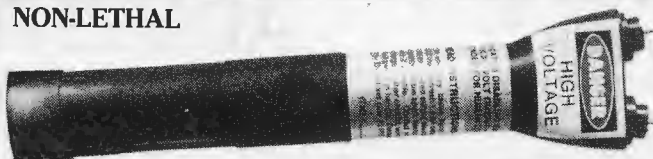
Nonetheless, Chinn's monumental Volume V will never be equaled and is required reading for all those with more than passing interest in military small arms.

Colonel Chinn passed away on 4 September 1987 at the age of 85. He set standards for research in military small arms that may never be equaled. A champion of U.S. military development in the area of automatic weapons, he will be sorely missed by the defense community and those of us who were honored with his personal friendship. ☞

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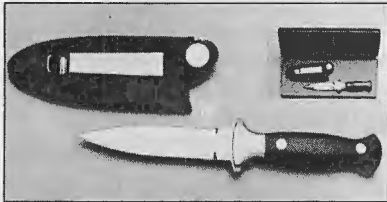
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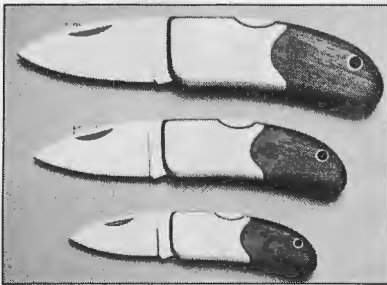
BERETTA KNIVES

Yes, you read right, Beretta knives. The company famous for its quality firearms has entered the knife market with a vengeance — beginning by introducing a 21-knife lineup.

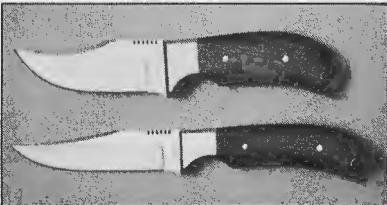
Beretta has introduced three groups of knives, consisting of a Collector's Series, a Sportsman's Series and a Hunter's Series. All knives in each series share 440 C stainless steel construction and wood or micarta handles.



Small Double Edge (Collector's Series).



Rosewood Inserts, receiver-style (Sportsman's Series).



Large Rosewood Hunters (Hunter's Series).

Nearly every style and type of small knife is included, from skinning knives to double-edged blades and even a money-clip knife. Beretta's intent isn't to compete with the serious battle blades or even the high quality folders; its effort is targeted primarily at collectors. To pique collectors' interest, master bladesmith Gary Barnes was involved in the design process on some models.

Prices for Beretta knives range from \$24.95 for the PB Money Clip to \$77.50 for the Small Double Edge. Contact Beretta Knives, Beretta U.S.A., Dept. SOF, 17601 Beretta Drive, Accokeek, MD 20607; phone (301) 283-2191.

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER

by Tom Slizewski



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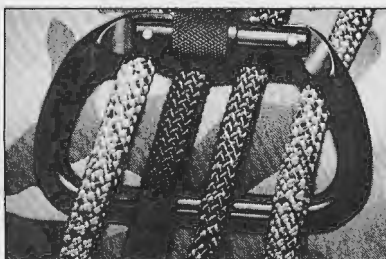
Custom grip panels add distinctive character to your favorite handgun and also provide an improved hold. Since custom grip panels are usually shaped to your individual hand, they're more comfortable and increase shooting accuracy. Unfortunately, custom grips are often handmade and therefore expensive. However, if you own a Colt Government model, variation or copy, or a Smith & Wesson Model 459 or 659, a good deal looms on the horizon.

R.W. Industries is offering custom "Autostocks" for only \$33. They're available in select exotic hardwoods such as rosewood, walnut and zebrawood, and each Autostock is hand shaped, finished with an epoxy resin and hand-rubbed and waxed. Oversized stock blanks are available for \$10 to allow you to customize your own. Autostocks give your Colt or Smith & Wesson the look and feel of an expensive custom. For full details contact R.W. Industries, Dept. SOF, PO Box 914, Lake Elsinore, CA 92330.

RAPPELLING ROPE

Rappelling rope is necessary equipment for any kind of serious climbing. Unfortunately, most commercially available rappelling rope comes in bright colors, making it easy to see while descending your favorite cliff or building side. While bright-colored rope increases the safety factor, it also makes you easy to spot. That's where Advanced Rescue Systems camouflage rope comes in.

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green and black), desert (shades of brown and tan) and urban (shades of grey and black) camouflage patterns, ARS ropes help to conceal the person carrying and using it. You can get ARS ropes in 7/16- or 1/2-inch diameters. Tensile strength, the amount of weight it can take before snapping, is 6,800 pounds for the 7/16-inch rope and 9,200 pounds for the 1/2-inch rope.

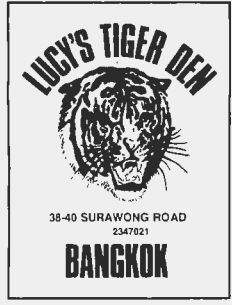
ARS ropes are available in lengths up to one mile. Hobby climbers generally use 300 feet, though shorter lengths are sufficient in many cases. ARS ropes are also available in black and other colors and cost .62/foot for the 7/16-inch diameter and .78/foot for the 1/2-inch diameter.

Color catalog featuring the full line of ARS rappelling accessories is available for \$2. Contact Advanced Rescue Systems, Dept. SOF, PO Box 1021, Sioux Falls, SD 57101-1021. ✕



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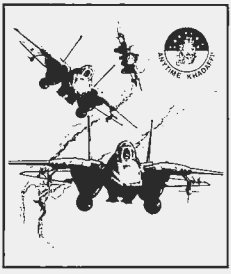
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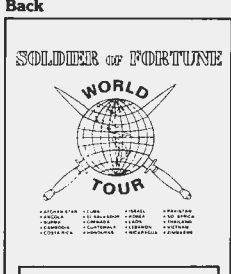
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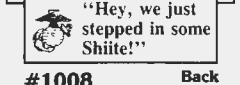
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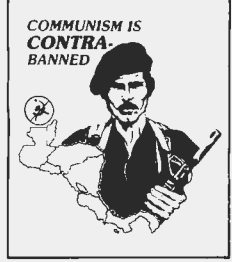
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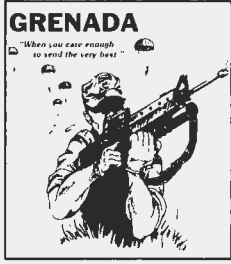
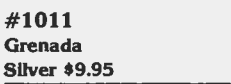
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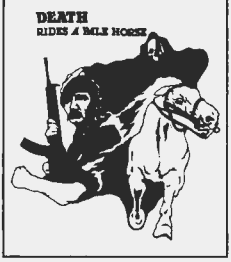
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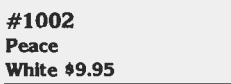
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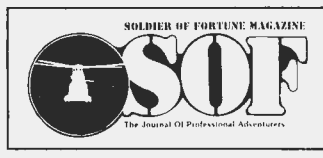
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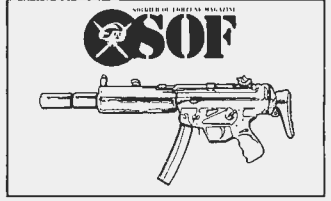
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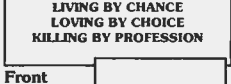
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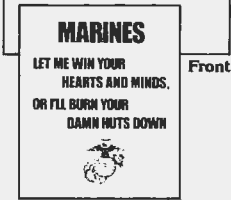
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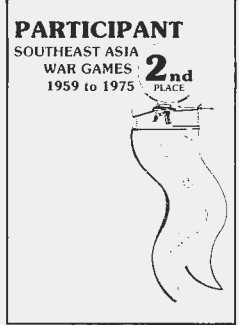
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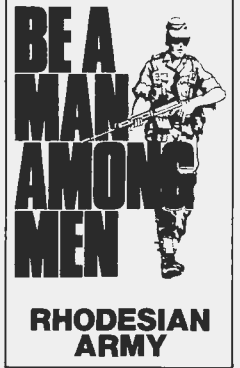
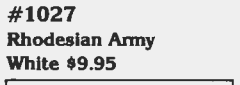
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WHILE patrolling a mountainous region of Morazán Province in El Salvador, an army platoon stops for rest near a creek bed. After forming a defensive perimeter, the commander sends out a security patrol made up of four troops under the control of a sergeant to recon the area. As they hump the bush, each is silently pissed off for having been "volunteered" for this duty. Suddenly to their front, guerrilla fire erupts and the point man drops to the ground in a mangled heap after taking three hits in the chest from enemy fire. Diving for cover, the others return fire and the Gs melt into the bush almost as quickly as they appeared.

After this contact, the sergeant and his three men scramble toward their wounded comrade. Barely alive, with his eyes bulging from shock and coughing up blood as he fights for every breath, the injured troop needs emergency first aid *now* if he is to have any hope of surviving. Having no medical equipment with them, his four buddies grab hold of his arms and legs and haul him back to the platoon area for treatment by the troop medic.

But by the time they reach the medic, the wounded trooper has become another battlefield statistic. He bled to death.

Far too many wounded soldiers die needlessly because their buddies don't know how to give first aid. There's no excuse for this. Anyone can master the essentials of combat first aid and keep someone alive before the medic comes. Such skills are just as important as marksmanship or map reading and should be learned before ever setting foot in a combat zone.

So, where do you start?

With a good working definition: First aid, as the name implies, is the initial aid and assistance given to an injured person before professional medical care arrives. The goal is simple — to keep those bodily functions operating which are necessary for staying alive. To accomplish this in the battlefield there is a sequence of procedures used by the Special Air Service (SAS) in Africa which must be followed. This system is known simply as the "A-B-C-D-E-F" system. Each letter corresponds, in descending order of importance, to a life-preserving procedure or responsibility. They are, respectively: Airway, Bleeding, Circulation/Chest wounds, Drips/Drugs/Documentation, Evacuation and Follow-up.

With our A-B-C-D-E-F model in mind, let's examine the priorities each procedure addresses:

Airway — Clear the airways. The human body needs oxygen to stay alive, period. Without oxygen, no amount of first-aid treatment makes



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

Before the Medic Comes



A downed buddy in combat shouldn't have to wait for a medic. Each troop must have a basic knowledge of first aid to keep the wounded alive until professional help arrives. Photo: DoD

any difference. Therefore, your first responsibility when you reach a wounded soldier is to clear all airways leading to the lungs. This involves removing obstructions from the mouth and nose and tilting the head back to visually check whether the tongue is forward. If the injured person is not breathing by himself, you may have to employ mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. In any event, make sure the airways are open

and that they stay clear throughout the procedures that follow so oxygen can continue to enter the lungs and feed the brain.

Bleeding — Stop or slow external bleeding. Oxygen is delivered to the body's vital organs by the blood; if a person is losing blood, he is losing his body's transportation system for oxygen. Some common methods of halting the blood flow from an open wound are: applying direct pressure on the wound itself; use of pressure points on major arteries between the wound and the heart; and, as a last resort, using a tourniquet. The idea is to promote the coagulation of blood around the wound and to restrict further blood flow to the affected area.

Circulation/Chest wounds — Check the pulse. This is the only way to find out whether the heart is pumping and capable of delivering blood — and oxygen — throughout the body. To do this, first place two fingers (not your thumb; it has a strong pulse of its own) on the radial artery in the arm or wrist. Then check the carotid artery in the neck by placing your fingers on either side of the windpipe.

If there is no pulse, begin cardiac resuscitation by placing the heel of the hand just under the sternum and, with the other hand on top, push down hard. Repeat this 15 times. What you are doing here is manually pumping the heart. Cardiac resuscitation is usually used in conjunction with mouth-to-mouth; the two together are called cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Now check for a special wound called a "sucking chest wound," where the lung is punctured and is in danger of collapsing, rendering it incapable of delivering oxygen to the blood. You can recognize a sucking chest wound either by sight or sound — you can actually hear air passing in and out of a hole in the lung, which accounts for the sucking sound. After determining that someone has a chest wound of this type, it is important to make an airtight seal around the wound bandage, both front and back if

COMBAT TESTED

Jack Thompson is a long-time associate of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine. Currently a personal security consultant and trainer, Jack's combat experience spans the globe. He first served in the USMC in Vietnam for five years, fought in Rhodesia with both the SAS and Selous Scouts for six years and has trained freedom fighters in Central America while providing bodyguard services for diplomatic personnel.

Continued on page 101



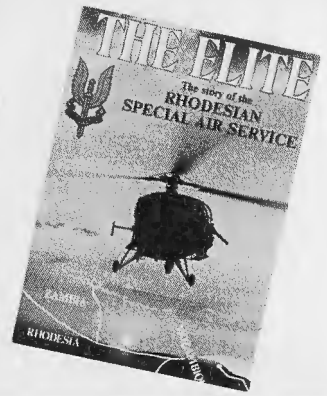
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ARVN's few M48A3 Patton 90mm gun medium tanks were generally superior to the NVA's Soviet T-54s and Chinese Type 59 100mm gun tanks, and they played an important part in delaying the NVA advance in northern I Corps. Photo: Ed Besch

SOF VIETNAM

BLUEPRINT FOR VICTORY

America's Missed Opportunity at Vinh

by Edwin W. Besch

In response to the 1972 North Vietnamese offensive, the United States launched unprecedented, and initially successful, bombing raids against North Vietnam (NVN) and mined its ports and rivers. North Vietnam countered by using Chinese ports and dis-

persing its logistics efforts, rendering the bombing and mining less effective. NVN forces in South Vietnam, however, were overextended, had suffered terrible losses and desperately needed replacements and resupply. The author, a CIA intelligence

analyst stationed in Saigon, believed that North Vietnam was ripe for an amphibious counterstrike against vital communications inside North Vietnam, which could have ended the war favorably for the United States and South Vietnam.

INTELLIGENCE ANALYST

Edwin W. Besch, shown here with ARVN Rangers at An Loc in 1973, spent three years in Vietnam. After being seriously wounded, he medically retired and joined the CIA as an intelligence analyst, serving at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon from 1971 to 1973. Since 1974 he has been an intelligence analyst with the Department of the Army, a DIA professor of scientific and technical intelligence, and is now chief, Asia Branch, U.S. Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center, Washington DC. He has written over 50 professional journal articles, including four for SOF and *Combat Weapons*.





northern border via Chinese ports, but it did make NVN's supply lines longer and more vulnerable to air attack, and it halted the supply flow for two critical months.

The North Vietnamese reacted with characteristic determination and resourcefulness. They dispersed their supply depots, expanded their road network and evacuated unneeded civilians from Hanoi and Haiphong to the countryside. But, while they were able to continue the war in the South and defend most of their territorial gains, the North Vietnamese suffered tremendous physical and psychological losses. Even NVN's official party newspaper, *Nhan Dan*, admitted that the bombing

LEFT: Vietnam Marine division celebrated recapture of Quang Tri Citadel in this Saigon exhibit, but it was a costly U.S.-GVN strategic error that paved the way for the 1975 disaster. Photo: Ed Besch



ABOVE: Soviet Sagger antitank missiles captured from the NVA. Photo: Ed Besch

IN mid-1972, during the North Vietnamese communist offensive, the United States had a unique opportunity to mount an amphibious operation that may well have resulted in victory for South Vietnam and the United States.

President Nixon ordered resumption of the aerial offensive against North Vietnam in April 1972, shortly after the communist offensive began. Unprecedented B-52 bombing raids against Haiphong and the outskirts of Hanoi, and strong reinforcement of U.S. air forces in Southeast Asia made the air strikes against NVN lines of communication, supply storage areas and fuel depots extraordinarily effective. The North Vietnamese air force was shot out of the air trying to intercept the raids, and NVN was forced to use intensive anti-aircraft fire and many SA-2 SAMs, often fired in unguided volleys, in attempts to blunt the aerial blows.

In mid-May, President Nixon ordered a blockade of NVN's ports and rivers by mining, which prevented Soviet fuel tankers and cargo ships of many nations from supplying NVN's military and civilian needs. The mining only temporarily halted supplies from reaching NVN, since within two months supplies began entering NVN's

had caused "very serious economic problems."

By early June, the war had reached a turning point. The communists' three main thrusts had failed to achieve their major objectives in the South, and their forces were seriously weakened and overextended. Government of Vietnam (GVN) forces had largely recovered from their initial shock and, heartened by emphatic U.S. responses to the enemy offensive, were regaining confidence and strength. Overwhelming air strikes, the naval blockade of NVN's ports and President Nixon's surprising diplomatic successes in Peking and Moscow combined to seriously lower North Vietnamese morale at a time when all major North Vietnamese Army (NVA) combat units were fully committed outside of NVN. And NVN was more dependent than ever on its lines of communication as it fought a conventional war in Laos and South Vietnam and supplied the Khmer communists in Cambodia. In short, the NVN homeland was now more vulnerable to a decisive counterstrike than at any time in the war.

Initially, I shared the euphoria in Saigon

and Washington about the success of the bombing and mining. With increasing dismay, however, I noted the effectiveness of NVN's response to the blockade. I realized that a third, even more direct and decisive way to cripple NVN's will to fight must be found.

By this time, I had been a CIA intelligence analyst at the U.S. Embassy for over a year. Although a civilian, I was still very strongly influenced by my Naval Academy education in seapower and my training and experiences as a Marine Corps infantry officer. My partially disabled right arm (due to wounds received while commanding "E" Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines during Operation Prairie I south of the DMZ in 1966), which ended my Marine Corps career, gave me a special "score" to settle with the communists. My new bride, Donna, who accompanied me to Saigon, and I shared an even stronger belief that the Viet-

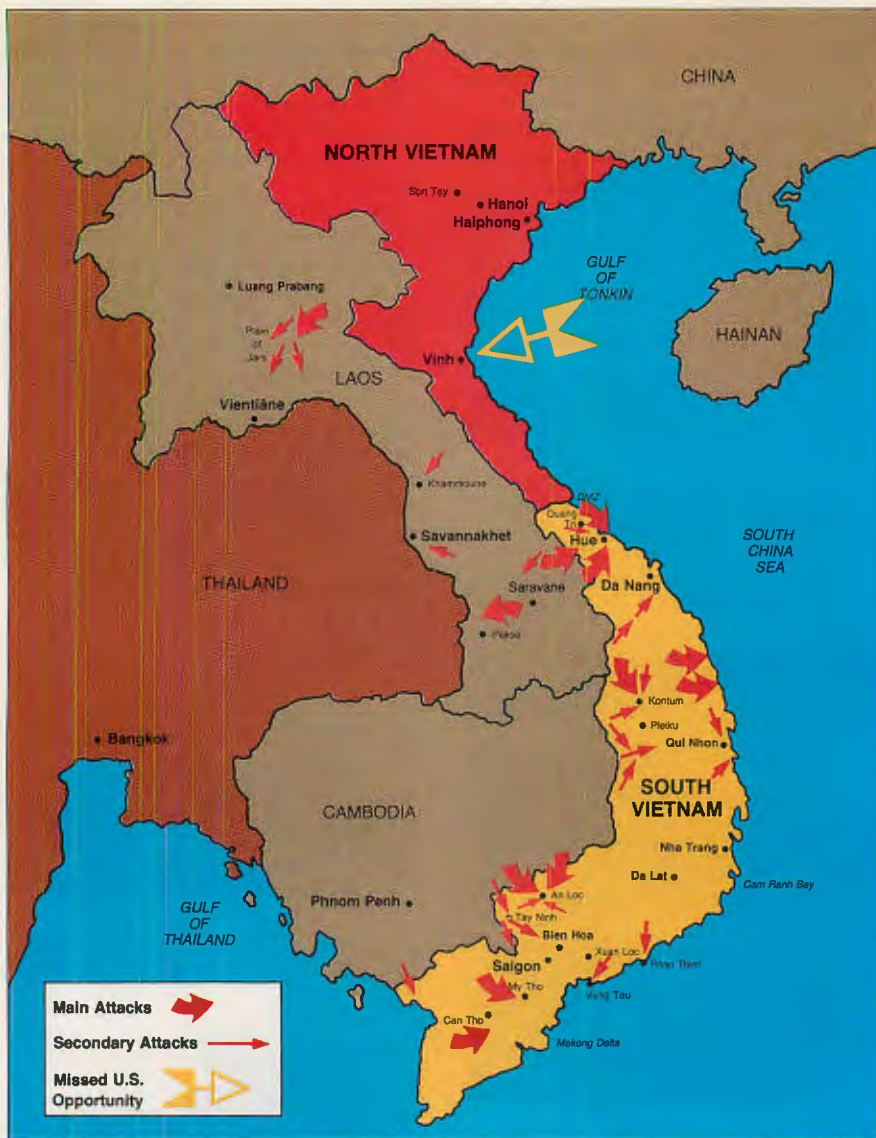


Soviet M46 130mm field gun (top) and Chinese Type 59-1 130mm field gun (below) were formidable weapons against firebases designed to withstand only mortar and rocket attacks. Dispersed in pairs and carefully concealed, they were difficult to locate and destroy. Photo: Ed Besch

namese people and their culture and religions were worth defending against the perversions of communist philosophy and a totalitarian government. These factors heightened my commitment to winning the war; my job gave me exceptionally good access to information about both sides; and my Navy/Marine Corps professional training versed me in the use of amphibious operations as a strategic tool.

Few captains, especially retired ones, ever have the opportunity to decisively influence the outcome of a major war, but my turn would come shortly, when I briefed Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and senior members of U.S. agencies who composed the Mission Council.

I knew that anti-war feelings in the Unit-



ed States would not allow a major reintroduction of American troops to fight a bloody ground war to retake lost territory, but the unprecedented vulnerability of the North Vietnamese homeland (for the first time, all NVN main force divisions were committed to the battlefields in the South and Laos) suggested that an amphibious assault with minimum force there could be a less costly, but more certain, means of cutting the vital communications to its forces inside South Vietnam and, possibly, ending the war.

I had no information about potential landing sites in North Vietnam, but Vinh, at the junction of NVN's northern "pan" and its southern "panhandle," had been suggested earlier in the war. Seizing a coastal enclave at Vinh would have severed the fuel pipeline and direct communications to the DMZ and the four southern passes leading to the Ho Chi Minh Trail network in Laos, leaving only a circuitous route through northern Laos. Concentrated bombing there could have reduced the supply flow to a trickle, far below the requirements of a depleted NVA dependent on fuel, ammunition and repair parts for its heavy weapons.

Aware of the concentration of high-level

Sites of North Vietnamese army attacks during 1971-1972.

Effect of concentrated B-52 strikes is apparent near An Loc, where Allied air power hammered three NVA divisions against anvil of surrounded ARVN units. Photo: Ed Besch



U.S. military and civilian planners on the Indochina War at this critical juncture, I looked for some inkling at the embassy or from stateside that an obvious (to me) amphibious strike at Vinh was at least being considered. But none surfaced, and I began to emphasize North Vietnamese counter-

measures against the mining and bombing in daily briefings to Ambassador Bunker and the Mission Council.

Finally, during a Mission Council meeting in late June or early July, an especially perceptive member said, "Ed, you seem to be disparaging the mining and bombing. What would you do?" Given an unprecedented and precious opportunity, I quickly summarized my thoughts as I walked to the large Indochina map in the rear of the embassy conference room and began my impromptu argument for executing an amphibious operation at Vinh with the U.S. 3rd Marine Division, then on Okinawa; the Vietnamese Marine Division; and a Vietnamese airborne brigade. I pointed out that:

- All NVA regular forces, except new units forming, were overextended outside NVN and had suffered heavy losses.
- NVN's forces in the South were more dependent than ever before on supply lines and were thus more vulnerable now because of their need for troop replacements, POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants), tank and artillery ammunition, and repair parts.
- A landing at Vinh would sever, not merely interdict temporarily, the lines of communication directly to the DMZ and all four southern passes to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, leaving only one circuitous route through northern Laos open.
- President Nixon's visits to Moscow and Peking had diplomatically isolated NVN and practically eliminated the threat of Chinese military intervention in response to a limited invasion of NVN.
- The Vietnamese Marine Division and an airborne brigade defending the My Chanh River line north of Hue could be replaced by the 21st ARVN Division, then involved in an obviously futile effort to reopen Route 13 in III Corps area. (The 21st ARVN division had an excellent combat record in the Delta. It suffered desertions enroute to III Corps and proved incapable of successfully attacking the decimated but stubborn and well dug-in 7th NVA Division along a predictable avenue of approach. It was surely capable of defensive combat behind a river line, but it would no doubt have been necessary to move it to I Corps under close guard to avoid wholesale desertions.)

• Consistent and reliable information from prisoners, defectors and captured documents indicated that communist units in northern I Corps were greatly understrength and demoralized; they could not mount and sustain another serious attack against Hue. (I had seen recent reports from at least one battalion in each North Vietnamese regiment indicating that average battalion strength was below 50 men, which was probably indicative of overall strength.)

• A small enclave at Vinh, vital to NVN, could be traded in future negotiations for communist territory captured in the South, thus removing communist bases for future operations.

Then I resumed my usual briefing about the previous day's military activities.

Ambassador Bunker, who had recommended an invasion of Laos to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail as early as 1967, remained silent. A few days later I gained the impression that Ambassador Bunker had discussed my suggestion with General Creighton Abrams, commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), when he pointedly mentioned that General Abrams expected another offensive against Hue, which was presumably a reason for rejecting a distant counterstrike using the Vietnamese Marine Division and an airborne brigade. But my estimate turned out to be correct: No significant attacks against Hue occurred again. I still hoped that the

Author (standing, right) briefing Mission Council and Dr. Henry Kissinger (striped tie) about six weeks after he proposed strike at Vinh. Photo: State Department



THE 1972 NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE

The 1972 North Vietnamese communist offensive may seem, like the 1968 Tet Offensive, to have been only another bloody anticlimax to the final tragedy of Vietnam in 1975. But in both the 1968 and 1972 offensives, while military victory eluded the communists, they achieved important political goals that first curtailed, then ended direct U.S. military involvement in Indochina.

Unprecedented communist use of conventional weapons — tanks, medium artillery, armored personnel carriers and surface-to-air missiles — in 1972 undoubtedly was prompted by successes they helped achieve in Laos a year earlier. Lam Son 719 — the major South Vietnamese raid into Laos during Spring 1971 — disrupted infiltration and preempted any major communist offensive in South Vietnam during 1971, buying more time for Government of Vietnam (GVN) forces to build up and take over from withdrawing U.S. forces. On the other hand, communist tanks and artillery caught South Vietnamese forces unprepared as they withdrew, inflicting serious losses and temporarily demoralizing some units. This probably convinced General Giap and his planners in Hanoi, and their backers in Moscow and Beijing, that modern conventional weapons in the hands of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) would be the key to overcoming the numerical and firepower superiority of the South Vietnamese forces and shatter their morale. By mid-1971, large numbers of tanks, armored personnel carriers (APCs), artillery, SA-2 and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and portable Sagger antitank missiles began to arrive from the Soviet Union, China and Eastern

Europe. New army units were formed, and replacements exceeding those committed to the 1968 Tet Offensive entered the infiltration pipelines to Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam by September 1971.

The NVA tested its shift from guerrilla to conventional tactics with a carefully orchestrated general offensive on the eastern edge of the Plaine des Jarres in Laos during early December 1971. Three NVA divisions, supported by dispersed and carefully concealed pairs of 130mm guns, which outranged defenders' 105mm and 155mm howitzers, drove General Vang Pao's Meo irregulars and Thai mercenaries from their hill-top firebases, while bad weather hindered aerial observation and close air support. These tactics — sudden, heavy artillery preparation preceding massive infantry assaults, sometimes accompanied by tanks and under cover of bad weather to hinder Allied close air support — set the pattern frequently used by the NVA in South Vietnam during 1972.

In South Vietnam, the communist buildup of two new NVA divisions (2nd and 320th), a medium tank battalion and 122mm field artillery in the western highlands was watched anxiously as Tet passed quietly, but reports of a coming "general offensive" seemed exaggerated. In fact, the communists had ably concealed the scale of their buildup of heavy weapons just above the DMZ and inside Cambodia opposite III Corps.

The NVA struck its first major blow in South Vietnam with a surprise three-division assault across the DMZ during Easter weekend at the beginning of April, while cities throughout the Mekong Delta received rocket and mortar attacks. The following week, three NVA divisions shattered an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) regiment and supporting armor at Loc Ninh, in Northern III Corps; besieged the 5th

ARVN Division's headquarters and its other two regiments at An Loc farther south, and cut Route 13 to Saigon. Finally, during the first week in May, the communists staged their long-awaited attack in the western highlands. The 1972 spring-summer general offensive eventually threatened almost every major populated area and line of communications in South Vietnam, with the three main blows directed against Quang Tri-Hue, Kontum Province and the Route 13 approach to Saigon.

The 1972 Offensive was different from previous communist offensives in the heavy use of armor, field artillery and small, portable antitank guided missiles and SAMs, which had varying effects on overall NVA combat capabilities because of poor coordination and lack of combined-arms training.

The NVA reinforced its main infantry thrusts with two types of armor battalions. A medium tank battalion at full strength consisted of about 31 Soviet T-54, T-54A, T-54B, or Chinese Type 59 (copy of T-54A) 100mm gun tanks, which were generally inferior to the ARVN's few M48A3 Patton 90mm gun medium tanks. NVA tank battalions were organized on Soviet/Chinese models into three companies of 10 tanks each. Several ZSU-57-2 twin 57mm antiaircraft (AA) guns or Chinese twin 37mm AA guns on T-34 tank chassis were sometimes attached to a battalion.

The second type of NVA armor battalion was similar in organization to an ARVN armored cavalry squadron with its light tank company and two companies of APCs, but it was smaller in size. An NVA light tank company had seven to 10 Chinese Type 63 amphibious light tanks copied from the Soviet PT-76 (which they usually were misidentified as), but the Type 63 mounted an 85mm

Continued on next page

Vinh operation was being considered at the highest planning levels in Saigon and Washington, to which I did not have access.

Several weeks later, around 19 August, I briefed the Mission Council when National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger was present. I did not propose the amphibious strike again at that time because:

- I believed (incorrectly) that Ambassador Bunker already had discussed my suggestion with General Abrams; it would have been inappropriate to go over their heads.

- The opportunity for an amphibious strike had largely passed, because the United States and North Vietnam had resumed cease-fire negotiations.

- The formality of the briefing and Dr. Kissinger's evident impatience made it very difficult to interject an extemporaneous discussion.

As I described recent military contacts,

Dr. Kissinger fiddled with a pencil until I briefed a report that North Vietnam expected the port of Haiphong to be open to shipping by December 1972. He asked rhetorically (and somewhat arrogantly), "Well, what makes them think they can do that?" But it turned out that the North Vietnamese were only three months off in their timetable, and they seemed to have a better grasp of the future than our chief foreign policy expert. Our national planners seemed to nurture overconfidence in air power and superior U.S. technology, leaving little room for appreciation of North Vietnamese determination and capabilities that would require further confrontation in a "primitive" amphibious assault.

The bombing and mining helped bring North Vietnam back to the negotiating table by mid-July 1972, initially with "hat in hand" but later a stiffening attitude. The

Government of Vietnam eventually counterattacked, but very cautiously. In many areas, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had only marginal numerical superiority, replacements were not adequately trained and some commanders lacked aggressiveness to exploit their tremendous superiority in firepower. The weakened communists dug in and effectively used their infantry weapons and a few artillery pieces to repel ARVN assaults while they deterred major counteroffensives by conducting their own limited attacks.

Saigon's exaggerated concern over the threat to Hue delayed the Airborne/Marine drive to retake Quang Tri City, the only provincial capital lost to the communists, until NVA forces had sufficiently recovered and organized a desperate defense. The GVN's two best divisions were wasted in a bloody offensive to retake this non-

gun and a 12.7mm AA gun and had a larger, rounded turret and a more powerful engine. NVA armored infantry companies were equipped either with Soviet BTR-50PK or Chinese Type 63 (M1967) tracked APCs, which resemble the U.S. M113 APC. They carried a dozen or more infantrymen and a 12.7mm or 14.5mm heavy machine gun, but they proved to be very vulnerable to artillery fragments and infantry antitank weapons.

NVA armor scored its greatest success at Dak To-Tan Canh in northern Kontum during early May. There, after a two-day artillery prep, a medium tank battalion carrying a battalion of infantry from the 66th NVA Regiment attacked the 22nd ARVN division headquarters and its 42nd and 47th regiments, coming out of the fog and predawn darkness from two unexpected directions with their headlights blazing.

ARVN resistance was ineffectual, partially due to a direct hit by a Sagger antitank missile on the division tactical operations center, which knocked out communications. Then the ARVN artillery commander rendered his artillery useless by refusing to fire on the tanks without an order! The ARVN disintegrated; most of the troops simply walked to Kontum City, leaving their heavy weapons and equipment behind.

Elsewhere, with few exceptions, NVA armored forces and infantry lacked combined arms training. They usually attacked piecemeal and were defeated. The NVA armor units generally failed to live up to expectations despite the logistics devoted to their support and the elaborate precautions to conceal their movement. The spectacle of NVA tanks crossing the DMZ en masse at a time when U.S. forces were withdrawing, however, affected North Vietnam's image throughout the world and eased the political impact of the subsequent U.S.

aerial offensive against North Vietnam and the mining of its harbors and rivers.

South Vietnam's numerous armored cavalry squadrons (consisting of a light tank company of 17 M41A1s [76mm gun] and two companies of 22 M113A1 APCs each) provided mobile fire support and carried mechanized infantry in numbers that communist forces in most areas could not match. The ARVN 20th Tank Regiment, equipped with M48A3 Patton 90mm gun medium tanks, played an important part in delaying the NVA advance in northern I Corps. At Dong Ha, it destroyed six NVA tanks at ranges of 2,500 to 3,200 meters.

During the month-long retreat of GVN forces, the 20th Tank Regiment lost all 42 of its operational M48A3s — 30 to NVA artillery and tank-killer teams armed with RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, 75mm and 82mm recoilless rifles/guns and a few Sagger AT missiles; 12 were swamped trying to ford rivers; none were lost to NVA tanks. But the 20th destroyed at least 50 (claims run as high as 90) NVA T-34/T-54/Type 59 medium tanks and other tracked vehicles.

Although less spectacular than tanks, NVA artillery proved to be far more effective in forcing the abandonment of ARVN fire bases built to withstand mortar and rocket attacks only, inflicting casualties on concentrated ARVN forces, isolating commanders by destroying their communications facilities, breaking up counterattacks and harassing populated areas. NVA artillery battalions were primarily equipped with 122mm and 130mm field guns of both Soviet and Chinese manufacture, which outtranged ARVN's far more numerous 105mm and 155mm howitzers by seven to 10 kilometers. The NVA also used Soviet M1938 122mm howitzers and 160mm mortars. The communists dispersed their artillery weapons in pairs

and carefully concealed them, making it extremely difficult for U.S. and Vietnamese aircraft to target them.

The NVA used Soviet and Chinese field weapons in Laos, I Corps and the western highlands of II Corps. The artillery weapons they used against An Loc apparently were ARVN howitzers captured at Loc Ninh and Snoul, Cambodia. The largest weapon they used in the Delta was the 120mm mortar.

Lighter weapons — 60mm and 82mm mortars, 75mm recoilless rifles and 82mm recoilless guns (including the new Chinese Type 65), and 107mm, 122mm and 140mm rocket launchers — continued to be used effectively by the communists to combat GVN forces and harass populated areas.

The NVA also used two small, modern technology weapons very effectively. The Soviet AT-3 Sagger wire-guided antitank missile was used against ARVN armored vehicles, communications bunkers and even small outposts in the Delta, while its U.S. counterpart, the jeep- or helicopter-mounted TOW missile, proved equally effective against NVA armor in northern I Corps and at Kontum City.

The man-portable Soviet SA-7 heat-seeking surface-to-air missile was an even more serious threat because it could disrupt Allied control of the air over the battlefield. It was equally effective against helicopters, observation aircraft and low-flying transports dropping supplies. Batteries of much larger SA-2 Guideline SAMs also made brief appearances in Quang Tri.

Despite the NVA's introduction of these new weapons, the war in 1972 remained primarily an infantryman's war. The 1968 Tet Offensive had been conducted, except at Khe Sanh and Hue, mainly by Viet Cong main and local forces who infiltrated populated areas while the NVA stayed back in reserve.

strategic, symbolic pile of rubble in mid-September. The opportunity to exploit Allied advantages of air and sea mobility by launching the amphibious option at Vinh during June-July 1972 passed as the Hue perimeter was extended, and heavy casualties forced full commitment of the Vietnamese Airborne and Marine Divisions. The North Vietnamese suffered very heavy casualties themselves, but they had pinned down South Vietnam's strategic reserve and prevented its employment against far more strategic terrain elsewhere.

Continued on page 89

Soviet T-54A tank and BTR-50PK APC (rear) captured by Airborne and Marine Divisions, respectively, during 1972 Offensive. Photo: Ed Besch



The southern communists had been decimated during that offensive and subsequent fighting so that by 1972 only two communist regiments, the understrength D-1 and D-3 VC Main Force Regiments in the Delta, were still composed mostly of southerners.

South Vietnamese Marine and Airborne Divisions, which constituted the GVN's strategic reserve, were clearly superior in fighting qualities to any unit the NVA fielded, and the 1st and 7th ARVN divisions were probably also superior to the NVA on a man-for-man basis. But other ARVN units generally were less disciplined and aggressive than their NVA counterparts, although ARVN divisions had considerably more firepower and mobility assets as well as incomparable logistics backup. (The communists would remedy many of these shortcomings before the final offensive in 1975.)

During the 1972 Offensive, the communists inflicted terrible losses on the Government of Vietnam, shook confidence in Vietnamization, seized considerable territory, seriously threatened important population centers and caused 600,000 refugees to further burden the GVN. They had reversed the Pacification Program and, most importantly, secured important forward base areas for future offensive operations (the incessant "nibbling" which sapped GVN strength and morale in 1973-74 and set the stage for the fatal blows in 1975).

Nevertheless, the communists failed to achieve their major territorial objectives in 1972 because of determined resistance by South Vietnamese military forces and civilian population, massive aerial bombardment by U.S. air forces and U.S. logistic support, and overextension of communist forces and resources committed simultaneously to major operations in South Vietnam and Laos (which they probably had hoped to

knock out quickly) and, to a small extent, Cambodia. Communist overconfidence and inflexibility played their part in defeat also, and a lack of coordination between infantry and supporting arms, especially tanks, frequently blunted attacks and resulted in irreplaceable losses. By early June, the communists' most severe blows had been struck, and although they would achieve further successes in southern I Corps and the Delta, President Thieu confidently (and with reasonable accuracy) asserted that the communists "do not have the capacity to do anything more" (*Time*, 12 June 1972).

The costly limited gains achieved in 1972 set the stage for the final communist takeover in 1975, after a war-weary United States withdrew its troops and even much of its logistical support. By then, the NVA had assimilated the combat lessons of 1972 in the coordination of combined arms; it had been supplied with even greater quantities of heavy weapons by the Soviets, Chinese and Eastern Europeans — in violation of the Ceasefire Agreement — and it had fully re-equipped and strengthened its forces and greatly expanded its logistics network in the South — again in violation of the Ceasefire Agreement. Lastly, the end of the war in Laos enabled the NVA to shift several additional divisions into South Vietnam.

After the 1972 Offensive and subsequent ceasefire declared on 28 January 1973, the Thieu government failed to solve the critical problem of poor leadership that prevented the ARVN from reorganizing more effectively for large-scale conventional warfare, improving training and raising combat units to full strength to match the communist buildup during 1973-74. Instead of trying to increase its popular support and institute vital reforms, the Thieu government became more repressive. Simultaneously,

the cutbacks in U.S. military aid reduced allowable fuel and ammunition usages by South Vietnamese forces during the protracted war that followed the 1973 "ceasefire" and perhaps fatally undermined the confidence of ARVN generals and troops alike.

Although the ceasefire period was frustrating and often bloody, it did decrease the bloodshed to some degree, and it gave both sides a chance to work out a compromise. But both sides pursued limited military objectives instead. Communist attacks on isolated populated areas lowered ARVN and popular morale, inflicted casualties and damaged the economy. GVN forces conducted spoiling attacks, counterattacks and operations to remove communist enclaves along the coast and in disputed territory, but they became overextended and could not cope with the continuing communist buildup.

The South Vietnamese collapse began in March 1975 at Ban Me Thuot (which was not attacked during 1972) in the lower central highlands. There, communist infantry, tanks and artillery destroyed the 23rd ARVN Division without precipitating U.S. military intervention. Poor generalship then brought about a panic and rout that South Vietnamese patriotism, courage and fighting abilities had forestalled with U.S. help in 1972. The North Vietnamese and their Soviet and Chinese allies had kept their eyes focused on strategic goals, coincidentally using a strategy similar to that used by the Americans to win their independence, while the South Vietnamese "fumbled" and the United States looked away.

— Portions of this article reprinted from *Marine Corps Gazette*, *National Defense* and *Shipmate*.

FROM MOSQUIT

Grassroots Support for Contra Cause

Text & Photos by Wayne Sumstine

I WAS beginning to wonder if I would ever make it to the Mosquito Coast.

Last year I had tried to research a story on the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean coast, or "Mosquitia" as it is referred to by its inhabitants. But when I applied for permission from the Nicaraguan government to enter the area northwest of Puerto Cabezas, my request was turned down. Fighting was too heavy, they said.

But now the Sandinistas had renewed and intensified their effort to make peace with the coastal peoples and it was being touted as a tremendous success. In fact, FSLN Ministry of Interior officials were saying that the Miskitos were returning to their homeland in droves from refugee camps in Honduras, and the program to reinstitute these people was quickly becoming a model for the rest of the world.

With this excellent news in mind, I confidently reapplied for documentation that would allow me to go into Mosquitia. This time, I was told that, although the Miskitos do indeed support the Sandinista government, contra guerrillas had infiltrated the area and were using the jungle to stage sporadic attacks. It was still not safe for outsiders to enter. Once again, permission was summarily denied.

The reason for the refusal seemed plausible on its face. But a question kept nagging at me. Why could I enter other war zones in Nicaragua, even those with heavy fighting such as the department of Jinotega, but the vast Mosquitia, which had only sporadic trouble, was completely off limits?

I was aware, even from their own reports, that the Sandinistas had been trying for years to consolidate Mosquitia under their rule. In 1981 they had initiated a campaign to move the indigenous peoples to areas where they could be more easily "managed." This effort was met by fierce opposition and resulted in the Sandinista army burning 60 or more native villages to the ground, slaughtering livestock and killing many resistors. A reported 45,000 Indians had fled the carnage across the river to live in makeshift refugee camps in Hon-



IA TO MANAGUA

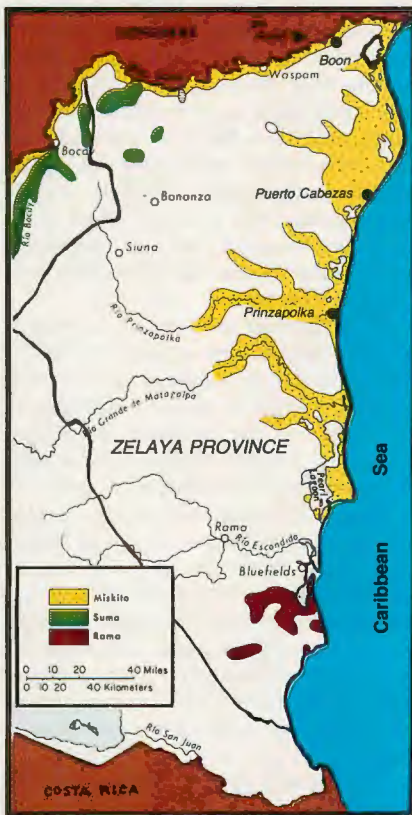
OUR MAN IN MOSQUITIA

Author Wayne Sumstine is a screenwriter and documentary filmmaker with a graduate degree in communications from CBN University. He's currently working on a novel, *The Wangki*, about Nicaragua.

LEFT: Truman and KISAN soldier unload school and medical supplies from our dori at village of Turalaya.

BELOW LEFT: Author and KISAN officer armed with Chinese-made AK-47 stand guard at the Nicaraguan village of Sih. The charred timbers here are from home of the local pastor. It was burned down by Sandinista raiding party dissatisfied with cooperation they were getting from locals.

RIGHT: The village of Urán, still smoldering from a fire caused by a Sandinista commando unit that slipped across the river.



ABOVE: Zelaya Province includes sparsely populated and geographically isolated eastern half of Nicaragua. Patterned areas show distribution of Indian populations.

duras. Those who stayed behind were relocated by the Sandinistas far into the interior of Nicaragua. But all this was supposedly changing — rapidly.

After three more months of frustrated efforts to enter the area, I connected with a small American relief group called the "Salt and Light Organization." They had a bodega, or warehouse, in the jungle refugee camp of Auka, six miles from the Nicaraguan border. After doing reference checks, they agreed to allow me to come down and finish my research. I arrived in Auka after a torturous three days on a cargo boat from La Ceiba and a perilous trip overland from Puerto Lempira. Once there, I discovered that the Salt and Light staff consisted of one American who looked after the bodega and a Miskito refugee named Truman Cunningham.

In addition to being the only Miskito in the area who spoke fluent English, Truman was native to the Rio Coco, knew every settlement well and was liked by all of the village leaders.

Although he had lost relatives in the war with the Sandinistas, and the fighting had separated him from two brothers and a sister, Truman assured me that the region was now very safe to enter. He said KISAN, the Miskito contra army, had secured the area far into Nicaragua, and there were no Sandinista forces present right now. Everyone everywhere in Mosquitia supported KISAN and they would never cooperate with the Sandinistas. As Truman had lived here all his life, was greatly respected by the other

Miskitos and not prone to exaggeration, I felt confident in his evaluation.

After a few days of acclimatizing, I began traveling with Truman through the jungle to remote Miskito villages along the Rio Coco and in Nicaragua to deliver school supplies and obtain health information for a medical team that was scheduled to make the journey at a later date.

Our first day out, we encountered a KISAN foot patrol returning from the area around Puerto Cabezas. They had liaison with Miskito settlements throughout the region and were depositing weapons in caches for the new offensive.

I questioned the leader, *Comandante Gamo*, about reports from Nicaragua that many of the Miskitos were laying down their guns to receive the Sandinista peace proposal. He told me that a few Miskitos were indeed going to meet the Sandinistas unarmed. But these were usually the most ardent anti-Sandinista fighters, willing to take such risks in order to establish spearhead settlements where supplies and weapons could be stored. Even the Sandinistas knew this, he informed me, although they would not be likely to acknowledge it. In order to keep up the facade, the Sandinistas were supplying some Miskitos — families only — with three pounds of rice every two weeks. But more food could not be risked because they knew any "surplus" would be channeled to the Miskito guerrillas. In addition, the Sandinistas were often bully-searching the new settlements, trying



LEFT: The people of Sawa returning from fields gather to hear messages over Sani Radio on movements of a marauding Sandinista unit.

BELOW LEFT: The author and Raúl on horses provided for their escape from the area by the villagers at Sawa.



Cubans and Bulgarians killed in battle, and from raids on Sandinista military posts. I can't verify or refute this information, but I did observe that the Miskitos were quite poorly outfitted. Those who didn't have weapons often asked me if I could get any for them, and those who did have weapons — to the man — carried AK-47 assault rifles manufactured in China.

At the end of the week, Truman became violently ill with a stomach disorder and was laid up for some time in the care of a Miskito medicine woman near the village of Sawa. As no one else in our party spoke English or Spanish, my thoughts turned to how I would eat and how I might get back safely to civilization. My first concern was quickly allayed by Miskito hospitality. Three times a day, women or children would come out of the jungle to my tent, bringing full-course hot meals. They'd watch curiously until I finished eating, then disappear back into the jungle with the plates.

My second fear, however, was grounded in reality. A few days earlier, in another village, we had been warned that a Sandinista commando unit, 50 strong, had entered the area. They had been spotted at night near Turalaya, stealing food before slipping back into the jungle. From then on, their movements were monitored by wary jungle inhabitants, but nobody seemed quite sure what these marauding foreigners wanted. It wasn't long before the news of their presence was broadcast to all settlements in Mosquitia over Sani (grapevine) Radio — the Miskito station based in Puerto Lempira, Honduras.

While Truman recuperated, a Spanish-speaking Miskito arrived from Livincric to inform me that the Sandinistas were aware of our presence in the area and had fair knowledge of our itinerary. They were advancing along the Rio Coco, most likely to intercept our "unauthorized" party.

What I discovered next, to my considerable relief, was that even a unit of 50 men could not achieve its objective without cooperation from the Indians. To confound the Sandinistas, some villagers had convinced one of their search parties that we had gone all the way upriver to the contested region beyond Anris. The commandos took off on what was surely an all-day wild goose chase.

Then a coded message arrived over Sani Radio that KISAN would be willing to send in troops to drive out the commandos. KISAN forces could come overland to Klampa from their main base near Tapamlaya #2 and move downriver to Boon, but they would most likely have trouble pur-

to find where weapons were being hidden.

Two nights later, following an exhausting trek to the Nicaraguan village of Utlimata, I collapsed onto my sleeping pad to listen to the screeching hordes of parrots flocking back across the Rio Coco to roost. Truman tuned in his shortwave radio to the nightly broadcast of "Costatlántica." This half-hour program in the Miskito language goes out over Radio Sandino from Managua.

Truman translated the evening's format for me, which consisted of three songs in Miskito followed by a political message beseeching the Indians to lay down their arms and no harm would come to them. Then came a few glowing testimonies of the good life now being enjoyed by the Miskitos who had already accepted the peace terms. Truman and the other Miskitos of the Utlimata area did not believe these reports. Some of

them even lived in the small villages where these testimonies were purported to originate. They did not know the individuals giving the reports, and clearly considered the program to be absurd propaganda.

For the next several days, we traveled throughout the region to the 13 villages that were accessible by canoe or horseback and sent messengers to the other seven. During this time, I observed a few charred remains of earlier fire bombings (including Truman's former house), and one that was still smoldering.

I was told repeatedly in each village that the war against the Sandinistas was being fought by the Miskitos alone. They said they received no outside help from the United States or from other contras. When I asked where they obtained their weapons, I was informed that they captured them from

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN NICARAGUA

Nothing has damaged the Sandinistas' carefully cultivated image more than their treatment of the ethnic minorities on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast.

For hundreds of years, Zelaya Province has been inhabited by Miskito, Rama and Sumo Indians as well as black Creoles, descendants of slaves brought in from the West Indies during the period when this area was a British protectorate. The Miskitos are by far the largest Indian population, numbering somewhere between 120,000 and 170,000 and living mainly around Puerto Cabezas on the northern part of the coast and along the Coco River between Nicaragua and Honduras. There are approximately 20,000 to 30,000 English-speaking blacks living around Bluefields, a town of about 25,000 on the southern part of the coast.

The ethnic minorities are culturally, ethnically and economically distinct from all other Nicaraguans. Historically, they have had great local autonomy. Somoza never bothered them much, probably because there wasn't much in eastern Nicaragua that he wanted. Aside from some timber and mining activities in the northern half of the region, which provided jobs rather than disruptions in the lives of the inhabitants, the ethnic minorities were largely unaffected by the Somoza regime. The Atlantic region was geographically isolated, with only one road linking the Pacific with the port of Bluefields, and economically oriented toward the Caribbean rather than the rest of the country.

Most Miskitos and others on the Atlantic didn't participate in the 1978-79 revolution and there was no fighting in their region. The Indian leaders believed that the Sandinistas would give their region autonomy in exchange for this support. Toward the end of the war a platoon of Miskitos even joined the Sandinistas in combat.

Tensions began to develop soon after the Sandinistas took power in 1979. People on the Atlantic coast were quickly turned off by the rhetoric of Sandinista Defense Committee leaders and by posters of Ho Chi Minh and Lenin that appeared on public buildings. The Sandinistas decided to impose greater centralization over the entire country, including the Atlantic coast, and pursued programs to bring the revolution to the masses.

Soon after the revolution, large numbers of Sandinistas began moving into the area. By the end of 1981 there were an estimated 7,000 troops, about a fourth of them stationed around Puerto Cabezas, creating a military presence much more intrusive than the National



A family of naked, malnourished Miskito children in the area of Urán. According to Radio Sandino broadcasts over "Costalántica" from Managua, the Indians in this area are well-cared for, with all their needs being met.

Guard under Somoza.

At about the same time many Cuban doctors, nurses and teachers began arriving, often taking the place of trained personnel who lived in the areas. The literacy crusade imposed Spanish upon English-speaking minorities of the Atlantic coast, often by Cuban teachers.

In October 1980, blacks in Bluefields finally protested the presence and behavior of the Cuban teachers. The violence was put down by the Sandinista military, and leaders of the spontaneous uprising were jailed. Aside from occasional contra forays across the border from Honduras, the Bluefields uprising was the first major expression of violent opposition to the FSLN.

Farther north, Miskitos boycotted Cuban-run classrooms, particularly in the rural areas along the Rio Coco. Miskito parents objected to Cuban teachers' emphasis on politics and scorn for religion, and they started keeping children out of school. When officials went looking for them, entire families disappeared into the bush.

Attempts by the Miskitos to preserve their autonomy resulted, in early 1981, in the jailing and torture of Miskito leaders. In January and February 1981, the Sandinistas rounded up approximately 8,500 Miskitos living in villages near the Honduran border and shipped them to relocation camps in the interior. Their homes, churches, crops and livestock were destroyed by soldiers. In 1982 another 7,000 Miskitos and Sumos were uprooted from eight villages on the Rio Coco and moved into central Nicaragua to work on state coffee farms, and in 1983 another 5,000 Miskitos were forced out of villages along the 70-mile road linking Puerto Cabezas to the gold mining area at La Rosita. Each relocation also produced flights of thousands of Miskitos to Honduras or Costa Rica to escape prison or relocation.

By 1984 the Sandinista rise to power had resulted in the following violations

of Indians' rights:

- The entire Indian leadership was arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned and interrogated.
- The Indians' right to self-government, land and resources was denied by new government policies.
- Up to 20,000 Indians were forcibly relocated to camps, where they were detained or denied freedom of movement.
- Some 25,000 Indians fled to refugee camps in Honduras to avoid being relocated to camps in Nicaragua. The Honduran camps were attacked occasionally by Sandinista forces.
- The entire region, down to village level, was placed under military rule.
- Indian radio stations and publishing were banned, teaching of indigenous languages prohibited, and Indian children were forcibly recruited into the Sandinista militia.

Even Sandinista leaders recognized their treatment of the Miskitos and other inhabitants of the Atlantic coast as a mistake. Tomás Borge, Minister of Interior, described the FSLN Indian policy as a series of "stupid errors," concluding that "we have driven the Miskito into the arms of the CIA." Each new group coming out of Nicaragua carried stories of Sandinista killing of noncombatants on the Atlantic coast.

In June 1987 three former Indian guerrilla organizations — MISURASATA, headed by Brooklyn Rivera; MISURA, headed by Steadman Fagoth; and KISAN, headed by Wycliffe Diego joined forces to form YATAMA, which means "the motherland of a united nation." YATAMA was designed to include not only the Indians of the three original groups, but all the various ethnic groups native to the coast.

YATAMA is reportedly indirectly negotiating with the Sandinistas now for the right to return to their homeland, but the Indians do not trust the Sandinistas or the contras, considering them both unfriendly "Spaniards." The contras are fighting to overthrow the Sandinistas, whom they consider usurpers, while the Miskitos are demanding only freedom to govern themselves, freedom to worship as they please and freedom to work their own land as they see fit.

— S. Max



The author with live chickens provided for sustenance on the jungle escape route, and an AK-47 donated for "hunting purposes only" by a KISAN soldier at Livincric.

suing the Sandinistas when they retreated. Furthermore, there was no path through the jungle from Boon to Sawa, where we sat in vulnerable anticipation.

When the villagers of Sawa heard this news, all of the men and boys took to the jungle with their machetes to clear a path to Boon. The women joined in, clearing away the cuttings and tending with food and drink. A Miskito boatman came down the Rio Coco to tell us that the villagers in Boon were engaged in a similar enterprise and would meet us halfway in the jungle. Four hours later, the two road-building crews did indeed meet up with one another, and the path for KISAN's advance was complete.

This unremitting grassroots-level opposition to the Sandinistas made it clear to me why the FSLN could find it politically disadvantageous, if not humiliating, for reporters or unaligned observers to be in the region.

Next, the Sawan Miskitos saddled horses for Truman (who was still sick), Raúl (another Miskito who had taken off from the war effort to help us distribute the school supplies) and myself.

We rode through the jungle back to Ulimata and from there hiked to our boat on the Rio Cruta. Fortunately, our outboard motor had been removed from the canoe and hidden from the Sandinistas by a local fisherman. After retrieving it, we boated

upriver to Tipi Lisangni without incident.

Once back in Auka, I mentioned to Truman that I would be flying into Nicaragua by way of Tegucigalpa. He suggested that I try to locate some of his missing relatives. He gave me their names and the areas where they had last been seen. I didn't really know how to begin such a search, but thought that a purely humanitarian request of this nature might be well-received in Managua. Perhaps a message could even be sent out over "Costatlántica" to locate them.

I flew into Managua for the first day of *Semana Santa*, or Holy Week. I couldn't get into the Ministry of Interior building to talk with anyone without an appointment, which I did not know how to make. The office for Radio Sandino was closed up tight. The weather that second week of April was like an inferno, and the water in the section of the city where my hotel was located was going to be shut off for the next two days. A few hours in Managua is more than enough for sightseeing, so I decided to hop on the next available train going someplace else. The one I caught was headed for the city of León. The 80-kilometer journey took 5¾ hours. I spent it standing up, pressed against the gate of a cattle car which was bursting at the seams with soldiers and civilians. Those who couldn't squeeze in or hang on to the sides crawled up on the roof. Managua, it seemed, was a popular place to leave.

Moments after pulling out of the station, while we were still in the city, I heard several loud metallic smacks, the sounds of ricochets and a howl of pain. Young men along the tracks were hurling baseball-sized rocks at the

soldiers of the ever-popular Sandinista army who were sitting on the roofs of the cattle cars. Since these rock-throwing incidents took place again numerous times in towns along the route, I couldn't dismiss them as delinquent pranks. Rather, I saw them as one small, but perhaps significant, gauge of internal dissent.

In León, I shared a hotel room with an American doctor, Brett Burns, who was working with Sandinista troops in the war zone north of Esteli. He was in León to renew his residency papers.

One evening after dinner, we sat in the main square talking with some Nicaraguan soldiers whom Burns happened to know. When they left, he commented that, if Americans who visited Nicaragua would only get out among people like we were doing, they could not help but observe how well-liked the Sandinista soldiers were. Before I had an opportunity to tell him about my experience on the train, we were approached by two men who had been standing nearby. They were Nicaraguans from León. The older one asked us if we were from Russia. Not an unusual query, I might add, as the town was brimming with Russian military advisers. When they found out we were Americans, their spirits seemed to lift. They asked all kinds of questions about the United States and what we were doing in Nicaragua. When Burns told them he was working with the Sandinistas, they did not hesitate to express their disgust. They blamed the war on the Sandinista military buildup and felt the alliance with the Soviets was the worst thing that had ever happened to Nicaragua. They made a num-

ber of references between themselves regarding the distasteful Marxist mind-set that seemed to be permeating the military with this influx of Russian personnel.

As we talked with these men, three Russians in their thirties approached us and asked in impeccable Spanish where they might find a place that served chicken. The two Nicaraguans stopped talking, and the silence grew almost embarrassing as it became obvious that they were refusing to acknowledge that they had been addressed. To avoid what loomed as an unpleasant exchange, Burns told the Russians he thought there was an open restaurant just around the corner and up the street. The Russians departed with handshakes and some comments about us all being comrades. The older Nicaraguan stated flatly, "We don't like them."

The complexity of politics and the war in Nicaragua may always extend beyond my limited understanding. For this reason, I was determined to allow experiences rather than propaganda to frame my perceptions. And now my experiences were giving shape to a dissatisfaction and disunity among people in the mainstream of Nicaraguan life, and what appeared to be a preponderance of fear and hatred of those in power.

The next day, I decided to go east to visit the town of Masaya. It had been the very heart of the anti-Somoza revolution, and it was here that the country's liberating forces had driven the hated National Guard back into the hilltop barricade at Coyotepe.

Since government offices were closed in León for the rest of the week, I invited the doctor to come along. He was determined to "open my eyes" to the bigger picture that would convince me the Sandinistas merited support; he knew he had a long row to hoe if he was going to do it.

In Masaya, as elsewhere in Nicaragua, there was a virtual collapse of public transportation, so we were lucky to hire a taxi for the day. As was his custom, Dr. Burns quickly engaged our driver, a former schoolteacher named Velásquez, in a discussion of the social and economic situation of the country. Velásquez was the most ardent anti-Sandinista I met, before or since. He even preferred the rule of Somoza to the present regime, despite the fact that he had fought against Somoza's National Guard. The doctor pressed him on two points, to which Velásquez did not immediately reply. First, he claimed that the economic destruction of Nicaragua was the fault of the United States and its economic embargo and could not be blamed on the Sandinistas. Second, he said, health care and education were much better now than they ever were under Somoza.

Without saying anything, Velásquez pulled the car to the side of the road and called over a man who was changing a flat tire. He asked the man, point blank, to tell us what he thought of life in Nicaragua today, whom he wanted to win the war and why. There was no equivocating here. This guy must have been waiting for a carload of

gringos on which to unload his invectives against the Sandinistas. The economy, he said, was being bled dry to support the Marxist war machine in Nicaragua and the rest of Central America, and to entrench the FSLN. Dr. Burns' views notwithstanding, the fellow lauded the contras as the liberators of his country. As we pulled away back into the street, the man called after us, "We live in Nicaragua, you don't."

Seventy-five yards on, Velásquez again pulled to the curb and called to a husband and wife standing on their front porch. They seemed shy at first about opening up in front of strangers, but relaxed considerably when Velásquez told them (mistakenly or intentionally, I am not sure) that we were Englishmen. The husband had lost his small store in the economic collapse; his son had been conscripted and was now fighting with the Sandinista army. He too would prefer to return to life in the days before the revolu-

"The contras are Nicaraguans like us."

tion. When talk turned to the present war, his wife hoped aloud for a contra victory. "The contras are Nicaraguans like us," she concluded.

As we drove on, Velásquez kept up a dialogue with Burns. "Yes, there are more doctors and better health care than before . . . (but) it's not the Sandinistas. Many foreigners come to help because they love 'the revolution.'" He lifted both hands from the steering wheel in a gesture that seemed to mock what "the revolution" had become.

Velásquez seemed intent on giving us a straw poll of Masayan sentiment before we reached our destination at Laguna de Masaya. And we were receptive to this. He pulled the car to the curb a half-dozen more times, randomly, to solicit opinions. Each person he called over added consensus to the suffering endured under the present regime, but none blamed the United States or the embargo for their woes. They wanted the revolutionary process to continue, and their dreams were embodied in the contra struggle.

I asked one man, "If the contras are so well-liked in the department of Masaya, why are there no major battles being fought here to challenge the Sandinistas?" He told me that the contras, despite their popularity, are no match militarily to clash head-on with the well-equipped, Soviet-supplied Sandinistas.

After Masaya, the doctor and I traveled back to the capital. *Semana Santa* was drawing to a close, and we both had business to attend to. Realizing that Burns had a better grasp of Spanish than I and was savvy in the

internal politics of Nicaragua, I told him of my experience with the Miskitos and asked for his advice in handling the situation regarding the missing relatives of Truman Cunningham. For him, it was not a humanitarian issue; it was sensitive, unresolved politics. His involvement with the Sandinistas would, he felt, be jeopardized if he were to bring the issue up to them with me, or even to translate for me. And he strongly urged me to back off from it as well. First of all, even if I knew I was serving a humanitarian purpose, the Sandinistas would not. To them, it could well be a propaganda ploy to exploit their "former" mistreatment of Miskitos. In any event, FSLN knowledge or even suspicion of my presence in Mosquitia could have consequences far beyond the confiscation of my notebooks and film. I still don't know if I should have followed his advice, but fear won out and I did.

Back in the surrealistic desolation of Managua, I had some time to kill before my onward flight to Costa Rica. One afternoon in the lobby of the Hotel Intercontinental, I happened to read an American newspaper with a syndicated article by columnist Mary McGrory (4 May 1987) entitled "Two Faces of the Contra War Show the Tragic Results of a Bad Policy." It was the first news from my country that I'd read since going into the jungle two months earlier.

The thrust of Ms. McGrory's story was that "everyone knows that the contra war is the immoral equivalent of the garbage scow that started out in New York and floats along the coast spreading noxious fumes and rage" and that "the contras, outnumbered four to one, cannot take the field, much less win a war."

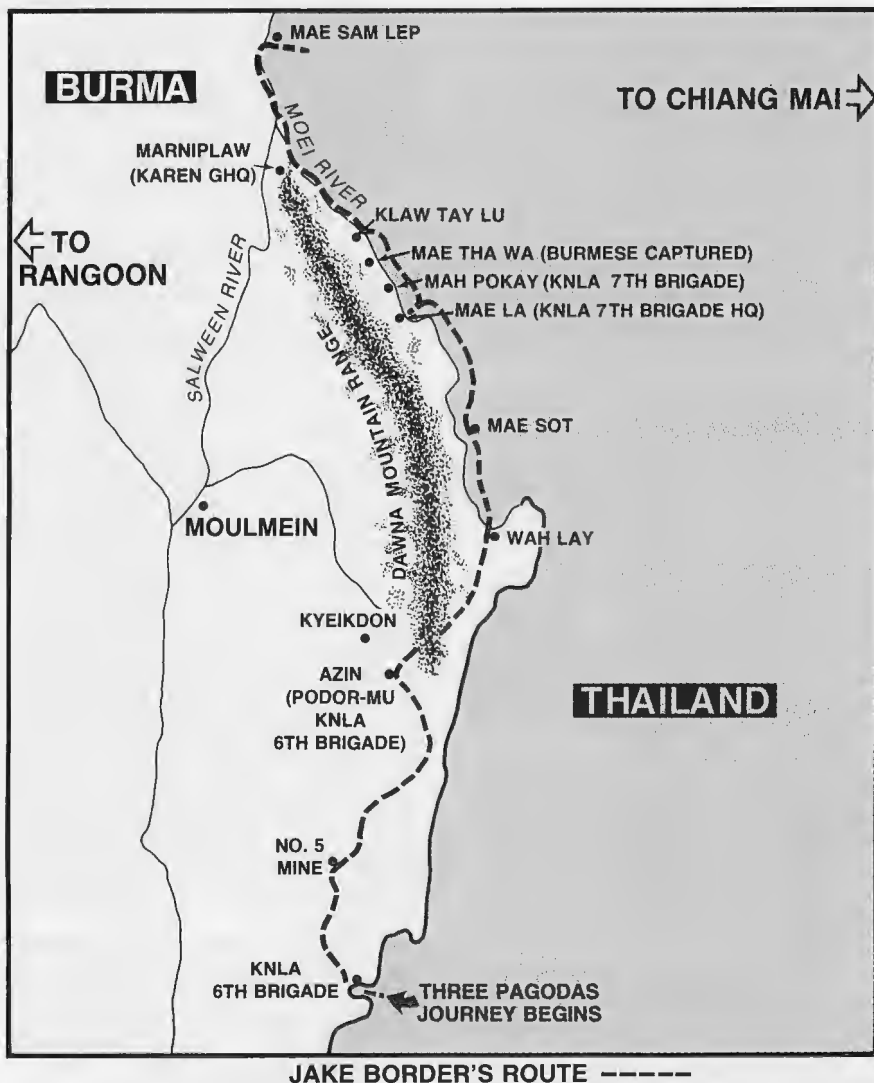
Her first statement made me wonder whether Ms. McGrory had ever really talked to anyone who lives in Nicaragua; the second made me think about an incident that had happened on the previous afternoon. To escape the ghastly heat of Managua's dry season, I'd ventured into the Margot Cinema to watch a poorly dubbed American movie. Twenty-five minutes into the show, there arose a considerable commotion as a few people from various sections of the theater jumped from their seats and dashed for the exits. Not quite sure what to make of it, I walked out front. From the lobby, I could see into the street where Sandinista soldiers had captured a handful of fleeing patrons and were loading them into the back of a military truck. The man at the ticket window, noticing my curiosity at the ruckus, explained to me that the four young men who had been caught were taken away to "join" the army. He said it was not at all unusual for the Sandinistas to raid movie theaters in order to conscript men who might not otherwise come forward to fight the contras.

In the lobby of the hotel, I again mused, "the contras, outnumbered four to one. . . ." For every rebel struggling against the FSLN, I wondered how many boys were being yanked out of theaters in Managua to fight them. ✕

BATTLE-GROUND BURMA

Open Season on Duck Mountain

Text & Photos by Jake Border



“STAY in the trench and keep your head down or you’ll get it blown off,” I was warned. “You are much taller than us.” After snapping a few more pictures, my heart and feet pounded in unison as I frantically scrambled for the protection of a Karen rebel command bunker.

Up on the line a 75mm recoilless rifle was being mounted and sighted at the main Burmese post on Duck Mountain. The gunner and targeting officer made some last-minute adjustments with a protractor to calculate elevation and angles, then waited for a radio signal. Other Karen rebels opened up with machine guns, bracketing the target in con-



LEFT: Map of author’s route through Karen republic of Kawthoolei.

KAREN CONFIDANT

If it happens in south Asia, *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine’s Jake Border is the man to ask about it. As an internationally known combat reporter, Jake isn’t satisfied with looking at the world from behind a typewriter. He gets inside Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Afghanistan and fights alongside the freedom fighters, giving the grunt’s-eye view of battle as it occurs. Other Border articles in SOF include “Burma’s Unlikely Alliance,” December ’87; “Battle at Three Pagodas Pass,” August ’87; and “Cambodian Recon,” October ’86.

junction with 81mm mortar fire from two additional fire bases.

Everyone was safe below ground in the bunkers and trenches — except me. I happened to be out in the open taking a leak. Bad timing! A Burmese 60mm mortar round whistled overhead, exploding about 100 meters to my left. I hit the trench, fly open, my bladder on go and my prick on hold.

BELOW: Major Johnny of KNLA 7th Brigade with radio and fellow officer during operation at Duck Mountain. Weapon against tree is .30 M1 Carbine.

What a way to make a living!

I was back in my old stomping grounds again — Three Pagodas Pass. This time I was accompanying the Karen rebels on a March 1987 operation to retake Duck Mountain, the highest point on a strategic chain of hilltops occupied by troops of the Burmese No. 9 Light Infantry of the 44th Division. Duck Mountain was taken from the Karen during the 1984 Burmese year-round offensive designed to break Karen resistance once and for all. Three years later, the Karen are still stubbornly holding on and now pressing the initiative themselves to regain some lost territory. Their plan

called for a heavy bombardment of the mountain followed by a direct frontal assault coinciding with nightfall. As the lone *gringo*, I was there to document this battle for Western consumption.

But getting to this war zone was, as they say, more than half the battle. A few days before, I met with the local Karen G-2 man about my chances of going in deep with a patrol of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the outlook was bleak.

During my previous visit during the Burmese offensive against the combined Mon and Karen forces, my Karen contact assured me that joining a KNLA patrol would be no problem. Now he was backpedaling, claiming that only small 20- to 30-man patrols were operating in this area and they would be insufficient to provide adequate security for me.

"If the enemy knows about a white man, they will put up more strength and smash the column, and you," remarked another Karen. This guy was not in the military but he spoke with clearly recognizable authority. Not only that, he was a representative from Karen general headquarters (GHQ) up north of here; his mission was now completed and he was about to return.

I still didn't know the man's name, but for some reason, maybe the look of disappointment on my face at my aborted mission, he invited me to join him. "You can come along with us if you want," he said freely. "You've got five minutes to make up your mind."

Here we go again, I thought. I didn't know how or where we'd be going, nor how long it might take, but this wasn't a time for asking questions. It was a time for making fast decisions. "Let's go," I said spontaneously, grabbing my cameras.

We piled into the back of a four-wheel-drive Toyota Landcruiser with the number plate reading "KNLA," which was quite appropriate since I learned that our route to GHQ would involve several days of driving through the southern part of the Karen State of Burma under control of the 6th Brigade of the KNLA.

Our driver was a commander from 7th Brigade, and in the back with me were his wife and a kid, an old man, four soldiers, a township officer and my new friend George, whom, I had just learned, was the chief justice for the Karen independent homeland they call "Kawthoolei" [see map]. The road was so dry and dusty, I felt like I was breathing talcum powder. "Revolution is not a pleasant business," said the township officer facetiously.

The first stage of the trip was to the No. 5 antimony mines which had been occupied by the Burmese in their new-year offensive just two months earlier. "Here the Burmese crossed the road and planted mines," yelled the G-2 officer from the front seat, waving



LEFT: Karen nurse at Azin hospital (Podor-mu camp) treating Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldier who lost foot due to Burmese land mine.

his arm as we crashed and bumped our way along the dirt track which was mercifully shielded from the blazing sun by thick overhanging bamboo trees.

After fording the river at Mae Kasa (the northernmost point I reached during the Three Pagodas offensive), we began to climb into the mountains where stands of forest have so far escaped the loggers' saw. Before too long we were forced to stop due to a breakdown of another four-wheel-drive which was blocking the road ahead of us. Also blocked on the other side was a 10-wheeled military truck loaded with anti-mony ore and crowned with two stag's head

trophies that some hunters had bagged in the jungle.

There was nothing to do but wait. The chief justice found a spot under some trees where he tuned his radio into Rangoon and picked up the Burma Broadcasting Service. I couldn't believe my ears; they were playing a children's story in English — "Sparky and the Magic Violin" — which I could remember from my childhood.

Once on the move again we arrived at the

KNLA troopers armed with AK-47s crouching in trench during Burmese shelling of Karen positions.

summit of the mountain ridge, which afforded a misty panorama of the Burmese heartland and cool, refreshing air to breathe. The first of the abundant wildlife we spotted was an eagle perched in a tree, though an AK round soon dislodged it. Fortunately the shot missed.

Just about any animal is fair game for a Karen, with the exception of rhinos and hornbill birds. "It is against our law to shoot them," I'm often told, which was borne out as we passed a magnificent heavy-backed hornbill at close range. Nearing the No. 5 mines we startled a mob of wild pigs, but they moved too quickly to be shot. High up in a grand old teak tree hung a huge beehive, but that store of wild honey was too hard to reach. In fact, the only trophy we took before stopping to eat was an enormous frog.

We pulled out from the mines at about 1900 hours and headed for our primary objective, a Karen village called Azin, front-line HQ for the KNLA 6th Brigade. With the aid of a spotlight, one of the soldiers continued to scout the forest for game, sighting to my pleasure and amazement a rare leopard cat about the size of a dog trotting along the road in front of us. Again I was glad when the soldier's shot went wild.

Next was a flying fox, lazily rippling through the air like a manta ray in the sea. Finally our "game hunter" spotted and picked off a silver-furred monkey up in a tree, his AK round nearly decapitating the little beast. It was unceremoniously tossed in the back of our vehicle for tomorrow's breakfast.

As we came down from the mountains, the flat seemed sparsely forested, and what was left was now subject to free-ranging fires. "They are caused from human neglect," came the honest but unconcerned explanation. "Usually from a tossed che-root [cigar]." Madness, I thought, just like this ride. After four hours of being battered and crushed, fatigue finally gave way to semi-sleep.

Our route came close to the Thailand border, then headed inland again following a water course. At a place called Kwikler there was a roadblock, but it was manned by the KNLA who, once roused, let us through. I was freezing cold and convinced this was the last crazy trip I'd ever make. Giving in to my nagging curiosity I asked George when this ride would be over. "About midnight." Miraculously we then stopped. "It's midnight," he said with a straight face.

The wooden barracks where we crashed were well-ventilated and I continued to freeze. In a room next to me someone snored incessantly and didn't even wake when I stormed in and shook him; great jungle readiness, I thought. To cap it off, the roosters announcing sunrise were perched directly underneath us, but if I thought I had been hard done by that, I had another thing coming. We were to stay here for four more nights, each a nerve-harassing repetition of the first.

Next day I learned we were in Podor-mu



camp near Azin, which was described as a "primary liberated strategic township." To the east were the Burma Ranges and about 20 klicks to the northwest was the town of Kyeikdon, where the Burmese had a small garrison. The Karen camp seemed to be at the foot of a solitary peak which checked out with my survey map as the one marked at 510 meters.

I rose early and joined the others in the river for a bath. Later came breakfast, which included our decapitated monkey, intestines and all. Before the heat of the day began, George and I walked to Azin and visited his friends there. In June 1986 the Burmese occupied this town, burning 32 houses to the ground. Many were still charred wrecks.

Azin is characterized by huge plantations of betel nut ("Karen chocolate") trees and not much else. We visited the district HQ school, which takes students up to the eighth grade (15- to 16-year-olds) in classes which include computer studies and, ironically, though of necessity, the Burmese language. There was a general store and a dispensary well-stocked with the usual variety of vitamins, antibiotics and anti-malaria medicines.

At a special lunch prepared for us I had my first lesson in the vagaries of the Karen language. I had learned how to say "water" but not how to say it correctly. The all-male audience roared with laughter at my first attempt to say "water." George obligingly explained that Karen is a tonal tongue, where a shift in pitch of voice can change the meaning of the word. He then informed me that instead of asking for water I had been asking for "an erection of the penis"!

Podor-mu camp is important for its hospital, which doubles as a medical training center for the 6th Brigade, with a staff of over 40, many of whom are women. Minimum age for the nurses is 16 and they have three months basic training which equips them to perform amputations and hernia operations as well as first aid.

The most common injury in the hospital is caused by mines; the most common sickness is malaria. The nurses, who receive no pay, seem inspired by patriotism. I asked one modest woman, whose face betrayed just a hint of lipstick and powder, why she had started her training. "Our villages have no nurses or health care and we want to help the people," she stated simply.

I visited a nearby village in the company of some young Karen soldiers. This was back to basics — for many of the children I was probably the first white man they'd ever seen. Here the unmarried women still adhere to the Karen tradition of wearing all-white, hand-woven smocks decorated with brightly colored embroidery. The elder women smoked contentedly on pipes.

After the kids had overcome their camera shyness the whole village turned out to check me over, politely providing newly cut coconuts for my refreshment. Then we retired to someone's hut for something a little stronger: Karen moonshine. Officially,



ABOVE: Karen soldier with Romanian AKMS slung across back.



ABOVE: Flash designating Karen demolition squad.

BELOW: Author's Karen escort, Maw Lay, carried a "King Cobra" — a cigarette-lighter-sized double-shot .22 magnum pistol.



BURMA DEMOGRAPHICS

Burma is a large country with vast cultural and political variety. But you'd never know it from the piddling amount of ink and celluloid the Western news media allots to it.

As the largest country (nearly the size of Texas) on the Southeast Asian mainland, Burma has over 100 distinct indigenous languages spoken among its 38 million people, three main religious groups — Buddhist, Christian, Muslim — as well as animists among various hill tribes, and numerous ethnic minority groups fighting for their independence. The largest of these minority groups, or "hill people," are the Karen, numbering just over two million, who live throughout southern and eastern Burma, and the Shan, also numbering about two million, who inhabit the eastern plateau region. The Kachin in the north and Chin in the northwest total about one million, while Indians, Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi make up the rest of Burma's minority population.

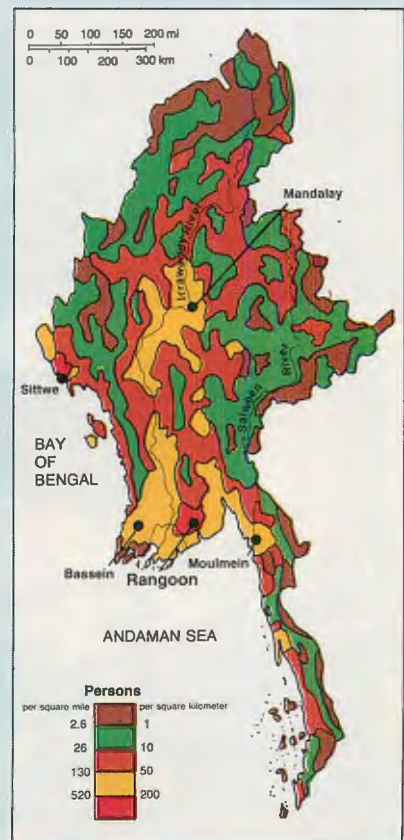
Density of population in Burma is directly related to areas which are suitable for agriculture [see map]. Most people live in the Irrawaddy River valley and delta, with the highest density of population found in the upper delta region between Rangoon and Henzada. The rest of Burma's terrain is mountainous and sparsely populated.

The Karen are the only hill people

who have come down to the plains and live in deltas among the Burmese along both sides of the lower Salween River.

— Tom Bates

Map showing population density in Burma.



Karen soldiers are prohibited from drinking liquor, but except for Karen GHQ, this rule is not strictly enforced.

All of my drinking mates coughed and spat out copious amounts of greenish phlegm. Since we all shared the same cup, I could only hope that the alcohol was strong enough to kill off whatever it was that had made them so sick. Then I spotted a curious old medical manual and, idly browsing through it, came up with a formula for an anti-dysentery mixture: nitric acid and tincture of opium! Bloody hell! I thought. A combination like that could probably handle AIDS.

By the fourth day in Podor-mu I felt I had sampled all its charms. I was itching for action. How about a trip to check out the Burmese post at Kyeikdon, I pressed George. He told me to cool my jets; it was only a bunker on a hill. "This bunker is not like a castle and the defensive fences are not like the Great Wall of China. It is not much of a target for your camera — otherwise it would be for our 57s," he said, referring to

BELOW: Karen soldiers at KNLA headquarters in Mae La armed with (left) .30 M1 Carbine and (right) UZI 9mm submachine gun.

their recoilless rifles.

I settled for another run into Azin, where I found some fudge-like natural cane sugar which I shared with my friend and escort Maw Lay, a young KNLA fighter who was armed with a deadly and intriguing little weapon.

Completely hidden within one hand he had a rectangular steel object much like a cigarette lighter, except for the openings at one end. It was a double-shot .22 magnum pistol the Karen call "King Cobra." I'd never seen such a neat little device before. I was told it had its origins in Vietnam. "Our intelligence forces use them in the cities,"



LEFT: Karen soldiers sighting-in Chinese Type 56 75mm recoilless rifle.

BELOW: Karen holding modified M16 outside GHQ in Marniplaw.



confided Maw Lay with grim satisfaction.

Back in camp I quizzed George on our delay. A special report was being prepared for Karen GHQ concerning shooting incidents between the KNLA and Mon troops of the independent Nai Shwe Kyin faction, and for some reason they couldn't get it right. All the officials concerned had to be consulted and all had to reach a consensus of opinion. Only then could the report be typed. "There are advantages, and disadvantages, to the democratic process," commented George with mounting frustration.

On the fifth day at 1800 hours we were cleared to go. Next stop was a trading post



Maw Lay KNLA soldier at Podor-mu camp near Azin armed with Soviet AKMS.

on the Thailand-Burma border called Wah Lay, about six hours' drive away — in the dry season. In the wet it takes three days and two nights of walking, including stretches where only elephants can pass.

The road was carved out of the Dawna Ranges by the Karen at a cost of "20 lakhs of baht" (two million baht, or about \$80,000), mainly to facilitate the passage of smuggled goods into Burma. From Wah Lay traders reach Kyeikdon, from where they head for Kya-in Seiggyi by boat and then on to Moulmein.

Driving through the night we met a party of traders whose six-by had completely overturned, spilling its cargo of polyester cloth and rubber sandals all over the road. Such are the risks taken by those "benefiting" from the enlightened "Burmese Path to Socialism." We took a few risks too, gunning our four-wheel-drive through portions of road where wildfires burned on both sides.

Around midnight we pulled into Wah Lay and found places on the floor of a Karen house to sleep. It wasn't until morning that I learned we were lucky to have even those bare boards. It looked like the holocaust had struck Wah Lay. Walking around I could see only ashes and rubble, the result of the Burmese offensive exactly one month before that saw 80 percent of the buildings, including six sawmills, razed to the ground.

The Karen customs post was back in operation, where guards armed with AKs and a pump-action shotgun took taxes from the traders arriving in a steady stream from neighboring Thailand. Up on a hill I found a Karen church intact and surrounded by fox-holes barricaded with church pews where the defenders had made their last stand. Scattered around were numerous empty ammo packets of both Burmese and Karen origin. The writing on the Burmese packets was indecipherable; the others read "5.56mm Tracer M196 Lake City Ammunition Plant."

About 700 Burmese troops from the 44th Division occupied Wah Lay for one day, even crossing into Thailand on so-called "hot pursuit," where they ambushed and killed eight KNLA soldiers and reportedly shot up a Thai armored personnel carrier (APC) and wounded some Thai border patrol police before retreating.

For the next stage of the journey we had to use a little subterfuge in order for me to get across the border undetected by the Thai border guards. I didn't anticipate any real problems if detected, but preferred to err on the side of caution rather than spend precious time explaining where I'd been illegally for the past week.

I was dressed in a disguise and strategically placed among others in the vehicle and passed through, no sweat. Next stop Mae Sot. This is a major city in Thailand grown fat off the cross-border trade. We stocked up here with supplies and feasted on all the goodies that we'd missed in Burma.

After some social calls, George and I headed north again on the main road run-

ning parallel with the Moei River. Again it was hot and dry and I was thankful when we pulled off down a side road that led us to a camp of Karen refugees, where I was delivered to some of George's friends. This was Mae La, one of seven camps housing some 27,000 Karen refugees in Thailand, all victims of Burmese oppression in the ongoing border battles.

The houses were not fenced in nor were there guards patrolling the camp perimeters. In this sense the Karen are better off than their Khmer buddies on the Thailand-Cambodia border. "We are free," said one Karen, adding that they had come to some arrangement with the Thai authorities. I didn't ask for any further explanation of that, and none was given.

Unlike the Indochinese refugees, the Karen are not recognized by the United Nations and therefore receive no U.N. aid. They exist through the support of private groups, primarily Christian relief organizations. For the Karen this lack of U.N. aid also means a de facto non-recognition of their valiant struggle for freedom.

Mae La is also significant because just across the Moei River is the headquarters of the KNLA 7th Brigade led by Colonel Hte Maung. I wasn't about to miss this chance to meet with Col. Maung. George arranged transport to the river and there bade me farewell. Some Karen were to guide me over. Said one, pointing across the shallow waters of the Moei, "There is Karenland, sir."

Indeed it was and before long I was introduced to the 2 I/C, Major Htun Chai. Interestingly, he was brooding over a survey map with a Karen commando, the French-trained elite recognizable in their tiger stripes and black scarves and dripping with weaponry. The map was no less accurate for its antiquity. It read: "Burma-Siam Edition 1926, Printed

Azin Karen soldier in betel nut plantation armed with .30 M1 Carbine.



for the Govt. of Burma Under the Direction of the Surveyor-General India.”

Nothing was spoken of it, but I sensed there was something in the air. I had planned on only a cursory visit this first time here and to continue on to GHQ as quickly as possible, but once again I cooled my jets and had a quiet scout around. Sure enough, from the arsenal near the river in front of the sign “Danger — authorized personnel only,” I spotted a 75mm recoilless rifle with a pile of 81mm mortar ammo.

Next day, I met Col. Hte Maung, who was dressed casually in army pants, a checkered shirt and black beret, packing a .357 Magnum and smoking a pipe. Though

proficient in English, the colonel was more at ease using an interpreter. “We Karen people don’t like war,” he said, “but the Burmese oppress us, so we must fight back.”

He recalled from his own personal experience Karen-Burmese enmity back as far as World War II, when many ethnic Burmese sided with the Japanese. As a child of “not more than 12 years,” the colonel remembered a Japanese-Burman massacre in his village near the delta city of Bassein. Of

BELOW: Preparing to fire 60mm mortar round against Burmese army position.



the 1,000 inhabitants only 20 escaped alive. The colonel was one of them. “This is a real story — not a fairy tale,” he said.

As a young man in 1946, the colonel joined the 1st Karen Rifles at Toungoo, then under British command. After Burma’s independence in 1948 he joined the revolution. “Your arms are your pens and pencils,” said my interpreter, “and the brigadier asks that you do your best to tell the story of the Karen struggle.”

All right, I agreed, seizing my chance, but where’s the action? The colonel turned to me and said, “You are lucky. Tomorrow at noon the attack will start.” I was told to rest up for the day and wait for the call. “The brigadier warns you to lie down when the Burmese big guns start shooting,” added the interpreter with a grin as he handed me over to the colonel’s right-hand man, Major Johnny, who would be in charge of the attack.

Relaxing in a *longyi* and chewing on betel nut as is the Karen’s habit, Maj. Johnny explained to me that the target was none other than the Burmese stronghold on Duck Mountain. The plan called for a heavy bombardment of the Burmese position followed by a direct frontal assault coinciding with nightfall.

A jeep ride took me through the rear lines of defense up to some foothills from where I had to walk the front-line trenches. In the early morning hours it was quiet here and the Karen soldiers relaxing in their hooches betrayed no sign of awareness of the coming operation.

I used this time to familiarize myself with the battleground. Facing us across a small valley was the enemy-occupied ridge. With binoculars the heavily bamboo-picketed outposts were clearly visible. Branching off at right angles from this target area was a lower ridge which approached to within less than 200 meters of the Karen trenches. I went up for a recon.

Here the Burmese bunkers and bamboo fences could be seen with the naked eye — though with caution. Keeping a low profile takes on all new meaning in an area this volatile.

At about 1030 hours I heard the first salvos of Karen gunfire, ranging the target. Time to get moving again. I dashed back down the line and returned to where I’d been dropped off from the jeep. There were two mortars set up nearby and they were just gearing up for action. The first was a homemade 81mm with an extended barrel “to give it the range of a 120.” The second was an American-made 81mm which the Karen claimed to have captured from the Burmese. Suddenly the first rounds were fired. Boom! Karen mortar, round away. Boom! U.S. mortar, round away, and we were looking at a collapsed heap of metal — the thing fell apart with the first round! After some sheepish laughs, the gunner readjusted the tube, this time securing the mounting firmly.

LEFT: Karen firing 60mm mortar against Burmese army position.

Then it was all on, the scene literally erupting into a concert of small arms and mortar fire. I made my photographs and shunted off again back uphill to the front line. I sought protection in a command bunker, where I gulped down tea to replace liquid lost in my profuse sweating. Then I noticed a strange thing. In the midst of all the boom-bangs, the roosters didn't stop crowing. Well, after all, war is man's business.

Once during a lull in the shelling I had doubled back to the command bunker to scrounge something to eat (the usual front-line rations are plain rice and chili for flavoring), when I sensed before I heard it . . . incoming! Dashing underground again, where I found my hosts already secluded, I beat the mortar round by seconds. The blast rattled the bamboo walls. Later outside about 20 meters away, I found the shallow depression of a 60mm explosion and scooped out some metal fragments as a reminder of what a close shave can mean.

Around 1715 hours the Karen barrage stopped. Their troops were now closing in on the target and were observing radio silence until they positioned themselves near the defensive perimeter at bamboo fences that would have to be penetrated before the enemy could be engaged. I found Maj. Johnny at the far end of the trench line, tensely poised over his walkie-talkie.

We waited in silence. Then whispered on the radio. Daylight was fading as the night closed around us. By 1730 hours the Karen attackers were placing a "torpedo" along the fence line — a battery-fired ½-inch-diameter pipe fitted with dynamite. There was no firing. At 1745 hours Maj. Johnny dispatched a crew to set up the 75mm recoilless to give the attackers covering fire when the attack started. "Our men's backs are exposed to the enemy's fire from another hilltop," he said hurriedly.

At 1800 hours all was set. It was dark as pitch. At 1805 hours all hell broke loose! A gigantic blast as the torpedo went off, its fireball light illuminating the entire ridge line.

Small arms spat and crackled as both sides exchanged fire, including a heavy machine gun (HMG) from the far end of the Karen trenches. Grenade flashes punctuated the close-quarters fighting and the ether was alive with frantic radio messages.

After 15 minutes the main enemy bunker was on fire, clearly visible from our side. The Karen had stormed the hill, splitting the Burmese defenders into two groups. Already they had reported killing a Burmese radio operator and capturing several weapons. But their position was not yet secured, and continuing explosions and tracers in the air highlighted their struggle to consolidate their hold. There were only 36 attackers.

I took time out to monitor the line. Contrary to the afternoon's slumber, the Karen in the trenches were now very much on the alert. At the opposite end from Maj. Johnny I encountered the HMG crew. They were enthusiastically hammering away with .30-

caliber Brownings, not the heavier .50-cal. as I'd been told earlier. Some gung-ho boy soldiers were dancing about the lip of the trench with little concern for their safety, ripping away with captured Burmese G-3 rifles on full auto, showering sparks to announce their position — and mine. I strategically retreated back to Maj. Johnny, passing pockets of Karen who were engaged

Wounded KNLA soldier being carried back from the field after attack on Duck Mountain. Shouldered weapon is .30 M1A1 Carbine.



in their form of psy-war: yelling insults across at the Burmese.

By 0200 hours the firing had died down to a murmur. Major Johnny decided to use this lull to resupply his men with ammo. Three boys made their *longyi* into bundles filled with M79 grenades and disappeared into the night. It seems they sent the wrong stuff because later there came requests for tobacco, of all things.

A small group of civilian porters was recruited from somewhere and loaded up with a 57mm recoilless rifle and ammo,

Continued on page 92

FORCE 136 CLANDESTINE OPS IN WORLD WAR II BURMA

British clandestine operations against the Japanese in Burma during World War II were the responsibility of Force 136, an agency within the Southeast Asia Command Special Operations Executive, itself an agency of the London War Cabinet. Specifically tasked with organizing underground anti-Japanese resistance movements, Force 136 recruited, armed and directed Karen guerrilla groups which proved vital to the British Army's eventual retaking of Burma.

November 1944 saw the first coordinated use of Burmese resistance under Force 136, when a Karen radio operator was secretly dropped into Japanese-occupied territory near Pegu, just north of Rangoon. This radio operator quickly made contact with the Burmese minister of agriculture, Than Tun, and relayed a demand for 20,000 firearms and a large amount of gold to build up a resistance movement. From January to March 1945, Karen radio operators were inserted throughout the entire length of Burma, setting up a communications network among various guerrilla groups and an effective, if sometimes haphazard, distribution system for materiel.

During this time another massive resistance movement led by British officers of Force 136 was taking shape in the Karen hills. About 12,000 Karen guerrillas were enlisted from Karenni down

through the Salween District and instructed to form four commands. By late February 1945, these Karen guerrillas were unified and mobilized for action.

The speed with which the British Army's final thrust down the Sittang Valley toward Rangoon occurred was a direct result of assistance received from this infrastructure of Karen guerrillas. In the Toungoo area, the Burma National Army (BNA) attack on the Japanese rear was coordinated with the action of a Karen guerrilla unit under Force 136. It cut off Japanese efforts to strengthen their sagging front by reinforcements sent from Thailand via Mawchi. Karen attacks in the delta area tied down other Japanese troops which could have been used to block British progress toward Rangoon. Consequently, the British 14th Army was able to advance from Yamethin to Pegu, about 220 miles, in only 18 days (11 April to 29 April). Then in a mere five days they covered the crucial 150-mile stretch from Pinyinmana to Nyaunglegin, where the BNA attack occurred. Overall, however, the most telling contribution of the Karen under Force 136 was the destruction of the Japanese army's lines of communication and transport to the delta area.

By 2 May 1945, as the first of the monsoon rains was hitting the city, Rangoon was occupied by British seaborne forces and the port became thereafter the vital channel for supplying the British 14th Army.

— Tom Bates

BORDER INCIDENT

Free the Mae Hong Son One

Text & Photo by Jake Border

Last month we ran Jake Border's article, "Burma's Unlikely Alliance," which described his visit with the Shans and the infamous Khun Sa, reputed opium warlord and military leader of the Shan State Army of Burma. That story has an epilogue — Border was thrown in jail by the Thais as soon as he returned from meeting Khun Sa.

SOF correspondents tend to find themselves in these types of predicaments from time to time, and usually they're wily enough to get out of them. Jake Border is one of our more wily correspondents.

A SHAN variety act was in progress, a combination act of machismo, masochism and madness. Balancing on glowing fluorescent tubes a meter off the ground, our entertainer was having darts thrown at his chest by an assistant. Khun Sa, host of the proceedings, was absent; he'd seen it all before. I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was the general's aide de camp. Would I please accompany him?

I was taken to one of the huts provided for our accommodation, where I found Khun Sa drinking beer with a few of my male colleagues. I joined them in what was a relaxed and strictly informal gathering. Conversation turned to a report we'd been shown in that day's issue of the *Bangkok Post* in which Thai authorities warned journalists not to make a visit to the reputed opium warlord's camp. Well, it was too late for that. We were already there and fast approaching a state where we would be in no condition to leave even if ordered to by Khun Sa himself.

One of the Thai journalists was particularly worried about the consequences of his visit. "My pen rai," we said with a laugh, using the stock Thai phrase which means don't worry, it doesn't matter, no problem.

Six days later the joke backfired on me. I was arrested.

With my friend Edith Mirante (an American specialist in the ethnic minorities of Burma who was investigating the effects of the U.S.-supplied herbicide 2,4-D on the Shan population) and an armed escort provided by Khun Sa, we had journeyed up to the Salween River and back in time for the closing ceremonies. By this time we were the only Westerners left in camp.

On 27 January 1987 Khun Sa provided a jeep for us to travel back to Mae Hong Son in Thailand. All the other foreigners had left without incident, and we departed in high spirits, music blaring from the cassette deck. Down the valley, past the poppy fields, through the SSA checkpoint and up and over the divide into Thailand. We had to ask about that because there are no signs, no border posts, nothing to indicate where you are.

We stopped for something to eat. Two Shan monks in the back were hungry, and according to Buddhist precepts cannot eat after noon, now rapidly approaching. So was our encounter with the law.

Driving into a valley, we approached the village where in the mid-1970s a former Shan drug "kingpin," Lo Hsing-han, had been arrested by the Thais. In retrospect Warren Zevon was bawling out an ironically appropriate number — "Send Lawyers, Guns and Money" — when zap! Roadblock! Just as we exited the village, there they were, half a dozen Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP) armed with HK-33s.

They checked passports and looked through our bags, ignoring the four other passengers and the driver, then escorted us to Mae Hong Son. They had been told to look out for *Bangkok Post* reporters, because on 23 January the *Post* had published a piece about Khun Sa apparently upsetting the powers that be. We weren't sure if we

had been officially arrested but we were definitely in custody.

Obligingly we stopped on the way to let the monks visit a temple, while we waited on the roadside with the cops. One handed me his pistol, a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum from which he had carefully extracted the rounds, and asked me if I knew how to use it.

While my hands toyed with the gun my mind toyed with the idea that right at that moment 20 kilograms or more of pure heroin could very well be changing hands right under our noses, having been carried in body bags under the monks' robes.

At Mae Hong Son BPP HQ we were transferred from the jeep (our driver was free to go) to an official's car and driven to the local immigration office for interrogation. For a long while we sat there; nobody seemed to know what was going on. Gradually the office filled with officials of all kinds, curious to know if we had seen Khun Sa.

Meanwhile my regional map published by the Royal Thai Survey Department was causing great consternation with the BPP. They seemed to think I had in my possession a state secret. I told them truthfully that I had bought the map at a bookstore in Chiang Mai. It even had printed on it "for Civilian Purpose." But no, they were convinced of a conspiracy and had themselves photographed posing with the map, to be used as some kind of evidence, I guess.

Eventually the questioning began, though in a confused and uncoordinated manner. I soon realized that there were many different parties after information, such as how we had gotten to Khun Sa's camp and who else was there, but they were all working independently of each other. A very smooth operator with an excellent command of English — spook-type — began a casual and innocuous line of inquiry

that I soon realized was leading into an area that I wished to avoid: Did you take any photographs?

I had a bag full of film but did not want it confiscated. I refused to answer any more questions. Hell, we still didn't know what offense we had committed, let alone what they might do with us. After I insisted on being informed about this, we were told we were being charged under Section 2: violating immigration laws by illegally exiting and re-entering Thailand. Legally it seemed that the visit to Khun Sa was irrelevant, but we all knew that in fact this was the catalyst for the whole circus.

Since we were arrested inside Thailand we could have challenged the authorities to prove we had crossed the border, but we signed the charge sheet on the understanding that we would be given a quick trial and standard fine. We were also to be "sent out" of the country, but were assured that we could return with new visas. It sounded a fair deal.

At about 1900, six hours after our arrest, Edith and I were taken to jail, where we were treated to a decent meal before being perfunctorily searched and locked into a freshly washed cell with a teakwood floor and attached toilet. There was no light except one in the corridor which shone through the iron bars and never went off, but it was rent free.

I was absorbed in reading Kerouac's *Desolation Angels* when a voice in English came from the adjoining cell, asking us if we would like some cigarettes.

"We are all foreigners here, sir," the voice said. "We came from Burma."

"So did we," replied Edith, and we all cracked up with laughter.

A little later the voice returned with: "Hello, sir, would you care to read the Bible while you are troubled, sir?" I stuck with Kerouac but thanked my unseen friend anyway. It seemed that he was a Shan-Karen Christian who had attempted to smuggle antique Buddha statues from Burma to Thailand but had been caught. He claimed the police had ripped him off, accepting the traditional take of "customs-duty" but turning him in anyway and confiscating the lost loot in the bargain.

Next morning we woke early. We'd slept well; jail was warmer at night than the jungle of Shan State. After breakfast, for which we sent out, we were processed by the police. Again the litany of questions we had already fielded in the immigration office and the tedium of endless paperwork. I couldn't help thinking that if they had nabbed the full complement of foreigners crossing the border there would be pandemonium here now. But we stayed cool and played the game.

We were then fingerprinted five times and a mug shot was taken for police files. Some sleaze, a local stringer for a national rag, snapped me at the same time and I later appeared in the Thai dailies looking like a safe-breaker. Edith refused to be photographed in this guy's presence, a



Author sits in Thai jail cell awaiting better things.

courageous albeit futile act of defiance under the circumstances — the police gave him a copy of their photo anyway.

By now word had leaked to Bangkok that two foreigners had been arrested on the border, and the phone at the jail began to run hot with calls for us. So much for low profile; we were now international news property. In the afternoon we were told we would be taken to court. Pulling up at a provincial administrative building, we learned we would be introduced to our "lawyer." During that endless waiting, which was by now familiar fare, a guy emerged from an office and offered us advice on how to plead. "Are you our lawyer?" asked Edith. "No, I'm a veterinarian," he replied. It was quite amusing, but Edith had had enough and adamantly demanded to phone the U.S. Consulate in Chiang Mai, which she was able to do from the provincial livestock office.

We finally made it to the courthouse, where once again we admitted our guilt with the mitigating proviso that there had been no signs to warn us that we were leaving Thailand nor any border guards to prevent us from doing so. If the authorities wished to prevent journalists from visiting Khun Sa, why didn't they station border police in advance, we argued. The stern-faced judge, a woman in her 30s, was not impressed by our escapade and fined us 1,000 baht (\$40) each, with a month's prison sentence suspended. We paid up and left, receiving a 20 baht rebate for the night we had already spent in the slammer!

We signed out of the jail and were driven to the immigration office, where we sat while officials conferred in hushed tones. Outside a tourist couple walked past, oblivious to our drama, probably oblivious to the drug trade and the Shan insurgency as well, but free.

We thought we were free, too, but no. We were taken back to the jail again for another night, no explanation given. I passed time talking with our smuggler friend next door. He had a two-year sentence to serve unless he could come up with a 60,000-baht fine. I asked him what he did each day in jail. "Thinking, sir, just thinking," he said.

By coincidence it turned out that our friend was sharing his cell with a number of Korn Jerng's soldiers who'd been caught in Mae Hong Son without papers. Did he understand who Korn Jerng was? I asked our friend. "Oh yes, sir," he replied. "He is the only true revolutionary in the Shan State." And what about Khun Sa? "He is just a businessman."

The following morning we both had calls from our consuls and we learned we had been the only arrests. Wire agencies were still hot on our case, calling the jail for follow-up news, and we had a visit from two locals running a tourist guest house who had heard that there were two "farangs" — foreigners — in the lockup. They were very welcome — they brought food!

At 1330 hours, smiling officials told us we would be sent to Bangkok in the evening. It was now 29 January, Chinese New Year, a public holiday for sure. We were too late for a flight and unsure about buses. How were we getting there? *My pen rai* — the immigration boys had a jeep (model 2,4-D, as in the poppy-spraying program), and we were driven through the night sleeping in the back on mattresses, in the company of one mildly drunk official.

But it wasn't over yet. It was Friday and we had no tickets for a flight out of the country. "You'll have to stay until Monday," we were told. We were in a large building at the rear of the public offices where foreigners get their visas extended. Upstairs were the overcrowded detention cells where we would be sent. To hell with that. "We have credit cards," we said. "We can book flights with these."

Edith was accompanied into the city and obtained seats on the next flight out — tomorrow at noon! Ah well, another night in the slammer. This was an education. There were separate men's and women's quarters, and I was placed with a handful of Iranians arrested with false passports and a mass of Cambodian refugees, many of whom had managed to journey all the way to Bangkok before being apprehended. But that's another story.

On 31 January we were finally released. At the airport our two escorting officers checked us in at the head of the queue, where patiently waiting package-tourists were obliging enough not to object, and handled all paperwork with immigration. I was technically overstayed, but having been an Immigration Department guest they didn't press the point. Our flight to Penang was called. We were escorted to the check-in gate and passed through. We had just been expelled from Thailand. But we were free. ✕

BLAST



FROM THE PAST

Brownings and Madsens Return to Duty in Santa Ana

Text & Photos by Harry Claffin

WHILE working with the Salvadoran army's 2nd Brigade out of Santa Ana in western El Salvador, a major problem came to my attention: There was an acute shortage of machine guns.

Equipment shortages are, of course, nothing new in the Salvadoran army. But considering that 2nd Brigade's mission is to protect high visibility targets from guerrilla attack, it's vital they be equipped with sufficient MGs for the task.

Also, a large amount of coffee — a huge foreign currency crop for Salvador — is grown in this area and it's the army's job to protect it. This is no small task considering how vulnerable the expanses of coffee

Browning M1919A6 awaits testing and reconditioning at the range before going into action around Santa Ana, El Salvador.

plantations are to being booby trapped, and how susceptible troops patrolling the area are to ambush.

Protecting coffee plantations and numerous fixed installations is difficult enough, but the Salvadorans' problem was further compounded because the machine gun with which they were equipped was one of the worst ever made — the M60. If you can keep half of those beasts working at any one time you're doing well.

They really had a problem. But good fortune was heading their way — thanks to John Browning.

It started one day while I was in the armory working on several 57mm recoilless rifles. I noticed the snout of some type of water jacket sticking out of a box. My interest piqued, I went to look. What I found was a Browning M1917A1 .30-06-caliber machine gun. Having a real fondness for these old war-horses I picked it up and examined it. To my utter astonishment it was complete and in perfect working order.

The fun was just beginning, however. Also in the box were three M1919A6s and they, too, were in good working order. In

fact, they looked new. Looking further I also came up with two heavy and three light tripods.

The guns were dirty but not rusted, and it would only take a few routine checks and some belted .30-06 ammo to get them firing. At noon I went back to my room and told Colonel Kimball what I'd found. Colonel Kimball was Military Group adviser to 2nd Brigade, and like me had a fondness for old Brownings. I asked him if we could check the water-cooled M1917A1 out of the armory, clean it up and shoot it. He thought there would be no problem with that, but wondered where we could find the ammo to send downrange.

We went back to the armory and were told there was none. But I remembered having seen a few cans in the past, and we began looking.

After digging around we came up with five cans of belted ammo. It was in bad shape and the links were rusted. I knew we'd have to clean it up before we shot it. The Salvadoran in charge of the armory was watching us and asked Col. Kimball if that was the ammo that went with the MGs. We told him it was. He said he didn't realize that was what we were looking for and walked off.

We were still digging around when he came back and asked us to follow him. We went into another part of the armory and couldn't believe our eyes. There in front of us were wooden boxes, stacked 10 feet high by 30 feet long and wide, full of .30-06 ammo. The armorer said this ammo was for the M1 Garand and the Madsen MGs. What Madsens? He said they had many Madsen machine guns in .30-06, but that they weren't used anymore.

Colonel Kimball asked him if we could see the Madsens. Sure, no problem.

In another part of the armory, stacked up like cordwood, were at least 50 Madsens. "Do they work?" I asked. The armorer didn't know. He had never seen them or the Brownings fired. I picked up four or five Madsens and checked them out. They looked to be in fine working order.

We went back to the stack of ammo. After a quick count we came up with roughly 800,000 rounds, of which 30,000 were belted for the Brownings. We signed out the M1917A1 and five cans of ammo and re-

Danish Madsen Model 1934 Light Machine Gun is being used in the field by equipment-short Salvadoran 2nd Brigade.



Member of Salvadoran army's 2nd Brigade takes his turn firing Browning M1917A1, caliber .30-06, Medium Machine Gun. These MGs date back to World War I and can be found on perimeter defense duty around Santa Ana. Browning M1919A6 is in the background.

turned to the house. It had been a long time since I'd taken a Browning down, but it's just like riding a bicycle — once you know how you never forget.

The gun, made by Remington in 1918, looked almost new after its bath in diesel fuel. We had one problem: The water seals

on the barrel were missing. I remembered these were made of asbestos string soaked in grease. The next day we went to town and found a hardware store that carried asbestos rope for making furnace seals. We took our piece of rope, unraveled it, soaked it in grease and *voilà* — instant seals. Now to find out if the gun would shoot.

The pistol range was just down the way from our house and was as good a place as any to test this old relic.

I hand-cycled the weapon many times after setting the head space and knew it should work. I raised the feed cover, put in a belt of ammo and settled down behind the gun for some fun. With the water jacket full of water the weapon was very heavy and didn't even rock as I jacked the bolt back. I squeezed the trigger and BANG! — one round downrange, nothing more. One shot? I jacked the bolt back again. BANG! One more round, but no burst. What was wrong?

Then it dawned on me: If the seals are too tight, the weapon will not function. Out went the water, one wrap off the barrel seals, refill with water and reload.

TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT. Perfect. The seals weren't leaking and the old gun was running like a sewing machine. By this time we'd gathered quite a crowd. They'd only seen this gun fired in the movies, never in person.

Continued on page 100

Test firing the Browning M1919A6, caliber .30-06, Medium MG on the range in El Salvador.

TRAINING DEMOCRACY'S SOLDIERS

Harry Clafin has helped train army and air force regulars in El Salvador as well as anti-communist freedom fighters in Honduras. He's also accompanied SOF staffers during three training missions to Central America.

Prior to his involvement down south, Harry served six years in the Marine Corps, three of those years with 1st Force Recon Company. He also worked with MACV Studies and Observations Group. He currently owns and operates Starlight Training Center in Liberal, Missouri.





Spetsnaz supermen? Their training and the flexibility they're allowed under strict Soviet military doctrine make them formidable enemies, and they're rotated through Afghanistan on a regular basis to fight one of the world's most determined resistance movements. But no unit is so good that it can't be beaten by an equally dedicated opponent.

SOF SOVIET SPECIAL OPS

SPETSNAZ INVADES AMERICA

**USG Ignores Soviet
Special Troops Inside Our Borders**

by Neil C. Livingstone and M.K. Pilgrim

Photos Courtesy of the Authors

ELITE Soviet Spetsnaz, or Special Purpose, troops are systematically conducting operations on U.S. territory, and the U.S. government is trying to keep the whole matter under wraps. A recent secret National Intelligence Estimate focused only on Spetsnaz operations on the territory of our allies and specifically excluded material about activities in the continental United States. Why? Chiefly because of bureaucratic infighting among the FBI, Defense Department and other federal agencies. But there is also the question of what to do about

Four-man Spetsnaz teams were secretly sent to Vietnam to test the then-new SVD sniper rifle on U.S. forces during the war in Southeast Asia.



WHAT IS SPETSNAZ?

Spetsnaz (*Voyska Spetsial' nogo Naznacheniya*) is a Russian acronym for "Special Designation," and the Soviet Military Encyclopedia (Volume 2) describes them, ironically, as the unsavory special operations forces of its Western adversaries. "Troops of Special Designation," it claims, are "special units and subunits in the armed forces in an array of capitalistic states, designated for reconnaissance-sabotage and terrorist activities, the organization of rebellious activity and armed attacks, the directing of psychological war, propaganda, and their subversive activity." As the term is used by the United States and its allies, however, it generally refers to what John M. Collins calls "a mixed bag of military and civilian SOF (special operations forces). KGB forces probably emphasize political missions, while the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) features war fighting, but boundaries are blurred and overlaps are common."

Spetsnaz forces are the only units in the Soviet military structure that are encouraged to be innovative and to operate with a high degree of independence. Thus, they serve as a unique element of the Soviet combat structure of wartime FRONTS. According to recent reports, each military district and fleet has its own Spetsnaz brigade. Brigades are believed to contain approximately 100 six- to 10-man teams (or five- to 12-man teams). This translates into approximately 600 to 1,000 Spetsnaz troops available to each brigade commander. The FRONT commander also has an independent Spetsnaz company at his disposal.

While there has been a good deal of debate and discussion as to who actually controls these Spetsnaz units, they are GRU assets that report to the Chief Intelligence Directorate's 5th Directorate

(department), which is responsible for operational intelligence. Simply translated, this means that Spetsnaz units operating at the FRONT level report to the Chief of Intelligence who, correspondingly, is under the command of the Chief of Staff. It is also known that Spetsnaz units can be tasked by the KGB with or without the consent of the FRONT commander. Each Spetsnaz commander recognizes the ultimate "authority" of the KGB in all Soviet political/military affairs. In other words, what the KGB wants, the KGB gets.

The history of Soviet Spetsnaz forces dates back to World War II, when they were created to carry out various unconventional operations behind German lines, including sabotage, assassinations, reconnaissance, espionage and training partisans. Today their role has changed little, and they are tasked with strategic reconnaissance and target designation; the destruction or sabotage of key targets such as nuclear weapons sites, infrastructure elements, pipelines, airfields, and command and control centers; the assassination or kidnapping of enemy political leaders; serving as "pathfinders" for other Soviet military forces; support for partisans; and certain counterinsurgency operations. According to Ross S. Kelly, "Naval Spetsnaz units are tasked with conducting reconnaissance of potential landing beaches, enemy naval facilities and submarine approaches to fleet anchorages, as well as amphibious raids."

The profile of the standard Spetsnaz soldier reveals that he is most often a highly trained non-commissioned officer or junior field grade officer (lieutenant or captain). Typically, the average Spetsnaz unit is composed of 18- to 20-year-old noncoms led by an officer in his early or mid-20s, with a warrant officer or sergeant as second-in-command. In contrast to conventional Soviet military doctrine, every non-commissioned officer is trained and has the authority to

take over and operate the unit in the event the senior officer is incapacitated, and this includes the highly unusual authority to use his own judgment to make decisions such as shifting the unit's emphasis from primary to secondary targets.

Every member of a Spetsnaz unit is considered to be "highly trustworthy," and those selected for Spetsnaz training have already passed a number of tests regarding their political reliability, such as Komsomol or Party membership. It has been claimed that the units are so trustworthy, in fact, that they do not have political officers watching their every move, as is standard practice throughout the Soviet military.

Every Spetsnaz member receives highly specialized training, including airborne operations (HALO and HAHO), scuba diving, silent killing, infiltration and exfiltration, demolitions (conventional and improvised explosives, incendiary devices, and special abrasives and acids), clandestine communications, psychological warfare, paramilitary sports (such as competitive shooting and martial arts), intelligence collection and clandestine operations. Members of Spetsnaz units are also given special language and foreign "culture" training, consistent with their need to operate in a variety of foreign environments like the United States.

While Soviet Spetsnaz forces are sometimes portrayed in the Western media as Ramboesque, 10-foot-tall superwarriors, they are not without their own limitations. However, inasmuch as they are being rotated through Afghanistan on a regular basis, Spetsnaz forces will have the distinct advantage over their Western counterparts of having seen action against one of the world's most dogged, ruthless and dedicated insurgent movements, the mujahideen. Most members of U.S. special operations units, by contrast, have not seen action in at least 14 years.

them; the actual interdiction of a Spetsnaz unit in the United States would likely produce cries of outrage across the country and create so much anti-Soviet feeling as to

Some of these Soviet intelligence-collecting vessels also house midget submarines used by Spetsnaz forces to penetrate territorial waters of Western countries. One incident put a Spetsnaz mini-sub on Alaska's coastline in an area where an Eskimo member of the Alaskan Scouts (National Guard) was shot to death.

UNCOVERING SPETSNAZ

Neil C. Livingstone is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and an authority on terrorism and national defense issues. He's authored numerous articles and books on those subjects, his most recent effort being *Beyond the Iran-Contra Crisis: The Shape of U.S. Counter-Terrorism Policy in the Post-*

Reagan Era, to be published by Lexington Press.

M.K. Pilgrim is the vice president of MMP Associates. He has written several articles on domestic terrorism, is an expert on the subject of the financing of international terrorism, and is a frequent lecturer to the intelligence community on the subject of Spetsnaz.

We welcome their insightful contribution to *Soldier of Fortune*.

UNCLASSIFIED

LENTRA-CLASS AGI INTELLIGENCE COLLECTOR



SPETSNAZ UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE OPERATIONS

The following scenario outlining typical Spetsnaz-type operations prior to a Soviet main-force incursion into a foreign country comes from unclassified U.S. government documents.

"An unconventional warfare scenario: The following hypothetical scenario illustrates the employment concept for the full exploitation of Soviet UW [unconventional warfare] assets.

"In support of a coordinated attack, air-dropped or air-landed GRU special purpose teams would be introduced into their respective target areas some days prior to H-hour. Special KGB sabotage teams would have been infiltrated over a longer period of time by clandestine methods to include the use of interna-

tional commercial travel. These sabotage teams could be prepared to begin their operations well before the enemy's rear area security apparatus can be fully alerted. In the pre-war period, some KGB personnel will seek to undermine national resistance through political measures.

"Sabotage teams will begin isolated acts of sabotage, such as destroying a key bridge. In addition, KGB teams will attempt to create chaos at major ports and disrupt communications.

"Shortly before D-day, additional sabotage teams will be inserted and the majority of 'sleeper agents' activated.

"Sabotage equipment can be smuggled into a country by any number of secret methods and stored in hidden, but easily accessible, caches. Smuggling techniques may include the offshore dropping of waterproof containers from ships and submarines. In accordance with the prearranged signals, they will be recovered and stored by clandestine

support personnel.

"Sensitive or fragile equipment (electronics material, detonators and communication devices) can be brought into the country by diplomatic pouch and made available to the teams through established procedures.

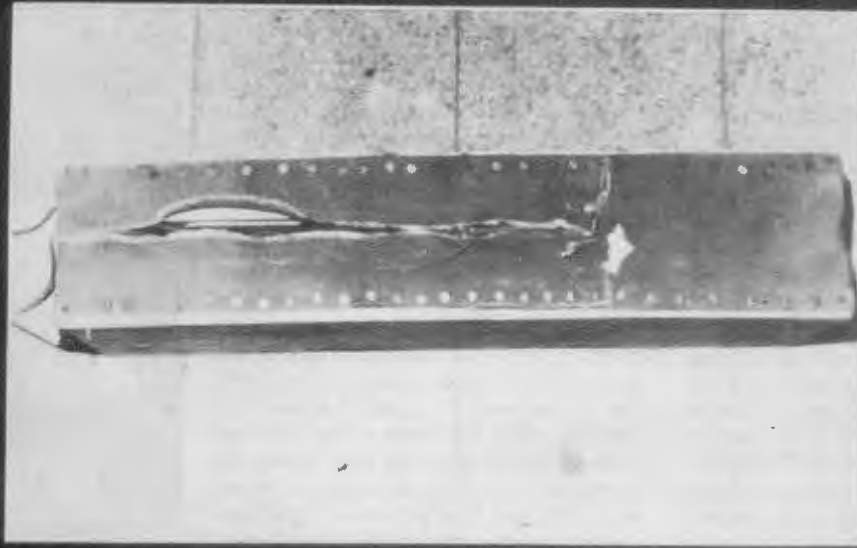
"Teams will attempt to place their explosives and incendiary devices on the targets and set them to detonate at H-hour. All efforts will be made to prevent association of these acts with the USSR in order to maintain the element of surprise for the main attack. Immediately prior to H-hour, the UW teams will prepare to:

- locate and destroy nuclear capable weaponry.
- jam radar installations.
- kidnap or assassinate key political-military leadership.
- seize or destroy radio and TV broadcasting facilities.

"At H-hour a wide spectrum of sabotage actions will be initiated."



SOVIET ELECTRIC DEVICE



jeopardize an arms control agreement.

Spetsnaz forces "softened up" targets in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion and, with elements of the KGB, surrounded the national palace in Kabul and later executed President Hafizullah Amin. Hunter-killer Spetsnaz teams are currently engaged in a variety of special operations in Afghanistan, such as the assassination of rebel leaders, the interdiction of arms and the ambush of rebel units. One of the most intriguing missions rumored to have been given to Spetsnaz units in Afghanistan is the capture of American-made, shoulder-fired Stinger ground-to-air missiles. The Soviets are believed to be losing aircraft in Afghanistan at the rate of one every 36 hours, and the Stinger is proving highly effective against the aircraft of Soviet-backed forces in Angola as well. Thus, to neutralize this threat, the Soviets have sought for some time to capture Stingers, which could then be sold or turned over to a country like Iran. If used against U.S. forces, the predictable outcry in Congress would be so great as to jeopardize continued Stinger shipments to anti-Soviet rebels, thereby removing the most significant threat to their air superiority. The recent discovery of Stinger packing materials (but no actual weapons) following the U.S. engagement with Iranian speed boats in the Persian Gulf suggests that the Spetsnaz mission may have been accomplished. Stories in the media suggesting that elements of the mujahideen sold a number of Stingers to Iran may simply be a subterfuge to mask the involvement of the Soviets in securing the missiles for the Iranians.

Spetsnaz units also played a prominent

Each Spetsnaz member receives intensive training on every aspect of overt and covert operations, including the most sophisticated Soviet electrical, communications and explosives devices. This unidentified item of Soviet electronic equipment is said to have been found in connection with a Soviet Spetsnaz operation in the United States. Government researchers have not yet been able to definitively identify its purpose.

role in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, including the seizure of Prague airport so as to permit the Soviet 103rd Guards Airborne Division to land. The

plane bearing the Spetsnaz unit feigned engine trouble in order to secure permission to land at the Prague airport. The elite commandos burst from the aircraft even before it had rolled to a stop, overpowering guard posts and establishing procedures to bring the division in. Four-man Spetsnaz teams also were secretly sent to Vietnam to test the then-new SVD sniper rifle on U.S. forces during the war in Southeast Asia.

Only seven years ago this was a classified (code-word) subject, but recently new attention and intelligence energy have been focused on Spetsnaz forces, and some material about this hitherto unspoken subject is becoming public knowledge. Nevertheless,

SUGGESTED READINGS ON SPETSNAZ

Kristen Amundersen, "Soviet Submarines in Scandinavian Waters," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1985.

Chris Burton, "The Myth and Reality of the Soviet Paratrooper," *Military Review*, January 1985.

Defense Intelligence Agency, *Review of the Soviet Ground Forces* (Unclassified), October 1981.

John Dziak, "Soviet Intelligence and Security Services in the Eighties: the Paramilitary Dimension," *Orbis*, Winter 1981.

James Hansen, "Soviet Vanguard Forces — Spetsnaz," *National Defense*, March 1986.

Al Holder, "Spetsnaz (sic) The Hid-

den Enemy," *U.S. Army Aviation Digest*, May 1985.

David Isby, "The Spetsnaz in Afghanistan: Soviet special operation forces in action," *Military Technology*, October 1985.

Ross Kelly, "Spetsnaz: Special Operations Forces of the USSR," *Defense & Foreign Affairs*, December 1984.

Lawrence B. Sulc, "The Soviet Union's Cutthroat Soldiers," *The World & I*, December 1986.

Victor Suvorov, "Spetsnaz, The Soviet Union's Special Forces," *International Defense Review*, 1983.

"Spetsnaz and Sport," *International Defense Review*, June 1984.

Inside Soviet Military Intelligence, Macmillan, New York, NY, 1984.

much about the actual organization and operations of Spetsnaz forces remains a mystery. There has never been a Spetsnaz defector to the West, despite the hemorrhaging of Soviet deserters in Afghanistan. Much of the current information being obtained by Western intelligence agencies is from Spetsnaz-“related” individuals claiming close or unique association with elite Soviet units. However, authorities remain skeptical about the value and authenticity of much of this information.

There are 24 Spetsnaz brigades controlled by Soviet military intelligence (GRU), and each boasts its own dedicated training facility. A great deal of what we actually know about Spetsnaz forces and their objectives comes from secret Western reconnaissance of these training areas, which has revealed mockups of U.S. nuclear power plants, refineries and electrical switching yards. Even more disturbing, such training areas also contain mockups of U.S. airliners and even the same models of aircraft used by the Air Force to transport the president and vice president. Training is also routinely conducted against mockups of various NATO targets, including models of nuclear-capable weapons (Pershing, Lance and ground-launched cruise missiles), nuclear depots and airbases.

Primary Spetsnaz targets in the United States are known to include key command and control centers, the president and other political leaders, the 799-mile-long Trans-Alaska pipeline and major infrastructure components, nuclear power plants, and military bases and facilities. Soviet intelligence agents, some of them possibly Spetsnaz “sleeper” agents or special reconnaissance operators, run shops and convenience stores adjacent to most major American military bases, chiefly for the purpose of intelligence collection. Some shops, however, may serve as “safe houses” and staging sites for

contemplated attacks on those U.S. facilities in time of war.

Sources also have confirmed the presence on some Soviet Lentra-class AGI vessels of midget submarines used by Spetsnaz forces. Although purportedly merchant ships, the Lentra-class vessels operate all along the U.S. coastline collecting electronic and signals data. Mini-submarines, presumed to belong to Spetsnaz units, have been tracked in Japanese and Swedish territorial waters.

There is a persistent story, denied by the Pentagon but confirmed by Alaskan sources, that an Eskimo member of the Alaskan Scouts (National Guard) was apparently shot to death after stumbling upon a Spetsnaz reconnaissance unit in Alaska. Reports indicate that authorities discovered footprints leading from the murder scene to the water’s edge, as well as mini-sub tracks nearby in shallow water. In addition, a piece of equipment found at the scene was identified as being of Soviet origin. The incident has produced serious dissension within the ranks of the Alaskan Scouts: Several members have refused to patrol the area of the shooting and others have resigned. [Editor’s note: SOF has learned that the item of Soviet equipment found next to the body of the Eskimo scout on Little Diomed Island was a Soviet NBC decontamination kit. In addition, an autopsy performed on the scout revealed that he had been killed by a dum-dum bullet of a type known to be favored by Spetsnaz teams.]

There are several reports of other attacks against Americans on U.S. soil, but details are hard to come by. It has been confirmed by intelligence sources that CIA double agent Boris Korczak was assassinated at a shopping mall in the Washington, DC, suburbs with the notorious umbrella-weapon



Spetsnaz troops, in guards’ uniforms, spearheaded the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia by seizing Prague airport. Spetsnaz troops wear uniforms of troops they’re working with: usually guards’ units or Soviet Naval Infantry (see this issue’s cover).

LOST IN THE FILES

To American military intelligence analysts he’s known as “The Swimmer.”

Details from the investigation of the body that washed up on a beach in Alaska are sparse: death by drowning, blond hair, blue eyes, age early 20s, no identification on the body, wet suit of unknown origin, no reasonable match with persons missing in diving accidents in either Alaska or Canada.

“The body was buried in an unmarked grave and the report was collecting dust in the local police files until a reporter working on the killing of the Eskimo scout discovered it,” an informed military intelligence analyst told SOF.

“Was he a Spetsnaz swimmer drowned on some mission we never learned about? We just don’t know.

“The problem is, there is no collec-

tion point for incidents of that nature. The reports either get filed by local authorities or passed on to the FBI, which just doesn’t do much with cases like that.

“One place where we have found some very interesting clues is with FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], and some of those clues are intriguing,” the analyst said.

“For example, several drivers crossing the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco simultaneously stopped their cars abreast, locked them up and got into a car ahead of them and drove off. The traffic jam was massive and when local police checked the cars they found they had all been rented at the airport with false credentials and credit cards.

“Another FEMA report detailed a peculiar incident in Wilmington, North Carolina, where at 0500 one morning a blue Mercedes came roaring off the ramp of a Soviet RoRo [Roll on, Roll

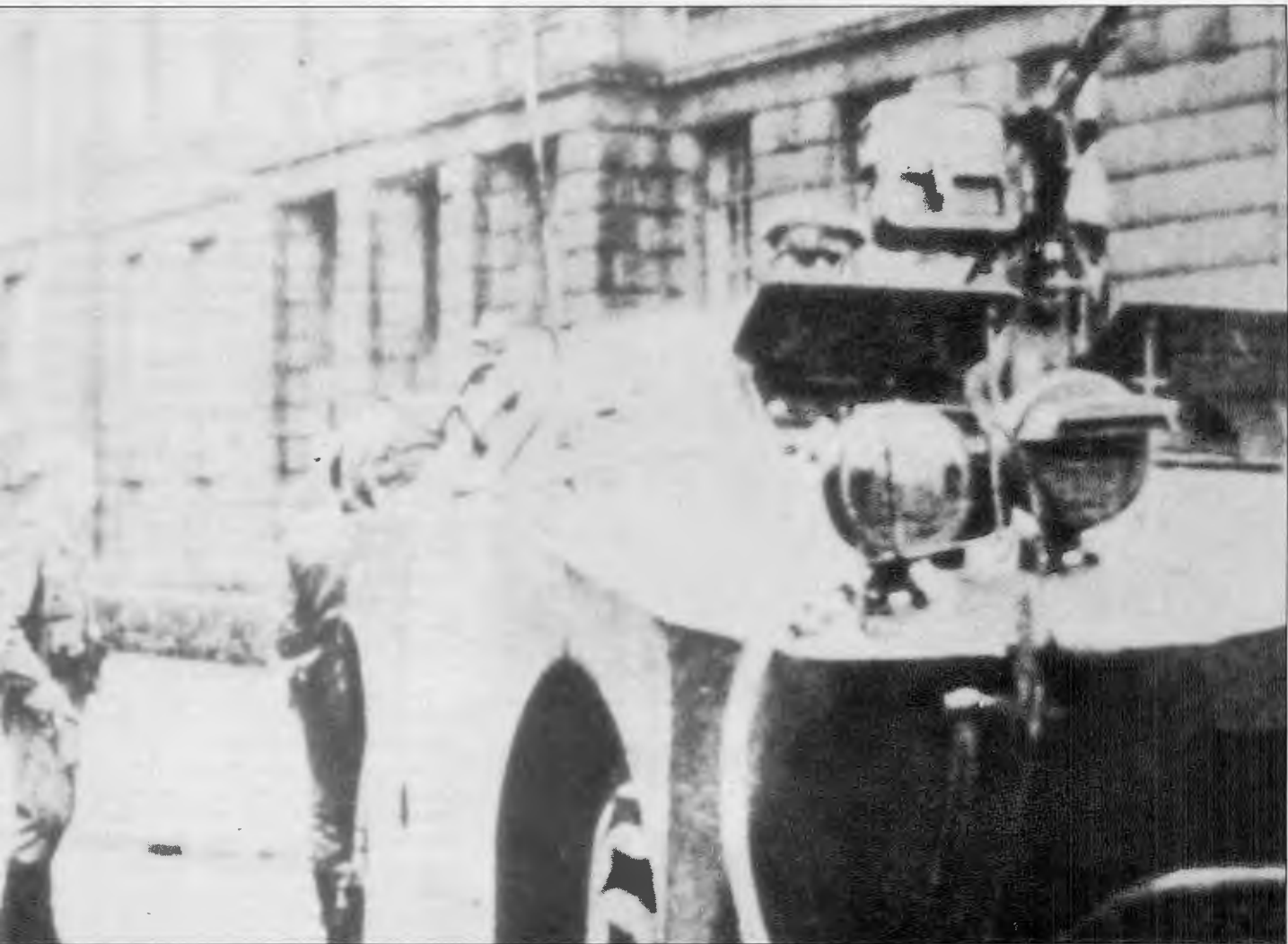
off] ship, shot down the pier at high speed and crashed through a manned pole barrier. The security guard reported it to the local police who questioned the Soviet crew, which predictably had seen nothing, heard nothing and knew nothing. We found the car three months later abandoned in the Florida Everglades.

“FEMA also has some chemical plant fire incidents which are suspicious, and lately we’ve begun to consider the possibility that some of the power failure problems we’ve had on the East Coast the last few years may not be accidental.

“Why are the Soviets taking the risk? They are either very good and believe that testing their operation plans is worth the risk, or they are very stupid and reckless.

“But then, as long as we don’t have a process for tracking them, they really don’t risk that much, do they?”

— Jim Graves



used in the attacks on Bulgarian exiles Georgi Markov (London) and Vladimir Kostov (Paris). It is not known who Korczak's assailant was, but it was likely an Eastern European intelligence or Spetsnaz agent.

The evidence of Spetsnaz activity in the United States is overwhelming. Sources say a Soviet unit was observed in San Francisco, and a number of Spetsnaz transmitters have been discovered during the last five years in locations as diverse as upstate New York, Alaska, Manitoba, Scotland and West Germany. In 1983, a Soviet-made "plastic" pistol, designed to pass through airport security undetected and employed solely for assassinations, was found on an individual at an airport near the nation's capital. Use of this particular pistol is restricted to Spetsnaz headquarters teams. Such teams have as their primary purpose reconnaissance and neutralization of key infrastructure targets, but also engage in "wet" operations, that is to say, assassinations. The fate of the individual carrying the pistol is classified, but it is safe to assume that he is no longer in the United States.

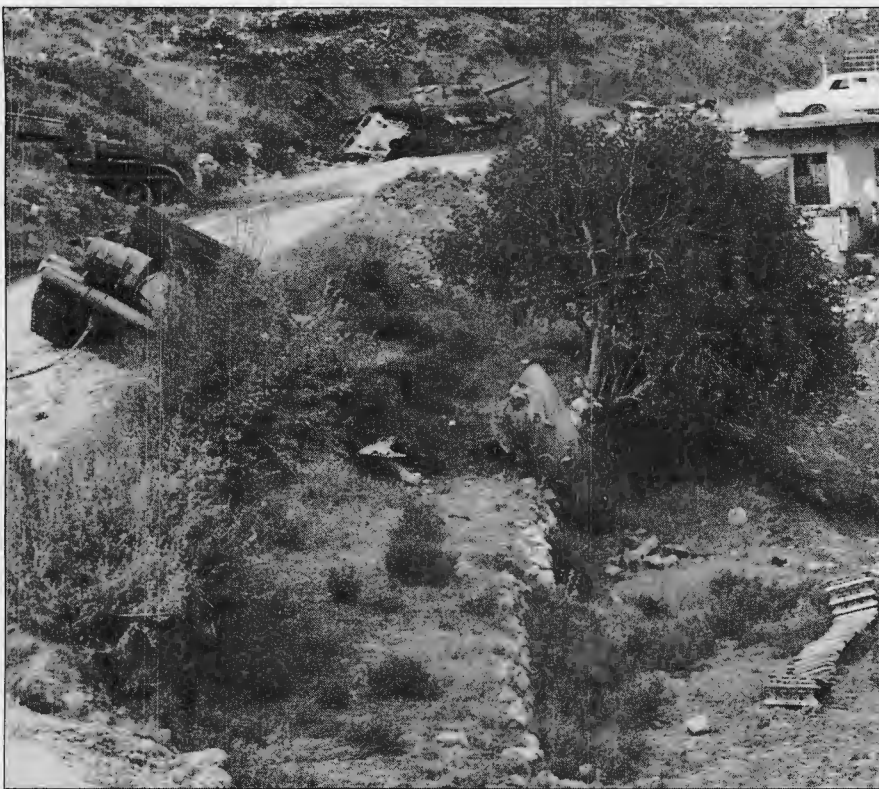
Merchant shipping also provides the Soviets with numerous opportunities for penetration. Cargo containers of Soviet ori-

gin with electrical and water hookups have been located in Delaware, California and North Carolina and are similar to those discovered in Europe during the past six years. While their purpose is not entirely certain, speculation centers on the containers being employed as staging areas, communications "drops," or to hide infiltrators and exfiltrators. Federal authorities believe that other Spetsnaz units have penetrated the United States disguised as members of visiting athletic teams, musicians and support personnel for dance troupes and other cultural organizations.

It is widely known that the Soviets conduct extensive Spetsnaz operations in Europe — especially on the territory of West Germany, France and Great Britain — in anticipation of a potential European conflict. The French, for example, routinely monitor the penetration of their territory by Spetsnaz teams, tracking them to communications "drops" and observing them conduct mock attacks on French targets. This, however, can be extremely difficult. Trucks marked "TIR" (*Transports Internationaux Routiers*) are permitted by European customs agreement to cross national frontiers with only rudimentary procedures and minimal scrutiny, and as a result East-

bloc TIR trucks are regularly used for intelligence collection (especially signals and other electronic collection) and to transport Spetsnaz operatives in and out of various countries. It is widely believed today that would-be papal assassin Mehmet Ali Agca escaped from Rome in a TIR truck of Bulgarian origin. Not long ago, on one particular day an estimated 5,000 TIR trucks from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia entered French territory, overwhelming the ability of that nation's intelligence services to track and monitor their activities. French authorities are extremely concerned about dormant agents in their midst who could be activated for reconnaissance, sabotage and other missions by Moscow in times of crisis.

It is time the U.S. government leveled with the American public about the activities of Soviet military forces within this country. The FBI regards Spetsnaz as hostile intelligence agents and therefore under the bureau's jurisdiction. But if the FBI, which is a law enforcement — not a military — organization, is unable to adequately protect our shores from foreign penetration, then consideration must be given to expanding both the Pentagon's and CIA's roles in combating this menace. ✖



After antitank commandos' battle with Muslim troops, dead tanks litter the countryside.

SOF LEBANON

TANK HUNTERS

Antitank Commandos Take Battle to the PLO

Text & Photos by Ned Kelly

A COUPLE of months ago in a tiny Christian village just to the north of Sanine, Lebanon, the word went out for help — and in a goddamned hurry, too.

You see, the problem was that a couple of Syrian-faction PLO vehicle-mounted twin 23 mike-mikes were working over the helpless civilian population; apparently just for the sport of it, too.

Try to form a mental picture of the devastating effect that sort of murderous fire would have on a defenseless mountain village.

Think of the quaint old stone buildings being leveled by an incessant barrage of HET (high explosive incendiary tracer) hits that flashed amid a cloud of dust and flying rocks. And think of the terror of the simple mountain folk as they huddled desperately together for a feeling of security in the dark and dank corners of their little cottages, waiting for dismemberment or grisly death by red-hot shrapnel and flying rocks.

Then, just to round off their day's shoot, the Palestinians cut down the village's terrified livestock. Just for sport.

The local Lebanese Forces' (LF, the Christian militia) infantry unit reacted quickly against the unprovoked PLO attack with the light weapons at their disposal, but to no avail. PLO guns were supported by Palestinian infantry who have quite a bit of training and a whole damn lot of combat time, too. LF grunts valiantly tried to work their way up to get at the offending PLO guns, but in doing so they took casualties which they just could not afford from those very same 23 mike-mikes that were until then working on the villagers. The LF advance was also contested by the supporting PLO infantry. The LF had no choice but to sacrifice the lives of more brave, and now very desperate, men.

Meanwhile back in east (Christian) Beirut, the cry for help passed on to the *Silah El Moudad* regiment, the LF's super-elite antitank and antiaircraft unit. These guys are referred to in Christian Lebanon as the *Moodamiroon*, Arabic for "they who smash everything." And, as it happened, a platoon of *Moodamiroon* TOWs (Tube-launched, optically-sighted, wire-guided



AUSSIE ADVENTURER

Australian author Ned Kelly has often filed dispatches with SOF from the Middle East, including "Lebanese Airborne" (February '87), "Salty Crusaders" (December '86), "Tracked Crusaders" (February '86) and "Lebanon's Winter Warriors" (August '85). Kelly's latest episode takes him back to Beirut, where he lived and trained with the Lebanese Forces antitank commandos.

missiles) was already deployed within striking distance of the problem area.

The TOW platoon commander was known only as "Nicola" in the interests of LF security. Seemingly a very young militia officer, Nicola was in his third year of university, studying for a degree in business management. But Nicola was also a blooded infantry and antitank veteran with many years of close combat experience in various troubled parts of Lebanon.

On receiving the word from his Beirut HQ, Nicola moved his platoon into the violated area as quickly as possible.

Then, in the apparently unhurried manner of a true professional, he conducted a very careful and thorough reconnaissance, looking for likely avenues of the PLO's next approach and suitable ambush sites for his TOWs. He was confident that elements of the Syrian-backed PLO or Israeli-backed Druze militia would soon try to work over another of the Christian villages of the area.

Nicola's careful recce and his plans for a deliberate ambush were suddenly interrupted by yet another PLO attack. He now had no choice (in view of the defenseless civilians being slaughtered) but to move into the village without delay.

The TOW platoon motored through the hills and small mountains as quickly as the terrain would allow, toward the village suffering under the renewed PLO attack. They dismounted their American-built jeeps when they came within earshot of the enemy guns. Nicola and a couple of his TOW commanders went forward on foot, under what can only be described as insanely dangerous conditions, and made a quick recce of the still furiously blazing 23 mike-mikes. In all truth they were probably quite lucky to return alive, as several times their movements drew the fire of the PLO gunners.

On returning to his eagerly waiting tank hunters, Nicola ordered the TOWs to be dismounted from the vehicles. Once they had laboriously done that, the crews man-packed the missiles and launchers forward. Following Nicola's lead, they made their way through *wadis* (steep, rock-strewn valleys) and relatively safe connecting pieces of dead ground to a position close enough to get in a good shot at the PLO.

Nicola personally took command of one of the dismounted TOWs and positioned the other two to support him in case he missed his quarry and had to withdraw quickly.

Nicola settled down in the best position he could find to wait for the (hopefully) overconfident PLO gunners to move their vehicle-mounted 23 mike-mikes in closer for some even easier shooting at the village. And that is exactly what they did.

Nicola's first missile was on time and on target: The PLO vehicle exploded and began to burn fiercely. Unfortunately the second PLO gun crew saw the blast of the launch as Nicola fired and they quickly switched targets and opened up on him instead of the village. The PLO gunners were very close to being dead on-target and the near miss left Nicola with shrapnel wounds

on the right side of his face. Undeterred by the maelstrom of 23mm HEIT exploding and falling around him, Nicola calmly went about preparing his second missile for firing single-handed. His crew had also been wounded in the incoming barrage of HEIT and were now in no condition to assist him. Just as soon as the second TOW round was ready, he fired — and the PLO gun and crew were dead meat.

Nicola had previously distinguished himself with the TOW during the LF's battles for the Shouf Mountains in October 1983. It was during one of the static periods of that fighting that the still lightly dug-in LF forces were subjected to some very incon-



ABOVE RIGHT: Antitank commando beret badge.

RIGHT: Original shoulder patch as worn by both the antitank battalion and the anti-aircraft battalion depicts winged, fire-breathing dragon and a bayonet.



BELOW: Lebanese Forces fire on Muslim troops with 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns mounted on a Mercedes "Unimog" 4x4 truck.



BOTTOM: French-German MILAN is light enough that antitank commandos can easily carry it and ammunition as they set off on a night amphibious raid.



venient heavy-caliber direct fire by Druze T-54/55 tanks that were working in the mobile artillery role.

Nicola's TOWs were deployed to deal with one such situation near the village of Mish-Riff in the Damour area. On this occasion Nicola was able to conduct his operation in the manner he prefers: as a tank hunter in the tradition of those terribly determined Germans in 1945 who sortied up and down the front line seeking out Russian tanks to attack wherever or whenever they could find them. Just like the tiger stalkers in Northern India during the old days of the British Raj, Nicola made the obligatory long and careful recce ("Time spent in reconnaissance is never wasted" — old Brit Army proverb).

He finally picked out a blind that would give an advancing tank trouble; a junction of very small valleys offered natural fire lanes in several directions. Because he had been well-briefed by the local infantry commander about previous enemy tank movements and activities, he was able to make a calcu-

TOP: Antitank commando with jeep-mounted TOW. TOWs are accurate and reliable, and it's not difficult to learn their operation. Downside is that it's too heavy to manpack both TOWs and ammunition, so vehicle-mounting is necessary.

ABOVE: Lebanese Forces armed with M16s advance to contact.

lated guess that this was a reasonable ambush site. Moving his jeep-mounted platoon out slowly and carefully, showing no lights in the predawn twilight, he set up his carefully camouflaged tank blinds, each mutually supporting, of course. This was quite difficult and all done under the cover of darkness.

With the patience of a tiger stalker, Nicola and his men waited throughout the long and boring day that followed for the enemy tanks to offer themselves as targets, but to no avail.

This patient but determined vigil dragged on for three days, then finally the enemy

tanks moved.

"I heard the 'voice' [the tracks and exhaust noise] of the tanks," Nicola told me in his heavily accented, but quite clear, English.

They advanced in pairs for mutual support. The first two fucked up, he told me. They crossed one of the little valleys together, relying on the following two tanks to support them. As they crossed the bottom of the little valley their silhouettes were clearly visible to the waiting camouflaged TOWs. They were sitting ducks for Nicola and his militiamen. The tanks labored slowly and with some difficulty up the steep bank on the far side, showing their vulnerable side and rear, where armor is the thinnest. What's more, down in the valley they were out of sight of their buddies in the supporting tanks.

Needless to say, Nicola and his boys licked their lips and made short work of the two more or less helpless T-55s.

Nicola, with the genuine modesty nearly always found among blooded warriors, finally confided to me somewhat reluctantly, almost as though it were some unsavory secret from his past, that those Druze tanks blazed for over 40 minutes. And he smiled, but ever so slightly, as he said it.

Meanwhile, a little way up the valley, his three TOW crews were keyed up to fever pitch as they waited in vain. The TOW gunners were angry and at the same time sort of relieved that the anticipated tank attack did not materialize. They were grateful to be alive but they felt somehow cheated that they were not able to fry up even more tanks that day.

The surviving Druze tankers had shown great prudence and withdrew instead of futilely losing more tanks to the dreaded *Moodamiroon*.

Silah El Moudad is equipped with an assortment of TOW, MILAN, SPIGOT, Sagger, Mamba, SS11, Entac, SAM-7 missiles and antiaircraft guns (quad 14.5mm and twin 23mm).

All members of the regiment's antitank side of the house must first complete the LF special force (ranger/commando) training before joining the tank hunters, as big things are expected of them. They are not supposed to be like the line antitank units found in NATO and U.S. mechanized infantry outfits. These guys don't protect friendly formations from a tank threat; they get out there in front of the sharp end and *hunt* tanks. These elite tank hunters are easily distinguished by their brown berets and brown boots (the mark of all special force troops in the LF) and by their distinctive cap badge and shoulder patch, which depict a winged, fire-breathing dragon and a dagger/bayonet symbolizing their mobility, the destructive effect and the exhaust flame of their high-tech guided missile weapons, and their commando/special force status.

Because of the time and money invested in the training of members of this regiment and because of their large area of responsibility (all of Christian Lebanon) compared

to the limited size of the regiment, many of *Silah El Moudad* sign on as full-time soldiers, though they are quite poorly paid professionals.

While there is no requirement — yet — for the regiment's antiaircraft people to complete special force training, they are most definitely not slouches either. They are all combat infantry vets, and the regiment's day-to-day training keeps them at a sharp edge. The boss of the regiment, "Gilbert," insists on exacting standards for all of his command, commando tank hunters and antiaircraft gunners alike.

Gilbert is a young full-time officer of the type found in all of the better armies of the Western world. He is young, multilingual, university-educated, a proven infantry combat commander and unmarried. It still strikes me as a little odd that all of the LF's star battalion and regimental commanders are unmarried. While they have no shortage of female admirers, they just don't seem to find too much time for them. Their priorities are with their troops, I guess.

The antiaircraft people usually employ their quad 14.5mm and twin 23mm guns against ground targets, as there just aren't too many aerial targets over Lebanon (Israelis excepted, of course), so they spend their time busting buildings, bunkers, trucks, armored personnel carriers and the like. But their favorite pastime is creating alarm and despondency among Muslim infantry, especially when they are moving in the open.

In 1981, during the battle for the Christian city of Zahle on the western edge of the Bekka Valley, the forerunners of the regiment were able to prove themselves in both antitank and antiaircraft roles — and against the Goliath Syrian army at that.

At Zahle, the Christian militia was surrounded by superior Syrian forces which included large numbers of T-62 tanks. The Christian militia did not have any heavy antitank weapons; they were then equipped mostly with RPG-7s and supported by 155mm and 130mm indirect artillery fire from the Christian enclave to the north and east of Beirut. Because the city of Zahle was surrounded by Syrian tanks with air cover, it was not possible to move Christian tanks from the Christian enclave across the mountains and into the city to engage tanks with tanks. The Christians had found a MILAN rocket launcher and imported French and Italian mercenaries to train them in the use of it. Christian militiamen now infiltrated through the snow in the mountain passes into the city with this one MILAN launcher.

When the massive Syrian armored formations assaulted the pitifully thin LF defenses around Zahle, they received an unexpected response. Within minutes three Syrian T-62s were burning fiercely, recipients of good solid hits from the MILAN.

The Syrian armored commander quickly saw the writing on the wall. Any of his tanks that came within 3,000 meters (max effective range) of the MILAN were going to crash and burn — and die. He wisely



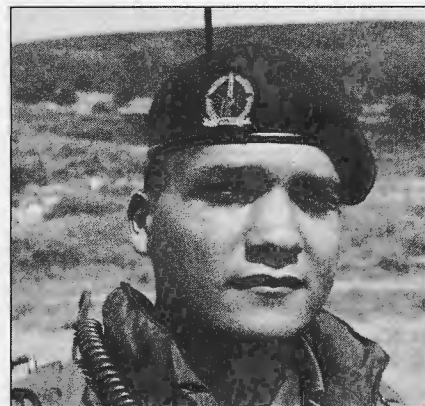
ABOVE: Antiaircraft weapons like this ZPU-4 14.5mm heavy machine gun spend time busting buildings, bunkers, trucks, APCs and an occasional aerial target.

RIGHT: Commando who was later killed in action in 1983 fighting in Bhamdoun wears beret and badge of the antitank commandos.

ordered all of his tanks to withdraw, precluding any worse disaster, much to the chagrin of the LF tank hunters, who thought that so far this was just a warm up. Syrian action against Zahle thereafter was limited to siege and massive artillery barrages from prudently safe distances.

Christian militiamen who operated the MILAN at Zahle were from the unit known as the Guardians of the Cedars. This unit is a praetorian guard of the Lebanese Forces. One of the results of the battle was that the Christian militia realized the potential of an antitank weapon and units properly trained in the use of it. One single MILAN had kept the Syrians from entering the city.

Lebanese Forces also formed the antitank commando unit because they just don't have enough tanks to consider trading blows tank-on-tank with the Syrians. The Christian militia is not rich; they cannot buy more tanks. However, antitank weapons are a cost-effective measure. They can afford many launchers for the price of a single tank. Unfortunately, when the antitank commando unit was formed with the Christian militia's meager financial resources, their original equipment consisted only of the single MILAN and two Soviet-made Sagger launchers and a very limited number of missiles for each of the systems. Without sufficient numbers of missiles, they were not able to properly train their gunners. A



Sagger gunner, for example, should fire about 50 missiles in practice before he can be counted on having a 75-percent chance of hitting a live target.

While antitank operators were breaking in at Zahle, LF armored forces on the "French Room" (a very high plateau above the surrounding mountains that commands the western approaches to the city and therefore all the clandestine resupply routes from Beirut) came under devastating attack from Syrian air force Gazelle helicopter gunships firing deadly accurate HOT (*Haut subsonique Optiquement téléguidé tiré d'un Tube*) missiles. The effect on the LF armored and soft-skinned vehicles was indeed devastating. Those determined Syrian pilots attacked as a horde, destroying all LF vehicles in sight. They eventually were even attacking individual Christian grunts with their HOTs (what an extravagance!).

The LF immediately dispatched four men with two SAM-7s (captured from the PLO), and they were in the battle zone within the hour.

One of the LF SAM crews fired and suc-



Lebanese Forces manpack Sagers through the mountains in Lebanon. Sagers are favored weapons in Lebanon, as they're cheap, light and easy to camouflage.

cessfully downed a marauding Syrian Gazelle gunship. The other SAM crew was frustrated in its attempt to score, as all Syrian choppers immediately withdrew. And so, while only one kill was effected, the result was a complete success, as all the enemy rotary wing aircraft left the scene with dispatch.

In the summer of 1982 the battalion fought its first action in the mountains northeast of Beirut, in a place called Aaquora. At the beginning of the battle Syrian tanks attacked the positions of the Lebanese Forces and captured them. While this was going on, the antitank commando battalion was in its garrison at Ballounieh, unaware of what was going on. In fact they were out doing PT when the messenger came for them to report to the front line and go into combat.

In the space of 75 minutes they went from their garrison routine to the front line, very quick considering the type of terrain they had to move through to get into position. The force deployed by the battalion was platoon strength, equipped with one MILAN which had only four missiles and two Sagers with a total of 20 missiles.

The antitank commandos were not well-trained at this stage in the use of their weapons, for two reasons: They didn't have enough ammunition to fire to become competent, and the Lebanese Forces to this day do not have antitank missile simulators for training purposes. To be competent in the use of the Sagger you need 30 hours of simulator time and 50 live-fires of the missiles. Consequently, they fired all 20 Sagger missiles at the Syrian tanks and scored only two hits. The two tanks that were hit were destroyed.

The LF had only four rounds for the MILAN launcher and there were grave doubts about those four, because all of them were two years older than their expiration

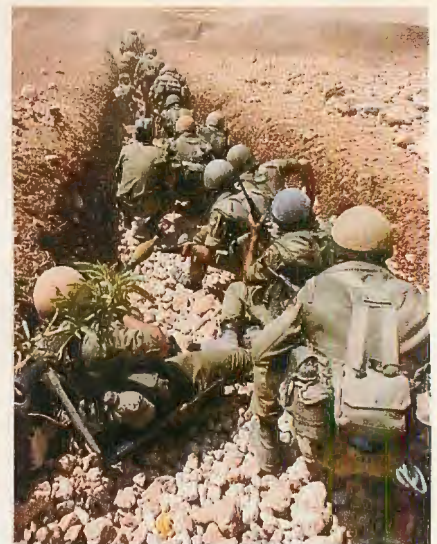
dates. When they fired the first MILAN round it knocked out a Syrian tank, but the second round exploded in the launcher and they fired no further rounds.

Despite the LF's poor showing, the Syrians, who had not expected to be engaged with missiles at all, retreated in what could only be described as a rout. They ran back to their start positions and the LF was able to follow up and occupy the original positions that it had previously held.

Headquarters of the Lebanese Forces was impressed with the performance of the antitank commandos and the effect they had on the Syrians, and they decided to increase size of the unit in terms of both men and equipment. They acquired MILANs by stealing them from the Lebanese army and by purchasing them overseas through arms dealers. And they bought Sagers from wherever they could — from Yugoslavia, perhaps, and definitely from the Palestinians. And they captured some, no doubt, from the Syrians and pro-Syrian militia factions.

During the battles of Iklim Karroub in 1984 and the first half of 1985, subunits of the regiment were constantly deployed. Iklim Karroub, a small island of Christian villages in a sea of Druze and Palestinian fighters about 30 miles south of Beirut, was completely cut off from the rest of the Christian area, with its back to the sea. The position was a U-shape with the base against the sea on low ground and the two arms stretching up into the hills. The biggest area of Christian villages was in the base of the U, totally overlooked at all times by Druze and PLO fighters in the hills.

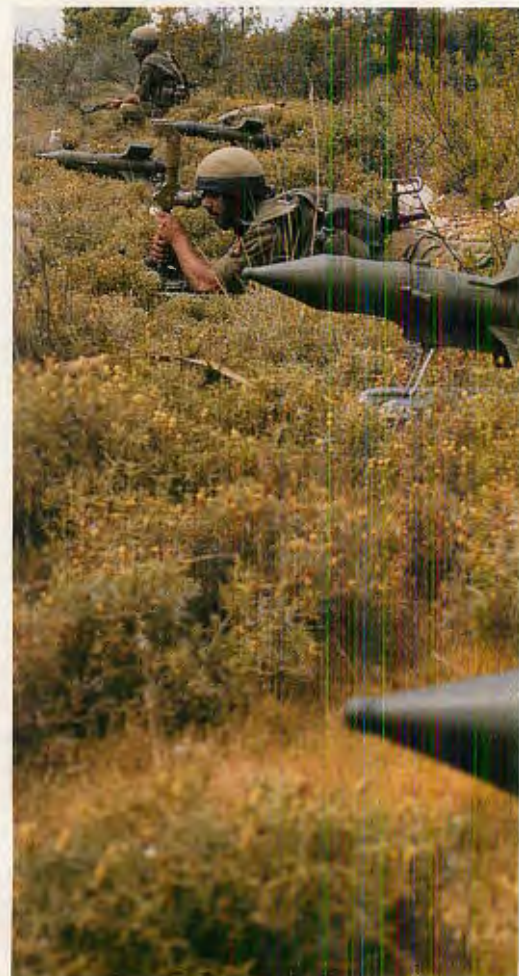
When members of the antitank commando battalion speak about the battle of Iklim Karroub, they refer to it quite proudly as "our battle." Muslim forces (Druze and Palestinian) outnumbered the Christians by many times and had a force of about 15-20 tanks. The tanks facing the Christians were quite obviously manned by Syrian troops, although the Syrians denied it. Because of the expertise with which the tanks were handled, the Christians were convinced that they were facing a Druze and Palestinian



ABOVE: Lebanese Forces infantry and antitank commandos in trenches on the Aaquora front. This first action of the antitank commando battalion took place in 1982, in the mountains to the northeast of Beirut.

RIGHT: Antiaircraft gunner with SAM-7. Note 23mm and 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns on BTR-152s in background.

BELOW: Soviet Sagger missiles are easy to camouflage, and missile and sighting system can be set up well apart so that when they're fired, they don't draw too much attention to the operator.





TOP: New shoulder patch of Lebanese Forces Antitank Commando Battalion.

ABOVE: *Moudad* medal awarded to antitank commandos for gallantry.



force that was supported by Syrian regular army tanks and tank crews. What's more, when Christian radio intercept people could hear radio transmission from tank to tank, they were able to recognize Syrian accents. This was later confirmed by Christian intelligence undercover agents living inside the land surrounding the Iklim Karroub enclave. They were living behind enemy lines and were able to observe that the crews of these Soviet tanks were in fact Syrian army soldiers.

Until the antitank commandos arrived, the local Christians had resigned themselves to the region falling. Surrounded by high ground and with all the roads covered by enemy fire, it was not possible to move during daylight without being fired upon by heavy machine guns, mortars or artillery,



and it was not possible to bring in tanks. Syrian tanks were in the habit of driving up on high ground and remaining stationary, in open view, firing at Christian villages and military positions for periods of up to half an hour. The arrival of antitank commandos, with one TOW and three MILAN launchers, took the enemy completely by surprise. When the AT platoon arrived secretly and went into action, it was able to destroy two enemy tanks and six multiple-barrel heavy anti-aircraft guns (14.5mm and 23mm mounted on vehicles) in the first action.

The Muslims tried to save face and recover the initiative by attacking later, under cover of darkness. They targeted the one hill still remaining in Christian hands, but the Christians intercepted Muslim radio traffic and learned of the plan.

The Muslims knew that the antitank commandos did not have night vision capabilities for their antitank weapons, so they attacked at night. However, Christian infantry and antitank gun crews were ready and waiting. They had coordinated with Chris-

TOP: Twin 23mm anti-aircraft guns mounted on a BTR-152. Weapons like these firing point-blank at a defenseless village can devastate a town and its people.

ABOVE: Antitank commandos armed with AKS assault rifles and carrying Sagers in manpacks take cover from Muslim fire.

tian militia heavy artillery, and the 155mm and 130mm guns back in east Beirut fired indirect fire and were adjusted by radio from the defenders in Iklim Karroub. Also, infantry mortar sections fired illuminating flares. This lit up the battlefield, the MILANs and TOWs could fire at night, and succeeded in knocking out two more attacking Muslim tanks. The result was another rout.

This battle took place two days before Christmas. Muslims had been threatening to heat up the situation and try to overrun the whole of the Christian enclave on Christmas Day but, after this resounding defeat, Christmas Day came and went without a single shot being fired. In fact, instead of

the situation heating up, the political and military tension in the area receded because the Muslims became convinced that there was no military solution to removing the Lebanese Forces from that enclave. During the battle of Iklim Karroub, Nicola, who was a young platoon commander at the time, was personally responsible for knocking out one tank with a TOW missile, one tank with a MILAN missile, and four vehicle-mounted anti-aircraft guns (the multi-barreled 14.5mm and 23mm heavy weapons used by the Muslims) in direct fire.

Distances involved on the ground during the battle of Iklim Karroub were quite short. Enemy forces surrounding this enclave deployed tanks singly instead of in pairs because they were able to put a tank on each hilltop surrounding the enclave, and the distances were so short that these tanks were able to see each other and provide mutual support. Nicola and his antitank commandos were engaging enemy tanks at ranges of around 1,000-1,500 meters, which is quite close. Muslim tanks were supported at all times by multi-barreled heavy anti-aircraft weapons in the direct fire role. Therefore, it was quite risky for Nicola and the other crews of the antitank commandos because, while they might knock out a tank, they would immediately be engaged by high explosive 14.5mm and 23mm anti-aircraft rounds.

One of the tragedies of this campaign was that, perhaps to vent frustrations, Muslims turned their tank guns on a beautiful Christian monastery, an old stone building dating back several hundred years, reducing it to a pile of rubble.

Antitank commando success has not been without cost. During a battle at Bhamdoun in the Shouf Mountains east of Beirut, the Christians lost a team to Druze commandos who had infiltrated the town dressed in Christian militia uniforms. The Druze set up a roadblock to stop Christian militia vehicles and reinforcements. One of the vehicles they stopped was a jeep carrying MILAN equipment and crews to operate them. The Druze were questioning the occupants of the vehicle, probably with a view to killing them, when one of the Christians noticed that, although the Druze were wearing Christian uniforms, one was wearing a red ribbon tied around his epaulet. This was a mark that the young antitank commando had seen in previous battles against the Druze. And so this young fellow slipped his safety catch off and opened up with his AK-47 on the Druze commandos, killing the one who was questioning them. The other two Druze initially fell back, but as soon as they recovered they opened up on the jeep, killing all but one of the Christians.

The wounded survivor managed to escape, secure himself in a building and return fire. The firefight drew attention to what was going on, and other Christian militiamen nearby moved in to investigate. They attacked the Druze commandos and killed them all. However, with the MILAN crew dead, there were no trained antitank

gunners available to fire on the advancing Syrian armor. The weapons and missiles were undamaged and were put into action, but the artillerymen had to learn how to use them as they went and they were all killed by the devastating Syrian artillery. It's impossible to say what their success would have been if they'd survived the artillery barrage and been able to face the tanks.

Nicola believes today that, had the Christian antitank weapons been mounted on APCs instead of jeeps, the crews would have survived the artillery bombardment and been able to employ their weapons. He points out that the Syrian tanks advanced on a single axis and that two teams firing from opposite flanks would have really had a field day. In fact, one of the things that came out of this disastrous battle is that Christian TOWs and MILANs have now been mounted on M113 APCs. They still man-pack Sagers and sometimes mount Sagers or MILANs on light jeeps to move them near the front before manpacking them in.

These days the antitank commando platoons are organized with the platoon commander operating as the gunner of the TOW or Sagger system while the rest of the platoon comprises three MILAN launcher teams.

Nicola's comments on the weapons of the battalion are that the TOW is accurate and reliable and not too complicated to learn to use, but it is heavy and difficult to manpack, so it is pretty much a vehicle-mounted weapon. The TOW is also expensive and the Christian militia just can't afford to spend that sort of money to knock off tanks. He particularly feels bad about using a TOW against a cheaper weapon like a vehicle-mounted twin or quad antiaircraft gun. Also, the TOW is sometimes a bit of a problem regarding maintenance; spare parts are pretty much impossible to get. The only place they can get them is if they are able to talk some sympathetic army officer out of them, steal them from the army, or jury-rig duplicate parts locally.

Nicola prefers the MILAN over the TOW because of cost, because it's a French-German weapon they can buy on the open market and because they're able to manpack it through difficult country to infiltrate behind enemy lines. They can also carry realistic amounts of MILAN ammunition cross-country by manpack. As opposed to the Sagger, the MILAN is easy to operate. Nicola considers the MILAN a tank sniper's weapon. MILAN teams can creep within easy range of a tank. The Soviet copy of the MILAN, the SPIGOT, is also used by the antitank battalion, but although it's as light as the MILAN, the legs make a lot of noise when they're opened, so it's not a weapon useful for sniping at tanks.

Nicola much prefers the old Soviet-built Sagger over the TOW even though it's a first generation antitank weapon. The big disadvantage is that it's difficult to train a competent operator, but once he's trained it's cheap and light, and it's also very easy to camouflage batteries of Sagers. You can



ABOVE: French-German MILAN is a favorite of the antitank commandos because it can be bought on the open market, is easy to carry, and it's relatively easy to train a soldier in its use.

RIGHT: Lebanese Forces grunts in close proximity to PLO, pinned down and far from happy.



set the missile up well away from the firer so that when they fire they don't draw too much attention to the gunner.

The battalion has stocks of the SS11 and the Entac (French antitank wire-guided missiles) but they don't deploy them because they're old, unreliable weapons and the missiles are well past expiration dates.

Members of the battalion are currently deployed on all of the approach areas from the Syrian-held parts of Lebanon into the Christian enclave; the areas of threat are Aaquora, Faraya, Basquinta, Kfashima and along the Beirut front. The crews are rotated; they're there a few weeks, then come back to the battalion for a few weeks for R&R and retraining, and then they're deployed again on a rotation basis.

All of the antitank commandos must go through the same training process. First they're trained as infantry, then attend Christian militia ranger school and the Christian militia special operations course, and then conduct special operations behind enemy lines with antitank weapons.

During the fighting in the eastern suburbs of the port city of Sidon back in 1985, antitank commandos were deployed by sea and fought in the infantry role as commandos since there was no tank threat in the area.

A small proportion of the *Silah El Moudad* regiment is para-trained. These

men received their training in Israel prior to 1984, at a time when the LF was still receiving a lot of Israeli support. (Unconfirmed reports suggest that others have also received para-training in both France and South Africa.) In addition to the increased level of individual *élan* that is afforded the regiment by para-training its members, a capacity also now exists for the dropping of AT ambush teams behind the front among the enemy's lines of communication. While this has not yet been done, it nonetheless remains an option for LF commanders during the more desperate types of operations, and it continues to be an unpredictable threat to the security of the enemy's rear areas.

The boys of the *Silah El Moudad* take deep offense at being called antitank troops. They quite rightly insist that what they do, in fact, is *hunt* tanks. And they do indeed hunt them — for fun and profit. The full-time members of the regiment do, after all, get paid the princely sum of approximately \$45 per month. ✕



TOP: Light attack vehicle? Assault gun? Dune buggy with a TOW? This vehicle is all those things. After testing by the 9th Infantry Division it was found lacking and dropped from the Army's arsenal. Photo: DoD

ABOVE: Among new technology fielded by the 9th is the MK 19 Mod 3 40x53mm grenade launcher, shown here mounted on an M3 .50-caliber machine gun tripod.

SOF MILITARY AFFAIRS

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Troops Sort Out High-Tech Test Bed

Text & Photos by Munremur MacGerrcinn

BBETTER equipment is constantly being sought by every branch of the U.S. military in their never-ending quest to make combat units as effective as possible — to move faster and hit harder.

New equipment is, of course, expensive, but our soldiers are worth it. However, new equipment also takes years to get from the drawing board to the battlefield.

Army Chief of Staff General Edward "Shy" Meyer was very concerned about this long lead time in developing new equipment and the inevitable cost overruns associated with it. That's why he directed that an agency be formed to look at "off-the-shelf" technology. He wanted to see how existing foreign and domestic items could be used to produce a great leap forward in tactical capability. The result was the High Technology Test Bed at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Of course it would be necessary to find a unit to test this off-the-shelf technology, and chosen was the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division, also based at Fort Lewis. The goal was to transform the 9th Infantry Division into a high technology light division, a new kind of unit with the portability of a light division and the fighting power of an armored or mechanized division.

The High Technology Test Bed, unfortunately, got off on the wrong foot from the start. For one thing, some of the original members interpreted their mission a little too broadly and went beyond the examina-



High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV), here shown with TOW antitank missile launcher, is being tested by the 9th Infantry Division as a possible replacement for the tried-and-true Jeep. U.S. Marines have already adopted it.

tion of existing hardware to propose radical new ideas. Some of these ideas, like the "boxhole" — a trailer that infantrymen were supposed to pull behind themselves — were widely publicized.

As envisioned by its originators, the "boxhole" would weigh next to nothing and never get hung up on brush or stuck in the mud. When the infantryman got where he was going, he would dig a hole, bury the "boxhole" and crawl inside. Once inside he would have all the comforts of home. In practice, of course, the "boxhole" idea was totally unworkable.

Another idea was the "battalion band," essentially a giant boom box on a jeep trailer. Song writers would be hired to write popular training songs. Imagine marching along to something like:

The charging handle's connected to the bolt-carrier key. The bolt-carrier key's connected to the bolt carrier. . . . And that's the way of the Lawd!

A third idea was the creation of high technology esprit and morale by hiring authors to write fictional adventure books about units of the division.

Ideas like these tended to discredit the entire High Technology Test Bed. At the same time, the rest of the Army was fully absorbed with the development and fielding of a totally new series of equipment, including the Abrams tank, the Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, new radios and so on. As a

result, the high technology light division tended to be ignored. This produced some strange aberrations — unit doctrine and training programs (normally developed by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command) lagged behind equipment testing, often by several years.

As a result, units were issued equipment without a clear understanding of how that

WELSH WARRIOR

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equipment should be tactically employed. Operational tests were conducted by units whose training was sketchy, to say the least. And, perhaps worst of all, new units were organized to meet equipment limitations rather than to accomplish tactical missions.

The best example of the latter problem is probably the light attack battalion. As originally conceived, the light attack battalion would employ the fast attack vehicle — a dune buggy. But how would it be used? The decision was made to mount the TOW antitank missile on the dune buggy. Unfortunately, this left the vehicle (which had a crew of only two men) vulnerable to small arms and other weapons systems. The obvious answer was to employ the dune buggies in squads. Some vehicles in the squad would be armed with the TOW, others with some kind of antipersonnel weapon. But how many dune buggies would make up a squad? What additional weapons should they carry?

While this debate was going on, someone pointed out that the Army's new Blackhawk helicopter could carry two dune buggies. The decision was made — without regard to tactical soundness of a two-vehicle squad — that the light attack squad would thenceforth consist of two vehicles. The second vehicle would be armed with the Navy-developed MK 19 Mod 3 40x53mm 40mm grenade launcher. The MK 19 Mod 3 is an automatic weapon that fires a High Explosive Dual Purpose round of higher velocity than the 40x46mm grenade used in the M79 and M203 grenade launchers, and that can be effectively employed up to 2,000 meters.

Somewhere along the line, the dune buggy fell by the wayside. It was too expensive and, when loaded down with ammo, radios, extra fuel, water, bedrolls and so on, it no longer looked so attractive. So the dune buggy died — but the light attack idea didn't.

Another concept was the assault gun. No one ever fully defined the term "assault gun," but basically it appeared to be a vehicle lighter than a tank that could kill a tank. After a brief fling with the Marine Corps' ideas in this area and an abortive flirtation with the thoroughly discredited M551 Sheridan Air-Droppable Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle, the High Technology Test Bed settled on the AM General High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (the HMMWV, pronounced Humm-Vee). This vehicle was just coming into the Army inventory, replacing the jeep and the old ¾-ton truck. The HMMWV was mounted with a TOW missile and *presto*, an assault gun.

Just about this time, light attack proponents were looking around for a replacement for the now-defunct dune buggy. Guess what they chose? You guessed it — a HMMWV with a TOW.

What's the difference between a fast attack vehicle and an assault gun? Answer: Fast attack vehicles are found in light attack units, of course, while assault guns are found in assault gun units.

Continued on page 98



ON a sweltering midafternoon in July 1915, revolution broke out in the Republic of Haiti. Again.

At Port-au-Prince, the capital, the government of Guillaume Sam, fearful of growing unrest and mob violence, took as hostages some 200 leading citizens suspected of involvement with rebellious elements. Sam ordered their immediate execution should the presidential palace be stormed. As mobs approached the palace, the prison commandant executed 167 of the hostages. President Sam fled to the sanctuary of the French Legation.

The howling mob followed him in and, after catching Sam cowering behind a bathroom door, broke both his arms so he couldn't resist. They dragged him into the street, hacked his body into small pieces and scattered them at the Legation's gates. Anarchy broke out.

There was no government or authority left in the city. Mobs raged up and down the streets, pillaging, raping and murdering.

President Woodrow Wilson ordered in the Marines. On 28 July, 330 Marines and sailors landed at Port-au-Prince and were shortly thereafter reinforced by additional Marines from Cuba. Marines and disembarked sailors occupied the rioting capital and restored a semblance of order. By mid-August, a

Marines responding to a riot in Port-au-Prince. Violence continued to plague the occupation forces until their withdrawal in 1934.
Photo: AP

new government was installed and the domestic political situation was fairly stable.

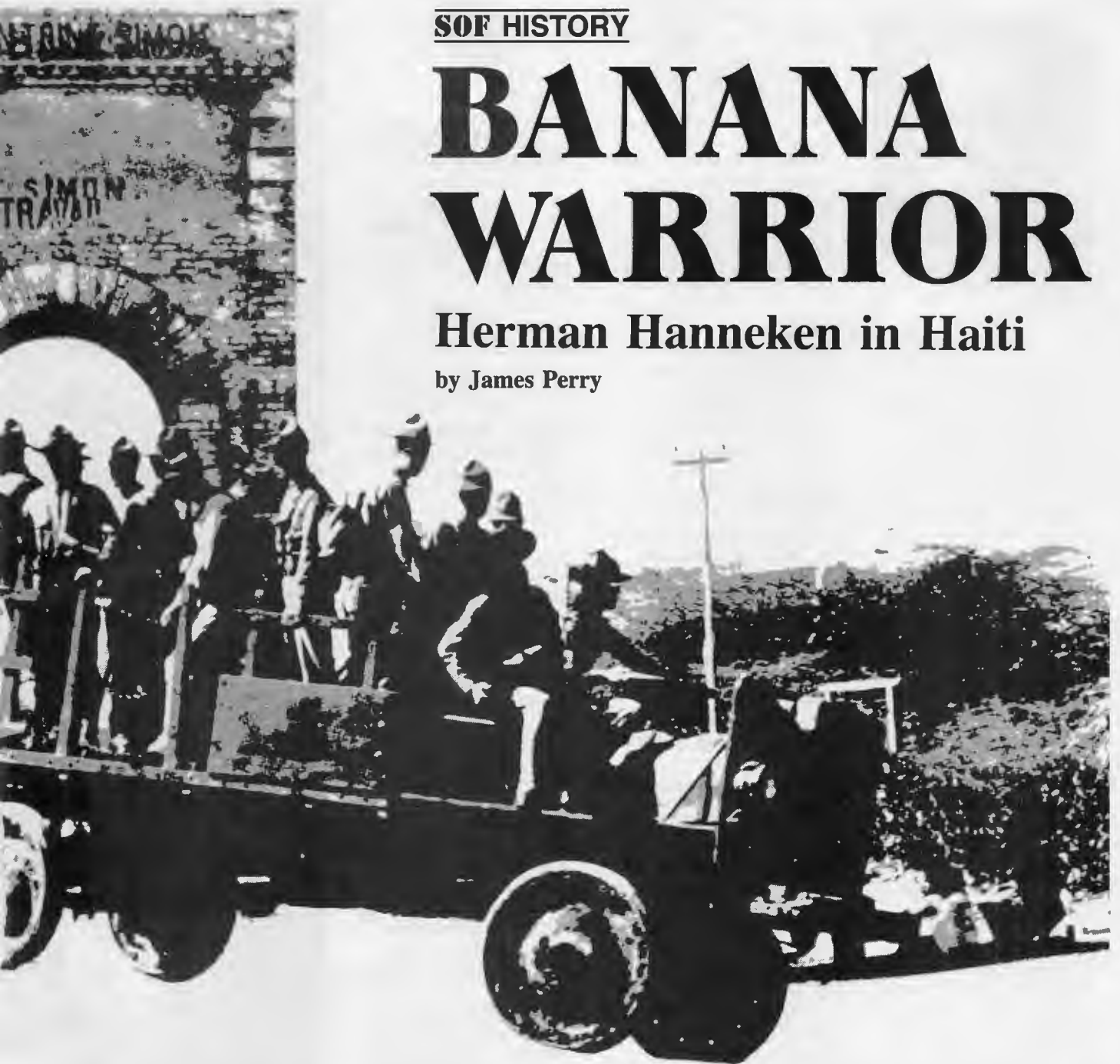
CORPS CHRONICLER

Captain James M. Perry has frequently written for *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. His most recent contribution was "French Masquerade" (August '87). Perry is a veteran of both the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Army's Special Forces, with service in World War II, Korea and Southeast Asia.

BANANA WARRIOR

Herman Hanneken in Haiti

by James Perry



Central America and the Caribbean in the banana war era. Continuing civil unrest in the early part of this century gave European powers an excuse for intervention. That, along with pressures brought by American business interests, which were often threatened by the troubles, led American presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson to Calvin Coolidge into frequent interventions in Central America and the Caribbean. Among the military expeditions and interventions:

Honduras in 1903, 1907 and 1924; Panama in 1903, which secured the Canal Zone for the United States, and again in 1918 and 1925; Cuba in 1906, 1912 and 1917; Nicaragua in 1910 (using as a pretext the execution of two American mercenaries fighting with rebel forces against the government), 1912 and 1926-33; Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1914; Haiti, 1914 and 1915-34; and the Dominican Republic, 1904, 1914 and 1916.



Lieutenant Herman H. Hanneken, USMC.
Photo: DoD

But while order had been restored, guerrilla bands known as Cacos continued to flourish in the hills. These bandits had plagued Haitian affairs for years. It seemed that no permanent solution for Haiti's problems could be found while these bands continued to prey on the countryside, selling their services to anyone wishing to become the next president of Haiti. And so for the next 17 years, the job of defeating the Cacos and policing the Haitian countryside fell to the United States Marines.

A year earlier, in July 1914, Herman Henry Hanneken of St. Louis, Missouri, enlisted in the Marines. By the summer of 1919, he was a sergeant in Haiti and chief of the Grand Riviere District, with a brevet commission of *capitaine* in the native police force, the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti*. There were over a hundred others like him, Marine officers and NCOs who led the *Gendarmerie*. From this point on, Hanneken's fame gathered steam as a captain, *Gendarmerie d'Haiti*, while his second in command, Corporal William Robert Button, became a second lieutenant in the *Gendarmerie*. Together they administered the northwestern slopes of the island.

As busy as Hanneken was consolidating his command, so also was his enemy in the hills, Charlemagne Peralte. A Caco aristocrat educated in France, Peralte has been described as "a slight, brownish man with a hungry face and large, gleaming

white eyeballs." He was an itinerant lawyer who dabbled unsuccessfully in local politics then gave up, for in his words "he got no breaks." He took part in the initial riots without displaying too much tactical brilliance and was later convicted by a Marine provost court for trying to steal a government payroll.

Peralte was sentenced to five years at hard labor and spent the next eight months sweeping the streets of Port-au-Prince. His aristocratic blood seethed. The sentence was disgraceful, beneath his station. He escaped and headed for the hills, his heart now filled with burning hatred for the Marines.

While Peralte and most of the other Caco chieftains were educated and spoke lilted, florid French, their army was comprised of peasants whose guttural *patois* was a bush language called Creole. Highly laced with African terms, very few white men were able to wrap their tongue around the language.

The Caco peasants were steeped in religious mystique, something akin to *ju-ju*. Peralte extolled them "to smear the brains of the *blanc* on your rifle barrel to make it hold true; their heart, eaten, makes you brave; their liver makes you strong." Cannibalism among the Cacos was more a result of religious fervor than a need for red meat, and Peralte capitalized on the practice. He kept his peasant army in a high-pitched fever with rum and oratory.

Holding court in the villages, Peralte sat on a throne, a woven crown of bright cloth and flashy beads on his head. He was inflammatory and convincing, especially for the backwoods native. "Haiti will rule the world!" he screamed to the attentive masses, "and I shall be its king!" The peasants poured fiery rum down their gullets and screamed back.

"Charlemagne! . . . Charlemagne! Vive Charlemagne! Vive la révolution!"

Bandit carnage intensified. Cacos ranged the coastal cities, pillaging and plundering and killing at will. It was a common thought among *gendarmes* that, if you were captured and somehow killed immediately, "you were a lucky man."

And so the moment finally arrived when the Marine brigade commander, Brigadier General John H. Russell, found it necessary to put a halt to Peralte's activities. He called in his commander of the northern area, Major James J. Meade, and handed him the assignment.

"In whatever way you have to do it," he told Meade, "kill or capture that bastard." Meade went to Hanneken and asked him if he thought it could be done.

"Fellow'd hafta work on his own plan," Hanneken allowed. Meade nodded softly.

"Then do it."

Sergeant Hanneken was 26 years old. He was six feet of hard Missouri muscle and gristle, thin and wiry, with the light, quick step of a cat and eyes to match. Some said he had the features of an Indian and that the most remarkable thing about him was his eyes. They were cold, hard and narrow, discompassionate mirrors when it came to duty. He belonged to the old breed of Marines, the hard NCOs who formed the backbone of the Corps. Meade knew that he had the right man in Hanneken.

Born 23 June 1893 at St. Louis, Missouri, Hanneken attended the Honrick Preparatory School in that city. At the age of 21, feeling himself starting to drift, Hanneken enlisted in the Marine Corps. Within five years he had risen steadily up the ranks to three stripes, an unusual accomplishment in the "old Corps." In Haiti he displayed an immediate talent for leadership and command of Creole and was



given the Grand Riviere District as his own hunting ground for Cacos.

His second in command, Corporal William R. Button, was 24 and much the equal of Hanneken in physical appearance. Also born in St. Louis, Button was Hanneken's closest companion and was described by Colonel R.S.



Hooker, CO of the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti*, as being "a young man of sterling qualities, a soldier in the truest and best sense of the word." Button was also sub-district commander of Môle St. Nicholas, Saint Raphael, and district commander of Poste Chabert and Le Trou, all territory in the northwest.

Hanneken and Button devised a plan to capture Peralte, though it was understood by all that, since the action would take place in the Grand Riviere District, Hanneken's thoughts would prevail. He called in Jean-Baptiste Conze, a wealthy coffee speculator, and laid the plans before him. Hanneken could not go outside the Grand Riviere District, so Peralte must be

Native guide leading a patrol of U.S. Marines through the Haitian jungles in 1919. Photo: DoD

drawn to him.

Conze was a mulatto — half-white, half-black. He had no love for the Americans but he had less for the fierce Cacos, whose rampaging was ruining his

business. He listened to what Hanneken had to say and, when the *capitaine* was through, Conze shook his head softly, whistling through his teeth at the absurdity of it.

"The whole thing sounds ridiculous, *monsieur*, but it might work," he told Hanneken. The two shook hands and Conze departed about 0200.

Next day, the entire village buzzed with the news. Authorities had tried to arrest Conze and he had taken off for the bush. Hanneken expressed disbelief that such a thing could happen. He also had double reason for being disturbed that morning. Private Jean Edmond François, with his rifle and equipment, had also disappeared. Women at the well clucked their tongues in empathy with the pair. After all, Conze and François were proud Cacos, not dupes of *les blancs*.

There was posted in the plaza a reward for Peralte's scalp: 10,000 *gourdes* — \$9,600 U.S. Up until that time, no one had really tried to collect it. Peralte, on the other hand, posted no reward for Hanneken's head. Instead, he flung challenges from without: questioning Hanneken's ability, his legitimacy and his mother's morals. None of it seemed to work. Hanneken would not permit himself to be drawn into the jungle and ambushed.

Conze, meanwhile, had developed into a "real pain in the ass" for the Marines. He built a fort at Capois, only a six-hour walk from Grand Riviere, and began gathering his own following of Caco peasants around him.

It seemed to irritate Hanneken, a trusted friend going over to the enemy. But secretly, that had been the plan. With \$800 of his own money, Hanneken had bankrolled Conze into the hills, buying the necessary supplies to set him up. He could have used



Hanneken in the Pacific during World War II. This photo was taken on Guadalcanal just after Hanneken was decorated with the Silver Star, making him one of only a few Marines to have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross (twice) and the Silver Star. Photo: DoD

government-issue equipment but he didn't want to arouse suspicion. Conze bought all his necessary supplies on the open market with Hanneken's money.

Outwardly, Hanneken put up a hue and cry about Conze's fort at Capois. He boasted that soon he would mount an attack against that target and that Conze had best beware.

On 5 September, Hanneken mounted a concerted effort against Capois. It was clear from the first shot that the Cacos intended to make a fight of it. Three *gendarmes* were killed in the first onslaught and, during the second, Hanneken was seen by his aide to clutch his arm, stagger and fall. He was helped off the battlefield by the aide as the bugler blew retreat. The Cacos went wild with ecstasy. They had defeated the great *capitaine le blanc!*

Hanneken retreated to his sparse living quarters to lick his wounds. But if the truth were known, the "wound" had healed miraculously, and the bandage which covered it was smeared with government red ink for stage effect.

It may sound like a childish ploy, all this nonsense of faking a wound, but the eyes of the Cacos were all around. They, too, were like children, and Hanneken found it necessary to treat them as such. He wanted whatever word that got back to Peralte to be the gospel truth as spoken from the lips of a Caco soldier. It would have more weight with Peralte.

Meanwhile, Hanneken was in close communication with Conze, and Conze was in close touch with Peralte. Peralte had not yet fully bought the story that Conze had joined the Caco ranks. Yet the battle at Capois provided Peralte with all the convincing he needed. He sent Conze a promotion to general and a message.

"I will soon visit the heroes of my New Republic."

And, of course, he would bring with him Jean Edmond François, his new secretary; the soldier who had deserted the *gendarmes* the morning of Conze's disappearance.

It had all been too simple. Hanneken's bankrolling of Conze's leap into the Caco ranks had paid off. Peralte was being drawn into the Grand Riviere District. More than that, Peralte planned an assault on Grand Riviere that would finish the Marines there and serve as a capital for his "New Republic." He ordered the Cacos to assemble for the attack.

Cacos swarmed around Peralte until the force was almost 1,200 strong. The word from Conze came down the hill in late October, a word that Hanneken had so patiently waited and prayed for.

Charlemagne Peralte was going to finish his old enemy. He was, at this moment, on the move toward Grand Riviere.

On the night of 3 October 1919, Hanneken, Button and 18 Haitian *gendarmes* disguised themselves as peasants,

blackening their faces and dressing in Haitian *macoutes*, a loose, flowing peasant garb. They slipped out of Grand Riviere and began their climb up the hill toward Peralte's camp. Major Meade, the man who had given Hanneken the assignment, also slipped out of Grand Riviere with a column of Marines. Meade's job would be to close the circle and, in the event Peralte managed to escape Hanneken, Meade would then have a chance to catch him.

Hanneken, face blackened and jaw set, was now a demon with a mission. Before this night was out, Hanneken and his party would have to penetrate six Caco outposts without detection before they could arrive at the inner circle where Peralte had his headquarters. Later, the commandant of the Marine Corps would call Hanneken "one of those indomitable Americans who enjoys going bear hunting with a switch." Hanneken, whose *gendarmes* were armed only with Krag rifles, would call the mission "damn poor odds."

Hanneken had armed himself with a .45 Colt automatic and a .38-caliber revolver, both of which he stuck in his waistband. Button was armed with a Browning Automatic Rifle. Hanneken would approach and kill Peralte, Button would cover with the BAR and the 18 *gendarmes* would form a wagon-wheel defense around the camp to repel any counterattacks.

They were met on the trail by the "deserter" François, who told them that the password for the night was "General Jean," in honor of Conze. François also brought the news that Peralte would not come down from the hills.

"Then," growled Hanneken, "we'll have to go to him. Can you take us there?" he asked François.

François explained that Peralte's force was heavily armed, "many rifles, *mon capitaine*. It will not be easy," he said.

The climb upward was steep and, being more

concerned with speed than security, Hanneken took a chance and decided on the more perilous approach to Peralte's camp, the trail. They labored upward, passing through the first outpost without difficulty. François had given the proper password, explaining to the first guards that the attack by the Cacos on Grand Riviere had been successful and that they were taking the news to Peralte.

"Vive Charlemagne!" the Cacos screamed in delight, firing their rifles into the air. "Vive la révolution!"

The trail broadened and Button began to get nervous about being out in the open. He suggested that maybe they should take to the jungle and avoid the other five outposts. Hanneken was opposed.

"I've come too close to that bastard now to take a chance on missing him. We'll stick to the trail."

His assessment was correct. They passed through the other outposts without detection, finally arriving at the head of the path, where the jungle rolled back completely. Hanneken was less than a hundred yards from his mortal enemy. François pointed toward the crest of the last hill. "He is up there, *capitaine*."

A huge Caco guard stepped in front of them, pointing his rifle directly at Hanneken.

"The password, brother," he growled.

"General Jean," Hanneken replied, but it didn't have a good Creole ring to it. The guard made a movement to detain Hanneken, but the Marine pushed past him roughly and the guard grabbed Button by the arm instead, noting the shiny new BAR which Button cradled in his arms.

"Where did you get such a pretty rifle?" the guard wanted to know, but Button shook him off, almost panicking for a moment. Hanneken's back was disappearing in the dark.

"Can't you see my *délegué* [chief] is getting ahead of me," he said gruffly, pushing past the guard. The man let him go.

Hanneken had stopped just short of the campfire. There was a makeshift lean-to there and, as Hanneken looked around at the group of Cacos, desperately trying to identify Peralte, a man stepped from the shadows and walked toward Hanneken.

Hanneken later recalled that he knew Peralte instantly "by his figure; his manner. His white eyes and teeth flashed. He was obviously the leader."

"I am Charlemagne, brother; what word do you bring?" the man asked. Hanneken stepped even closer. Nine paces.

"I bring word of the victory at Grand Riviere," Hanneken replied, but his voice was hollow, drained. The climb upward had sapped his strength. Even some of the Caco guards had noted that Hanneken's party was exhausted, one saying to the other, "those niggers look tired."

Peralte, suspicious for the first time, took a half-turn away from Hanneken, presenting less of a target.

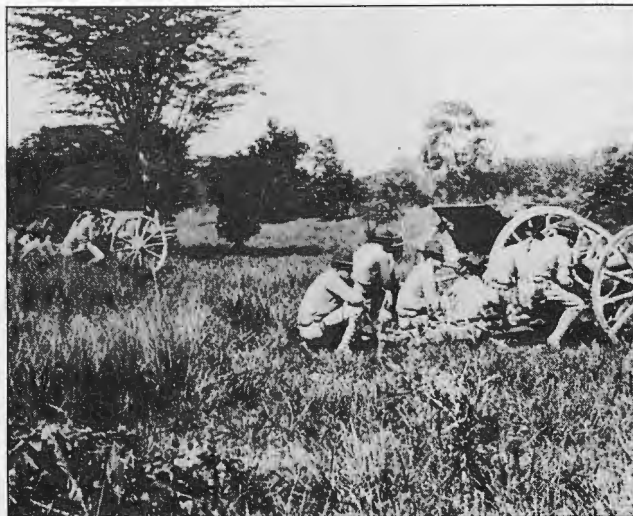
"All right!" Hanneken yelled to Button and, whipping the automatic from his belt, took deliberate aim and fired.

The first round tore a chunk from the bandit's shoulder. The second round caught him square in the chest and slammed him backward, dead, drilled perfectly through the heart.

Both pistols still blazing, Hanneken was joined in battle by the thunder of Button's automatic rifle. Cacos crumpled around them as Peralte's personal bodyguard paid the price for following the wrong leader.

Bedlam reigned. Wild shots from all around whistled through the bush as the 45-70s of the Cacos barked, splitting the night with thundering noise.

"You okay, Button?" Hanneken yelled as the Caco fire slowed.



Marine artillery, part of a battalion-strength unit sent to Haiti, in the field near Port-au-Prince. Marine artillery units served from the initial intervention in 1915 until the final withdrawal in 1934. Photo: DoD

"Yeah," Button answered, then cautiously, "I think so."

"Okay," Hanneken said. "Check everybody out. We'll sit it out until the sun comes up."

At 0500 there was no life anywhere. The jungle was ominously still, apparently abandoned. Nine Caco bodies sprawled around Hanneken's party, heaped together where Button had dropped them.

Peralte was stone dead, his features set in twisted rigor mortis caused by Hanneken's heavy .45-caliber bullets. Hanneken touched the man to make sure and then slowly came to his feet, ready to take on another fight if one came. Nothing happened. The Cacos had fled.

Hanneken found a lonesome, abandoned burro standing beneath a mango tree and he upended Peralte's body on its back. They collected the weapons and papers found in the camp and, as Hanneken later reported, "there being nothing else of value, we set fire to the rest."

Hanneken led the party back down the same trail they had come up on. Peralte's body was lashed upright to a door in Grand Riviere, photographed and positively identified. The bounty of \$9,600 was paid, but the Marines were not able to share in the reward. Hanneken did, however, recover "the out of pocket \$800" which he had used to bankroll Conze's move into the Caco ranks.

Meade's force had successfully turned back an attack by the Cacos, inflicting "heavy" casualties. The Cacos were now in full retreat, leaderless. Hanneken's small party had effectively managed to change the course of Haitian history in a few short seconds by disrupting the Caco revolution for a moment. It was enough to cause President Wilson to comment on Hanneken's courage.

"This is one of the most singularly important acts of heroism in my time," he said of Hanneken.

Congress said more.

On 10 June 1920, Hanneken and Button both received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their heroic efforts in killing the infamous bandit.

Hanneken was further commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps for his part. Button was promoted to sergeant and took a short leave home, returning to Haiti a few months later, where he died of malaria at the

Department Hospital, Cape Haitien, Haiti. He was just six months short of his 25th birthday.

Herman Henry Hanneken went on to yet more glory.

A few months after he killed Peralte, Hanneken tracked down the dead bandit's successor, Osiris George, and shot him dead. He was awarded his first Navy Cross for that feat and another palm cluster to his Haitian *Médaille Militaire*, Haiti's equivalent of the Medal of Honor.

In December 1928, he arrived in Corinto, Nicaragua, with the Second Brigade Marines and, less than a month later, he dragged in Sandino's chief of staff, the bandit General Jiron, winning his second Navy Cross.

During World War II, Hanneken served with the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal and Pelileu, winning both a Silver Star and a Bronze Star for more heroism.

He retired in 1948 with 34 years of service, advancing to brigadier general because of his award of the Medal of Honor, and he and his wife, Margaret, retired to some peaceful living at their home on Delight Street in El Cajon, California.

Even though General Hanneken was approached many times by those wanting to do a film story of the killing of Peralte, General Hanneken steadfastly refused to be immortalized in any such movie. He was even reluctant to discuss the details of his vengeance at Grand Riviere with those who simply enjoyed being reveled by the tale.

On 23 August 1986, Herman Henry Hanneken answered his final call to duty. He passed away quietly at the Veterans Hospital, La Jolla, California, and was buried with honors four days later at the National Cemetery at Rosecrans, San Diego, California.

He was 93 years old. ✖

In this fourth part of SOF's exclusive intel coup behind the Bamboo Curtain, our T&E team — Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown, Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis and contributing author Bob Jordan — steps out of the world of rattle guns and into anti-armor infantry weapons to test-fire the People's Republic of China Type 69 rocket launcher. All testing took place at a Chinese weapons facility never before opened to Westerners — the People's Liberation Army Small Arms Research Institute north of Beijing. Chinese military weapons designers and PRC army officers were also in attendance. SOF wishes to thank the PRC government for its gracious invitation to our staff members to freely examine, on location and unhindered, that country's military hardware, much of which had yet to be seen by Western intelligence analysts.

WHOOOSH. As the rocket sails down-range, Bob Brown turns into a blur of motion and his baseball cap flies upward to rest cockeyed over his brow. Through the large smoke cloud and bright flash produced by ignition of the rocket's booster, the warhead can be seen heading toward the target, a section of armor plate 100 meters away. There's no mistaking the sound of the impact. It's a direct hit, dead center, and SOF is moving forward with its test and evaluation of the PRC Type 69 40mm rocket launcher at the People's Liberation Army Small Arms Research Institute just outside Beijing.

The RPG-7 (*Reaktivniy Protivotankovyi Granatomet*: rocket antitank grenade launcher) was introduced in 1962. Modified shortly thereafter to the RPG-7V, it remains in use, in one form or another, throughout the world. By every standard of current technology, the RPG-7V has been outmoded by weapons like the U.S.-made TOW (Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire command-link guided missile) or French MILAN (*Missile d'Infanterie Léger Antichar*). Yet it is still blowing the hell out of buildings in Beirut, knocking out its makers' BMDs in Angola, and almost every infantry squad of the Israel Defense Forces still has an "RGPist."

Why? Because the RPG-7V weighs only 19.6 pounds, and gunners with more guts than brains can expect a second-round hit probability on stationary targets of more than 50 percent at close-up ranges of 300 meters and less, with penetration through 330mm of armor (at normal). Designed principally for use against armored vehicles, it can be employed as well against fortified bunkers and buildings.

It is most readily distinguished from its predecessor, the RPG-2, by a large, conical-shaped blast-shield at the rear end. The method of operation is essentially that of the World War II German *Panzerfaust*, consisting of a tube, open at both ends, with a pistol grip and trigger mechanism. It was copied in 1969 by the PRC and it was their version,



SOF EXCLUSIVE

GUNS BEHIND THE GREAT WALL PART 4

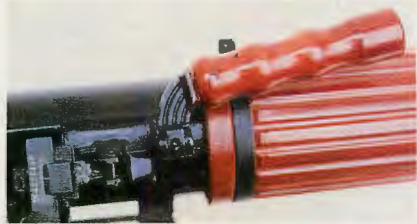
China's Handheld Tank Killer

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis





ABOVE: SOF contributor Bob Jordan prepares to fire Type 69 rocket launcher from kneeling position.



LEFT: Three of Type 69's improvements over Soviet RPG-7V: windage-adjustable rear sight, folding carrying handle and heavier, grooved insulator.



BELOW LEFT: Slotted indicator stem directly to the rear of rocket's warhead must be mated with notch on top of launcher tube's muzzle. Failure to do so is most common cause of misfires.



ABOVE: PRC Type 69 40mm rocket launcher with bipod legs extended and equipped with optical sight.



SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown prepares to fire Type 69 anti-armor rocket launcher from prone position.

the Type 69, that we tested. There is no Chinese equivalent of the Soviet RPG-7D, a two-piece collapsible version for airborne troops.

Anyone can master the procedures for firing an RPG-7V or Type 69 in just a few minutes, and you'd be well advised to do so if you're planning a vacation to either Lebanon or Afghanistan in the near future. Proficiency with the optical sight requires more extensive training. Here's how it's done, step by step:

1) Remove a grenade from the packing crate (Soviet PG-7 rockets are packed six to a box, PRC only four to a box) and inspect the fuze, nose and nozzle tube for external damage.

2) Remove the shipping cap from the end of the rocket and attach the booster element by screwing it clockwise until it's hand tight.

3) Make sure the launcher's hammer is up. If not, pull the trigger. Push the cross-bolt safety in back of the trigger to the right into the safe position. Raise both the front and rear iron sights. PRC rear sights can be adjusted for windage, Soviet rear sights cannot. Leave the front and rear sights down if you're going to use the optical sight.

4) Insert the assembled grenade into the launcher muzzle and rotate the grenade until the slotted-head indicator stem, located to the rear of the pocket nozzle, moves into the notch in the top edge of the muzzle. This is absolutely essential to insure alignment of the firing pin and primer — failure to do so is a primary cause of misfires.

5) Remove the safety cap retaining pin from the grenade's nose by pulling the tape attached to it and removing the safety cap. Retain them in case you decide not to fire the round. The safety cap should not be removed during heavy rain or hail, as the piezo-electric fuze may short-circuit.

6) Place the launcher on the right shoulder and grasp the insulator on the tube with the left hand. Grasp the pistol grip and trigger mechanism with the right hand. Point the launcher toward the target.

7) Cock the hammer by applying downward pressure with the thumb.

8) Push the cross-bolt safety to the left.

9) Press the right cheek against the insulator and align the sights on target.

10) Hold your breath and squeeze the trigger slowly. Felt recoil is almost imperceptible. Stay on the target (if you're not under fire) and watch as Ivan Ivanovitch goes straight to hell by means of an instrument of his own creation.

Inspect the launcher tube after each shot, as bits and pieces of the booster's cardboard wall often remain to block the firing pin.

There are three basic firing positions and in each instance you need to pay close heed to the backblast, as this weapon is almost as dangerous to the rear as it is to the front. The danger area stretches 20 meters to the rear and 8 meters in width.

Firing from the prone position provides the most protection from enemy fire for the gunner and his assistant when there is little

PG-7 GRENADE: METHOD OF OPERATION

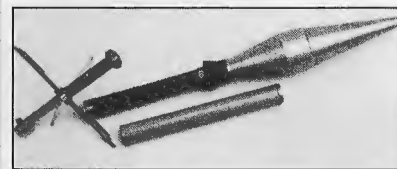
Although the launcher tube's diameter is 40mm, the PG-7 grenade has a maximum diameter of 85mm. The 5-pound, rocket-assisted, fin-stabilized, shaped-charge HEAT (High Explosive Anti-Tank) round is muzzle loaded and percussion fired. A piezo-electric fuze produces sufficient voltage to activate an electric detonator at the rear of the round when the grenade's nose is crushed against an inner skin. After ignition of the explosive charge, the explosion is focused by the coned shape of the outer shell into a super-hot gas jet. This jet burns through armor plate with enough residual energy to expand inside the vehicle after penetration and initiate a secondary explosion. Subsequent to this, the copper cone collapses, forming a thumb-sized, teardrop-shaped, momentarily molten slug which passes through the hole in the armor plate as a solidified projectile.

Four large, knife-like fins snap out when the projectile emerges from the tube. At the rear end of the missile are

some small offset fins designed to improve stability by causing a very slow rate of roll. The warhead arms after 5 meters. Initial velocity is 580 fps, but the booster motor ignites after the rocket has passed 10 meters from the muzzle and the velocity is increased to 965 fps. The effective range is 300 meters against moving targets and 500 meters against stationary objects.

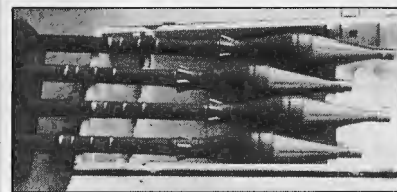
Soviet PG-7 HEAT rockets will self-destruct at 920 meters if not detonated prior to this range. PRC HEAT rounds have no self-destruct mechanism. In flight, Russian PG-7 rounds can be distinguished by a bright red tracer element that burns as brightly as a highway flare. In the early 1970s, the Soviets introduced the OG-7 antipersonnel rocket, which employs the 0-4M impact fuze used in their 82mm mortar series. OG-7 rockets have been encountered in Afghanistan.

The PRC Type 69 launcher will accept all Russian munitions designed for the RPG-7V. China also produces a yellow illumination rocket of 600,000 candlepower for the Type 69 launcher with an illuminating radius of not less than 250 meters and an illumination time of more than 40 seconds.

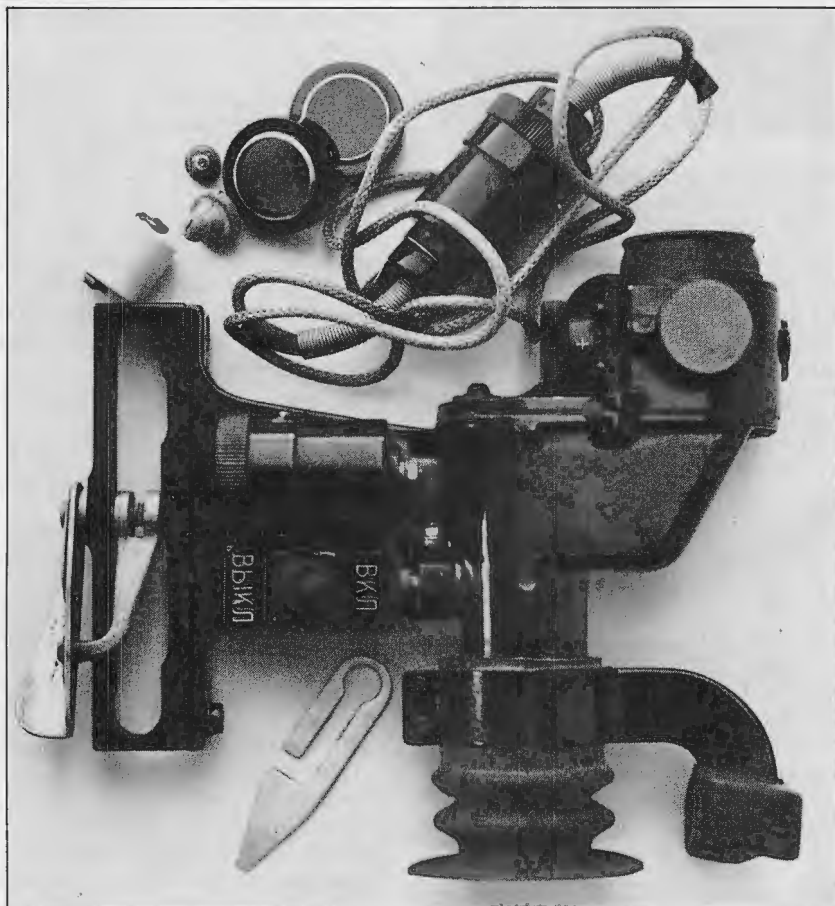


TOP: Type 69 dummy HEAT round for training purposes.

ABOVE: Type 69 dummy HEAT round with stabilizing fins removed and extended.



PRC HEAT rounds are packed four to a crate.



RPG-7V optical sight of Eastern European origin.

TYPE 69/RPG-7 OPTICAL SIGHT

The PGO-7V optical sight is a 2.5X prismatic telescope with a 13-degree field of view. In my opinion, it's inappropriate for the frenzy of combat.

There is a temperature compensator under objective lense. Turn it to "+" or "-", depending on whether the temperature is above or below freezing. The reticle pattern has a stadia scale for estimating ranges from 200 to 1,000 meters. But the procedures for its use are too complex.

To determine the range, you must first set the bottom of the target on the baseline, then note the single digit on the stepped scale that aligns with the top of the target. If the actual height of the target is more or less than the scale's given target height, you must take this difference (in tenths of a meter) and multiply it by a constant (four) and the digit on top of the target. This product is then added to, or subtracted from, the range indicated by the stadia scale. Imagine performing this mathematical feat while tracers are slowly arcing your way! You're not through, however, as you still have to estimate the amount of crosswind deflection.

Forget it. Leave the optical sight in the barracks and depend upon the open sights and your ability to estimate the range.

cover or concealment. It is the most stable position, especially when firing the PRC Type 69 launcher since it is equipped with a bipod. It's also the least comfortable, as the elbows must be placed on the ground and the body pivoted 45 degrees away from the launcher's axis to avoid the backblast. If you are firing an RPG-7V without a bipod, make certain the muzzle is at least 6 inches above the ground, otherwise the stabilizing fins will strike the ground after they extend and deflect the rocket. Exercise caution in arid regions also, as the backblast can set dry grass on fire.

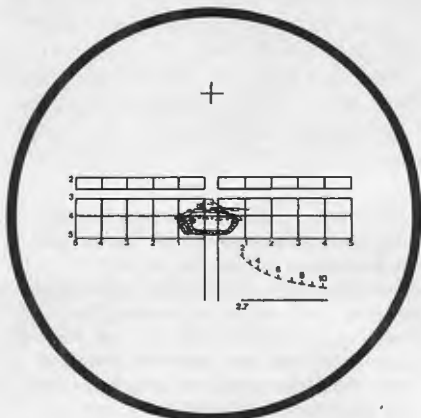
When there is sufficient cover, the kneeling position should be employed, as it is both stable and permits the gunner to move quickly after firing a round. When assuming this position, prop the left elbow against the thigh of the left leg and hold the right elbow as close to the body as possible to stabilize the weapon. When firing from the kneeling position over a wall or window ledge, there must again be at least 6 inches of clearance for the fins, to avoid deflection of the rocket. If you are firing from inside a building, you need at least 6 feet of clearance to the rear to prevent injury from the backblast.

Although this is a "fire and forget" weapon, the standing position subjects the gunner to the most exposure from enemy fire and is the least stable. Keep both elbows pressed close against the body and lean forward with the left foot. If you attempt to engage overhead aircraft from this position, make certain you're standing on at least a 6-foot boulder with the rear of the launcher projecting over the ledge. If not, the backblast will reflect off the ground in back of you and incinerate the lower half of your body.

Strong head winds will drop the RPG-7V/Type 69 rocket's point of impact, while tail winds will raise the point of impact. Compensate accordingly by aiming either higher or lower. However, crosswinds are even more detrimental to the RPG-7's performance. Crosswinds affect the stabilizer fins more than the nose so that the head of the rocket, and thus the flight pattern, are invariably turned into the wind.

Stay with the iron sights, as the optical sight is too complicated. Use the primary

RPG-7 reticle pattern of the RPG-7 optical sight, which can be used to determine the range of enemy targets.



Type 69 pistol grip and trigger group. Hammer is in cocked position, ready to strike firing pin mechanism directly above it.

front sight when temperatures are below freezing. Rotate the higher secondary sight into position when temperatures are above freezing. Dial the range into the rear sight. Adjust the Type 69's rear sight for crosswind deflection, if necessary, and hope you get a second shot for correction if there are high crosswinds.

In addition to a folding bipod and windage-adjustable rear sight, there are some other differences between the Soviet RPG-7V and the PRC Type 69. The Type 69's launcher-tube insulator is grooved and quite a bit more substantial. It provides noticeably improved protection from heat transmitted through the launcher tube by the backblast. There is also a folding carrying handle in back of the rear sight. A version called the Type 69-1 differs only by the addition of a rear, folding pistol grip attached to the bottom of the insulator by a

Continued on page 97

TYPE 69 40MM ROCKET LAUNCHER SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber, launcher: 40mm.

Caliber, munition: 85mm.

Munitions and method

of operation: Rocket-assisted, fin-stabilized, shaped-charge HEAT round with piezo-electric fuze. Muzzle velocity, 580 fps; velocity after booster ignition, 965 fps. Muzzle loaded and percussion fired. 600,000 candlepower illumination rocket also available.

Overall length, launcher: 37.4 inches.

Overall length, rocket with booster: . . . 36.4 inches.

Weight, launcher: 19.6 pounds.

Weight, munition: 5 pounds.

Range: 300 meters (moving target); 500 meters (stationary target).

Armor penetration: 330mm at normal; 110mm at 65 degrees angle of incidence.

Sights: Square post, hooded front sight for temperatures below freezing with secondary post for temperatures above freezing. Rear sight adjustable for both elevation and windage deflection.

Optical sight: 2.5X prismatic telescope with field of view of 13 degrees. Reticule has stadia scale for estimating ranges from 200 to 1,000 meters and range scale graduated from 200 to 500 meters with deflection scale. Temperature compensation knob and battery-operated reticle illumination.

Accessories: Spare parts and tool kit, night vision scope, canvas rocket/accessory pouches and subcaliber (7.62x39mm) training device.

Status: In service with People's Liberation Army, Afghan mujahideen and numerous other countries.

Manufacturer: PRC government arsenals.

Exporter: Poly Technologies, Inc., Dept. SOF, 5/F, Citic Building, 19, Jian Guo Men Wai Street, Beijing, People's Republic of China.

T&E summary: Improved version of Soviet RPG-7V with windage-adjustable rear sight, folding bipod, heavier launcher tube insulation and folding carrying handle. HEAT round has no self-destruct mechanism. Effective and battle-proven anti-armor weapon.

MISSION MOZAMBIQUE

SOF Escorts Missionaries Out of Combat Zone

Text & Photos by Bob Jordan

MOZAMBIQUE's still and tranquil night was shattered by the breaking of glass. As the steel buttplates of AK-47 rifles demolished the windows of the farmhouse, five missionaries inside, now rudely awakened, ran into the most protected room of the building and started praying. Locked inside the room, they listened to the un-



INSIDE SOLDIERING

Bob Jordan has seen combat in Vietnam and Rhodesia, served in South Africa and the Transkei, and has traveled to the People's Republic of China, Suriname and Central America with SOF. He has made a number of trips inside Mozambique and written on that subject for *Soldier of Fortune*. When not on the road, Bob bases out of the Washington, DC area, where he works as a security and political consultant.

LEFT: Bob Jordan first became familiar with Mozambique during his service with the Rhodesian Special Air Service, conducting both cross-border raids against terrorist base camps and training for fledgling RENAMO forces. He has made a number of trips back inside on behalf of SOF, the Mozambique Information Office and other interested parties.

known guerrillas approach and then try the door. Convinced that death was near, their prayers increased.

A sixth missionary, not trapped in the room, had meanwhile met the soldiers and discovered their identity. This discovery enabled him to call to his friends, reassuring them of at least temporary safety. Unlocking the door, they emerged into a darkness glittering with metallic reflections and redolent with the musky smell of fear and excitement. They marched into a moonlit field and, surrounded by the guerrillas, it seemed that rape and death, the traditional African manner of dealing with missionaries, were imminent.

Such was the beginning of a three-month captivity in the hands of the anti-communist Mozambican resistance fighters known as RENAMO (the name is derived from the initials of Mozambique National Resistance). The six missionaries and the 19-month-old daughter of one couple were now wrapped up in the little-known country that is Mozambique.

BELOW: One of the many plans devised by the author for spirited the missionaries out of Mozambique revolved around motorcycle transport. Unfortunately, the plan fell through when the bikes "vanished" back to Malawi.

While being marched through the moonlight by a group of armed men who have just taken you from your bed, it is difficult to draw a distinction between being "kidnapped" and being "removed for your own protection," particularly when the latter has not been explained. The missionaries thought, with good reason, that they were being kidnapped. RENAMO viewed the exercise as one which removed innocent bystanders from harm's way. It's all a matter of perspective, I suppose.

RENAMO did start trying to give the missionaries back almost immediately, but few things are simple in African politics. In many previous incidents where foreigners have been inadvertently involved in the Mozambique civil war, they have not fared well. In one instance a Portuguese priest was escorted to safety by the guerrillas and released only to be killed by government soldiers. RENAMO was blamed and propaganda generated to discredit the movement. RENAMO's policy now is to remove all foreigners from battle areas until they can be turned over to a neutral third party.

In the case of this group of people, RENAMO's president, Afonso Dhlakama, offered to call a cease-fire while the International Red Cross came in and extricated them. The Red Cross agreed, contingent upon the agreement of the Mozambican government. That government, quite content to have missionaries held "hostage" by the guerrillas, and reaping the propaganda benefits of the situation, refused to cooperate or to allow the Red Cross in.

Since one of the missionaries was an American woman, attempts were made to get the U.S. State Department involved, but State, repeating the totally erroneous line that RENAMO consists of unorganized bandits without communications or spokesmen, would not participate. In a challenge made to Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, Senator Jesse Helms, R-NC, said, "You could get her out in five minutes. . . . In two calls you could get that lady out. It's a matter of record, Mr. Secretary. And yet the State Department is sitting on its duff."

Eventually, Congressmen Tom Delay, Jack Fields and Dan Burton did make those calls, to the Mozambique Information Office (now called the Mozambique Research Center) in Washington, DC. That office, which has been providing information on and communications with RENAMO for over a year (contacts the State Department claimed could not be found), agreed to help recover the group of missionaries. Tom Schaaf, executive director of the MIO, knowing my past association with RENAMO, asked if I could help. I agreed to try.

We considered several plans for arranging the release of the group before I left

LEFT: Jordan's mission was to escort white missionaries, held by RENAMO forces until their safety could be guaranteed, out of Mozambique. Mission accomplished — complete with *Soldier of Fortune* T-shirts.



Washington. Knowing that plans which seem entirely feasible when laid out in an office can be completely irrelevant in the field, especially in Africa, we agreed on concepts rather than detail, with a great deal of flexibility. Our best-case scenario was to be a flight by light airplane straight into the base where the missionaries were located, load them aboard and fly out again. Although a pilot and plane were available for this mission configuration, there was a slight snag: RENAMO would not tell us where its guests were for fear that someone other than me would arrive with more than just one light plane. Our worst case was that I would make my own way into Mozambique, stumble around for as long as it took to find God's Children and then somehow get them out of the country. Promising Tom that I would not return without success, I left his office and went home to consider various other aspects of the mission.

One of those aspects was finance. A group of conservative political advisers had paid for my ticket to Africa, but there was the matter of significant local expenses that would have to be met. Knowing Robert K. Brown's burning desire to do good deeds, I phoned him and asked for a bit of help. As anticipated, he came through splendidly in the matter of expenses, for both myself and the missionaries when they finally reached a place where they could spend money. Brown also provided some new clothes for me to take in to the group, who presumably had worn out whatever they had been wearing when RENAMO took them away.

Then there was the matter of reimbursement for my time. While I am strongly motivated by the right sort of cause, there are still niggling bills, such as alimony payments, to be paid. The organization which sponsored the missionaries, Youth With a Mission, and I agreed upon a mutually satisfactory figure, but as of this writing I'm still waiting for the check. (The salient point here is quite simple: All you good-deed doers out there better insist on money up front.)

Another consideration was what to do if plan "A" didn't work. As any Africa veteran will testify, even the simplest plans have a way of coming unravelled when exposed to the vagaries of the bush and the inhabitants thereof. Used to and expecting that sort of thing, I had a few contingencies in mind. More important, though, I had a mental attitude conditioned by soldiering in Africa for 15 years. Flexibility. You would go mad without it.

In short order, preparations were completed and I was on my way.

By now more than two months had passed since the missionaries were taken. Inside various guerrilla camps in Mozambique, the missionaries were treated as well as the guerrillas could manage, but they were still suffering from the effects of a bad diet, rudimentary health facilities and apparent lack of interest on the part of the outside world. Several of them had contracted malaria. All had lost weight. A Zim-



After three months in the bush with RENAMO, after-action body maintenance was the order of the day for the missionaries. Support from Senator Jesse Helms and others, the Washington, DC-based Mozambique Information Office, and SOF's Robert K. Brown helped effect their safe return from Mozambique.

abwean newspaper had reported that the baby had died while in guerrilla hands. A singularly nasty type of insect similar to a chigger had infested all of them. Fortunately, three of the missionaries were also nurses, but without the comfort of strong religious faith, their morale would have been low indeed.

Arriving in South Africa, I contacted another missionary, an American whom I had met some time before. He had a plane and a pilot's license, and was willing to embark on the mission in full knowledge of the hazards of travel in a war zone. The two of us went on to Malawi, hoping that the government of Malawi would not hinder us in this humanitarian effort, and would possibly even help. (They didn't hinder, but then again they didn't help.)

Our main problem continued to be ignorance of the missionaries' location or condition. Waiting in Malawi for a few days trying to find out the answers to these fundamental questions, I finally decided that the only way was to go in and find a guerrilla base with a radio. My sky pilot agreed, and the two of us, along with another man from his church, made our way across the border into Mozambique during a night in early August. We managed to sneak three motorbikes across with us as well, although there was no little effort expended in getting them ferried across the river.

We immediately found a RENAMO base but there was no radio, so the next day we

drove for three hours and found another camp. This one did have a radio, but the only answer we got was an order to proceed deeper into the country to still another base where we would be told whatever we needed to know. Back onto the bikes for another grueling cross-country scramble of four hours duration before we reached the guard post of the provincial command base.

(All of you ex-infantry readers will recall frequent longings for transportation other than that provided by your feet, but I am not so sure that motorbikes are an acceptable substitute under Mozambican conditions. Bouncing over sundry bumps, falling over in mud and sand patches, dismounting to walk the bikes across single-log bridges, being slashed by sharp-edged elephant grass and other local flora is, to put it mildly, quite exhausting. Admittedly more ground can be covered, but a heavy toll is paid. Our problems were compounded because we had guides/escorts riding pillion, at least one of whom had never been on a bike before. His lack of balance and insistence on leaning the wrong way led to a fair number of spills.)

As it was by then too late in the day for any business transactions, we bedded down at the guard post and awaited developments. Having just spent more than seven hours scrambling across the African countryside, we really were happy to settle down in the hut shown to us. We were even happier when a couple of the troops arrived with sheets and blankets, which they carefully laid out on the dirt floor, and indicated that now we had beds.

Next morning, after a sound sleep, the base commander came out to greet us and invite us into his camp. For most of that day we exchanged radio messages with President Dhlakama, and finally found out just where the missionaries were. It was a long



“MASSACRES” IN MOZAMBIQUE

RENAMO most often gets media attention when the Mozambican government makes allegations that massacres or atrocities have been committed. These allegations are usually repeated verbatim from the Mozambique News Agency (AIM) without any attempt at verification. Often the allegations are repeated without even mentioning that they come from AIM, which is like repeating stories from TASS without informing readers of the source. AIM, after all, is the official news outlet for a communist government, in exactly the same way that TASS provides news for the Russian government.

In one of the most recent allegations of guerrilla massacres, the insurgents were accused of having killed some 400 civilians in a village called Homoine, in southern Mozambique. As this happened just before my trip, it was the basis of numerous conversations I had with various members of RENAMO. To a man they denied that such a thing could have happened, for a number of reasons.

RENAMO, waging a campaign in the usually successful Maoist pattern, realizes that the support of the population is the most important factor in its struggle. It will do absolutely nothing to alienate the people, and its harshest disciplinary measures are reserved for anyone who violates the rules regarding treatment of civilians. For this ideological reason a massacre carried out by RENAMO is out of the question.

Eyewitnesses report that hundreds of *uniformed* men were the ones who did the shooting. The rebels are so short of all types of equipment that the report of *uniformed* men in itself exonerates

Mozambique's communist FRELIMO government stated that nearly 400 Mozambicans were slaughtered in the village of Homoine by *uniformed* RENAMO insurgents. As author Jordan, and this photo, point out, uniforms are few and far between in RENAMO.

them. They don't have that many uniforms.

While RENAMO admits that sometimes civilians do get killed in cross fire (even Americans admit to that sad fact), the civilians in Mozambique are particularly adept at avoiding gunfire. At the first shot everyone in hearing runs for the bush and disappears in seconds. Even if RENAMO wanted to kill 400 civilians, it could not round them up and contain them for long enough to do the job. Hunting them out of bush hiding places and shooting them one at a time would take more men and more time than a guerrilla operation could spare.

It is also curious that the Mozambican government allowed no independent journalists into the so-called massacre site until more than a week after the event; the same restrictions applied to U.S. Embassy staffers. Even then, journalists could find no proof of a massacre, if it in fact happened at all. If it did happen, it's far more likely that government soldiers did it to try to deter the population from supporting the rebels. In that case, it was a dismal failure. Mozambicans know who is interested in their welfare and who is interested only in exploiting them.

— Bob Jordan

Editor's Note: A press release received by SOF from RENAMO's Washington, DC-based office also addresses the so-called massacre. It

reads, in part: "On the morning of July 18 [1987], a large disturbance took place in Homoine . . . RENAMO had no forces in the district at the time but sources, including monitoring of FRELIMO's radio communication and reports coming in from the field, indicate that a large group of local FRELIMO militia fired on the headquarters of FRELIMO regulars of the same locale. Following the uprising, the FRELIMO regulars, acting on orders from Maputo, retaliated in force against the militia and residents of Homoine."

William Pascoe, a policy analyst for Third World affairs at The Heritage Foundation, also had comments to make about the alleged massacre in a commentary for The Washington Times (30 July 1987). Pascoe writes: "There may be serious doubts that it happened as described. And the journalists who wrote the stories know it, because the stories themselves contain the elements of doubt."

Pascoe asks: "If the massacre really took place as Mozambican government sources described, why would the government not rush Western journalists and U.S. Embassy staffers to the scene, in order to get independent verification as soon as possible?" Why not, indeed? Was there really anything to report, or did FRELIMO require the time to cover up its own involvement?

He continues: "The timing of the incident — just as a major review of U.S. policy toward Mozambique was being undertaken within high Reagan administration councils — suggests something fishy." Mozambique's communist FRELIMO government is standing on shaky ground in all areas — political, economic and military — and it's no doubt aware that Washington's sympathies may be shifting toward RENAMO. Considering that major U.S. news outlets — AP, Time, The Washington Post, et al — are easy prey when it comes to disseminating communist-supplied disinformation, and that many ranking U.S. government officials rely heavily on these sources in the decision-making process, this "incident" may have been stage-managed for the benefit of the wavering West.

As with many such stories emanating from Africa, the facts will probably never surface. FRELIMO, for obvious reasons, wants its opposition, RENAMO, blamed for the incident at Homoine as well as any other tragedy, real or imagined. RENAMO, if it wants to continue swimming through the sea of the Mozambican people, must just as obviously avoid alienating the population as well as Western governments — a tough job considering that, for now, FRELIMO holds all the media cards.

way from our location — 180 miles or so. Even worse, though, were reports of enemy air activity in the area, which precluded any chance that we could fly down and get them. There went plan "A."

Discussions concerning plan "B" followed. That involved my going to meet the group and sending a message to the pilot when the situation cleared. "B" was unacceptable due to the uncertain time frame. At this stage the two people with me, and all three motorbikes, were dispatched on a short task as a favor to the guerrillas. Apparently they ended up back in Malawi, and I haven't seen them since. Plan "C," which would have been an extraction of the missionaries by motorbike, was now discarded.

That same night I was taken through a rainstorm nine miles over the mountains to yet another base. Why the move had to be in the rain at that exact time is anybody's guess, but I probably needed the exercise anyway. Radio discussions with RENAMO headquarters continued the next day.

While I was at this base, capable of holding at least a thousand troops, I was introduced to a group of women resistance fighters. In RENAMO, women serve as infantry as well as providing support functions such as nursing, clerical and communications. In this base, since most of the males were "at the front," camp security was largely the responsibility of the women's detachment. Many of the ladies were veterans of battles with Mozambican and Zimbabwean government forces, and two of them had scars from shrapnel wounds.

By now I was into Plan "D," which consisted of me going south while the missionaries moved north. This was agreed upon and initiated, and I left Central Base a few days later. "D" was modified a few times in the interim, but eventually I arrived in the camp where I was to meet up with the missionaries, now enroute northward. Quite a few more days passed with occasional news from the guerrillas about progress and difficulties, including another change of plan because of enemy activity, but that change required nothing from me but extra patience.

Then, about 0900 on 17 August, a guerrilla whom I had not seen before came into the camp. Dressed in full combat gear, dusty and obviously weary, his appearance was the first indication that the group must be close. A few minutes later the camp commander leaped on the camp Honda and sped off down the track to his guard post, soon returning with an elderly white woman and a small, blonde child. She didn't see me for a minute or so, but stared around dazedly. Then her eyes registered the presence of the first new white person she'd seen in more than three months, and she said "Praise the Lord." I was to hear quite a lot of that expression in the next few hours.

The camp commander, meanwhile, had ridden back out to his guard post and returned with another lady, and then another; and then soon the whole group was assem-



Life is tough in the bush for Mozambicans, especially so for RENAMO freedom fighters. Here stands the RENAMO "Hilton" deep inside Mozambique.

bled, mixing smiles, tears of relief and prayers at my news that civilization was almost in sight. The balance of that day was spent resting, eating, washing hair and using toothbrushes for the first time in three months, along with the general body maintenance that is necessary after a two-week, 12-hours-a-day (sometimes 16) march through the African bush.

By now I was on plan "F, as amended" and was hoping that not too many more changes would be needed. Not certain of Malawian reaction to the arrival of "undocumented aliens" in their midst, I had originally intended to smuggle the missionaries into South Africa. There they would at least be assured of a civilized reception without fear of being caught up in the political pressures of the Malawi/Mozambique relationship. But in any event, the State Department finally got involved and I turned the group over to a representative from that organization soon after our arrival in Malawi. More problems arose almost immediately.

State Department's view (despite its denials) was that the missionaries should all go to the capital of communist Mozambique for an "official release ceremony" (read "propaganda exercise"). A corollary to that was that the five white Zimbabweans and the child should be turned over to the care of their own embassy, while the American should remain in U.S. hands. Sounds reasonable, except when one considers that Zimbabwe has up to 16,000 combat troops occupying parts of Mozambique, helping their communist brothers fight RENAMO. A little more consideration, especially of Zimbabwe's appalling human rights record and complete disregard for the niceties of justice, law and order, could lead to the conclusion that, as these people had just

spent three months with the guerrillas, perhaps they might know something of military value which should be extracted immediately and by the most expeditious method. Such a conclusion should lead to caution when deciding what to do in a case like this one.

It looked like a return to Maputo was in the offing until a barrage of telephone-launched rockets from Senator Helms, Congressman Burton and numerous other interested parties landed in Malawi, while a similar barrage was being fired at Foggy Bottom. This pressure convinced the State Department to persuade the Mozambican government to moderate their demands, and in a few days the missionaries were finally told that they could go wherever they wanted to go.

Most of the group were Zimbabweans and wanted to go home. The American wanted to visit friends, see Victoria Falls and, more importantly, provide the protection of her U.S. citizenship to the rest of the group, so she also decided to go to Zimbabwe. On 21 August they left Malawi on the short flight to Harare. My job was over.

Epilogue

Waiting at Harare's airport when the missionaries landed were members of the international press corps, wanting photos and interviews. Also waiting at the airport, though, were members of Zimbabwe's (North Korean- or East German-trained) secret police. The police got to the missionaries before the press did. Without warrants, without explanation, without so much as a chance to wave hello, the missionaries were bundled into a waiting van and taken away. A press type who observed this incident said, "After being released from a RENAMO 'kidnapping,' they have just been kidnapped again — by the Zimbabwean CIO" [Central Intelligence Organization].

Without the intervention again of Senator Helms and other concerned parties, these people who had just come out of a war zone might still be in a Zimbabwean prison. ✕

I WAS THERE

Continued from page 19

nessed an American soldier intentionally violate either of those articles of faith.

Now several hundred yards out, a long, thin, shadowy line of exhausted men was making its way to an opening in the concertina. They were dispersed at intervals of 50 feet and their pace was slow. I could tell that these men were tired. Every line and sag of their bodies betrayed their exhaustion. On their backs and bodies they were carrying machine guns, ammunition boxes, mortar tubes and packs heavy with the burdens of the modern infantryman.

For several weeks these soldiers had been living and fighting in that jungle environment we called "the boonies." They'd fought hard, eaten little, washed rarely and rested even less. As grunts their nights had been violent with fear and filled with ambushes, snipers and the noises of the jungle. Their days had been sleepless and miserable as they humped through the jungle under a mixture of hot sun and driving monsoon.

Given their distance from the perimeter I gauged that they'd be safely in-

side within a few minutes. These men were fighting men but soon, at least for a while, their fighting would be over. On Christmas Eve, after weeks in the field, they were finally coming in for several days of peace.

After a few moments I stretched, finished my scotch and, with my M16 slung over my shoulder, walked down toward the perimeter wire. On my way, I noticed a snowman that someone had erected out of sandbags. It had been sprayed white and had a steel helmet on its head and sergeant stripes on its arms. Around its neck was a large sign that read "Frosty the Pointman." I laughed to myself and moved on.

As I approached the guard tower I could hear a radio playing: "This is AFVN on Christmas Eve, with all of the in-country and world news coming up on the hour, read to you by Army Specialist Gary Warin. . . . But now, a word from our sponsors. . . . Let's talk about U.S. Savings Bonds . . . and now here's Perry Como singing 'O Holy Night' . . . and the beat goes on."

I'm not sure whether it was the scotch or the familiar sounds of Christmas carols that were coming from the radio, but I felt warmer inside. I knew that being here this year would now enable me to appreciate all my future Christmases so much more, starting

next year when I would be home. Most of all I was thankful that I was still alive while so many were not.

My thoughts were interrupted as the first troops started coming in through the wire. I immediately recognized a number of faces. It was 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st of the 12th Infantry. These were the same soldiers who'd accompanied our team on at least four missions since September. They were crack troops and, after their first mission with us, I repeatedly attempted to procure them for future missions. They, in turn, were always more than willing to go out with us because, while our missions were clandestine, they were short and swift, as opposed to their month-long bivouacs in the field.

I was astounded when I saw them because I didn't know any of them were still alive. Only three days before I'd heard that the entire platoon had been blown away on Hill 527. For several weeks an NVA heavy weapons company on top of that hill had wreaked havoc on American troops in the area. After heavy American casualties, it was this platoon that finally dislodged the enemy. But instead of being dead or wounded, here they were.

After all they'd been through they



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did not complain or slouch. It was only the terrible deliberation of each step that spelled out their appalling tiredness. Their faces were black with dirt and unshaven. They were all such young men, but you couldn't tell it by looking at them. The dirt, the whiskers and the residue of battle made them appear so much older than their actual years. These men had stared death in the face — and yet in their eyes there was no hatred, no bitterness, no depression or despair. There was just the simple expression of being here and of doing their duty.

Before the line of soldiers moved on, one of them stopped momentarily to adjust his binding rucksack. He was a soldier from Chicago named Alvarez and, as he slid his pack from one side to the other, I noticed a crimson patch that saturated a jagged tear in his jungle fatigues. Without so much as a whimper or moan he tightened his rucksack down over the shrapnel wound on his back and marched off in my direction. Seeing me standing there, he glanced up and said, "Hey buddy, got a cigarette?" I reached into my fatigue jacket and pulled out a fresh pack of Winstons and tossed it to him. "Thanks, buddy," was all he said.

About 10 paces down the road he stopped, hesitated for a moment and, in a gesture of recognition, turned

around. A big smile erased the exhaustion from his face and, with a wave and a grin, he yelled, "Hey Davis, is that you?" Before I could respond, he flashed me the peace symbol and hollered, "Merry Christmas, amigo."

"Merry Christmas," was all I could say before he and his companions disappeared into the distance.

While the people back home could never understand our world, I wished they could have seen these grunts just once, just for an instant. One glance at these soldiers would teach them more about compassion, about sacrifice and about the meaning of good will toward men than a decade of Christmas sermons.

Even though I was 10,000 miles away from my family I was no longer depressed. These men were my friends and would forever be a part of my memory. As I walked back into the darkness I could still hear Christmas carols coming from the radio, and my shoulder was no longer hurting.

Tonight was a night I would never forget. Every Christmas hereafter I would recall that brilliant flash in the jungle sky and the images of that long, thin line of American soldiers. I knew that every Christmas hereafter I would recall these men — these men who lived times that others said were best forgotten; these men who went where

others feared to tread. These American soldiers who spent Christmas Eve in the jungles of Vietnam because their country asked them to.

James Martin Davis served in Vietnam as Military Intelligence team leader with the 4th Infantry Division from 1969-70. He currently works as an attorney in Omaha, Nebraska.

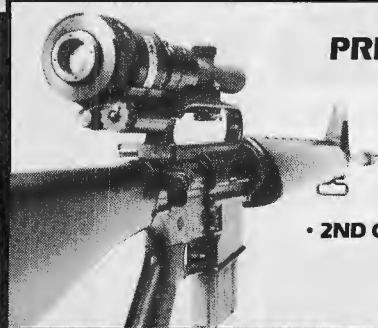
FULL AUTO

Continued from page 16

Because of its high cyclic rate, gunners must exercise strict fire discipline. If three- to four-shot bursts are fired, the hit potential is almost equivalent to machine guns with slower rates of fire.

As there is no forearm and the bipod folds back even when the legs are extended so that it cannot be used as a front brace, it is difficult to fire the MG 42 from any position other than the prone. As the prone position is the most appropriate for the majority of combat scenarios, this is of little consequence.

The 1,000-year Reich lasted only 13 years, but the MG 42 lives on to this day. In its original caliber, 7.92x57mm, it remains the standard infantry machine gun of Yugoslavia,



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where it is known as the SARAC M53. It was used by the French army until the AA52 was adopted. Most of the French MG 42s were phosphate re-finished. Converted to caliber 7.62x51mm NATO, the MG 42 has been manufactured and/or adopted by Austria (MG 42/59), West Germany (MG1/3 series), Spain, Italy, Portugal, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Denmark, Norway, Chile and the Sudan.

It possesses all the proper characteristics, both good and bad, of a modern General Purpose Machine Gun. While not quite up to the standards set by the FN MAG 58, the MG 42 remains vastly superior to the M60. ✕

BLUEPRINT FOR VICTORY

Continued from page 37

Was the amphibious strike at Vinh an impractical figment of the author's imagination, perhaps the result of a limited analysis of the situation, or was it a viable option? The answer must take into account both the military and political situation at the time.

Two distinguished experts addressed the former issue. Sir Robert Thompson, British counterinsurgency expert and White House consultant about Vietnam, stated, "Dis-

rupting the enemy's rear base while securing one's own is far more important in achieving victory and breaking the enemy's will to resist than . . . defeating the enemy's main forces in the field. In insurgency and counterinsurgency it is primary." In an interview quoted in *Armed Forces Journal International* (November 1980), General Robert H. Barrow, then commandant of the Marine Corps, stated, "Look at Inchon, the classical turning movement. Most wars are won by getting on the other fellow's lines of communication. MacArthur referred to [Inchon] as his strategic masterpiece. Also one could speculate on what the results would have been had we landed in North Vietnam, around Vinh, and come south in a sort of hammer/anvil action. I'm not suggesting it would have ended the war, but rather that we failed to exploit the usefulness of our amphibious capability." The most knowledgeable experts were the North Vietnamese themselves; in mid-1972 their diplomatic personnel queried news correspondents about U.S./South Vietnamese intentions to invade them.

As to amphibious capabilities, formidable U.S. Marine forces and naval support were available to Commander, Task Force 76 (the Seventh Fleet Amphibious Force) by early May 1972, according to Major General E.J. Miller and Rear Admiral W.D. Toole, Jr., USN, the respective commanders.

They wrote in 1974: "The obvious objective was to project this available seapower

ashore and strike the enemy behind the lines, inasmuch as the coastline was lightly defended and the enemy was well extended. The tactical advantage of such operations was clear, but political constraints precluded the reintroduction of U.S. Marine Corps troops into South Viet Nam in a land warfare role." Instead, USMC helicopters and amphibious tractors lifted up to three battalions of Vietnamese Marines during each of four limited strikes in Quang Tri between 13 May and 22 July.

Obviously, the limited and localized benefits of a turning movement behind NVA forces in northern I Corps were not deemed commensurate with political consequences of reintroducing U.S. troops. But, suppose the reintroduction could have decisively altered the war and forced its favorable conclusion; would the high stakes not have justified overriding the political constraints?

This leaves the question of political feasibility, especially the reintroduction of U.S. troops. Use of the 3rd Marine Division on Okinawa for the amphibious assault was deemed essential by me (and later confirmed by USMC advisers) because of the rapid replacement of losses in the Vietnamese Marine Division with personnel untrained in amphibious techniques. From the news media I had learned that unprecedented use of heavy weapons and the blatant invasion by the NVA had temporarily but sharply curtailed anti-Vietnam criticism worldwide. I don't think the outcry over the



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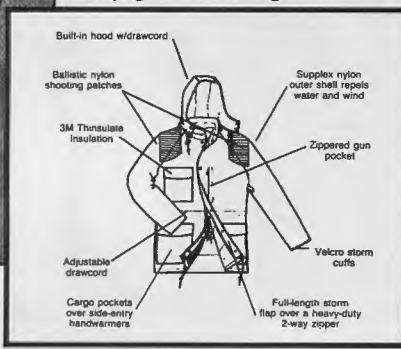
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3rd Marine Division invading NVN in mid-1972 would have exceeded that following the alleged "carpet bombing" of Hanoi by B-52s in December 1972, which the administration weathered.

In 1982, before his death, I queried Ambassador Bunker concerning his memory of the particular briefing in which I advocated execution of the amphibious option at Vinh. He graciously replied with a telephone call and a letter, but unfortunately, his memory and records yielded no further details. He did state his "belief that Washington would have found it impossible politically to reintroduce American forces into Vietnam and that General Abrams felt incapable of diverting any ARVN troops from the job at hand of turning back the North Vietnamese offensive." He also wrote: "I think you are right in describing the option at Vinh as a 'missed opportunity.'" Bunker related this to his own proposal made in June 1967 to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

At the time, Ambassador Bunker, having already had his earlier proposal rejected, must have felt a natural reluctance (as almost anyone in his position surely would have) to suggest the bold proposal of a lone and junior civilian analyst to a four-star general and his large military staff who were preoccupied with the desperate battles for South Vietnam. This explains why my proposal probably "died" in the embassy conference room and why I didn't get any further with it among my acquaintances at MACV J-2 either (MACV staff was divided into five groups, J-1 through 5. The second group, J-2, dealt with intelligence.), but not why it apparently didn't occur to someone else with sufficient "horsepower" to have it receive serious consideration at MACV, the Pentagon and the White House.

Ultimately, the decision to invade NVN would have to have come from Washington. Dr. Kissinger's 1979 memoirs, *White House Years*, provide strong clues to the national decision-making process in mid-1972. On page 1,178 he states that, while a three-day B-52 strike on Hanoi and Haiphong was contemplated in early April 1972, he favored the mining blockade of NVN, originally proposed by Kissinger's staff in 1969. He also states that the B-52 strike concept "had to contend with the reluctance of General Abrams, who, even though his air forces had been augmented far above his recommendations, still insisted that he needed all his assets for the crucial battle in South Vietnam."

I believe they overestimated the NVA; failed to see NVN's vulnerability; and lacked the rare strategic insight, appreciation for amphibious operations and daring shown by General MacArthur at Inchon, despite this past example.

Kissinger and George C. Carver, CIA expert on Vietnam, recognized that the mining would only be effective until overland routes through China could be established. On 6 May, Kissinger sent a backchannel message to Ambassador Bunker: "To put it

in the bluntest terms, we are not interested in half-measures; we want to strike in a fashion that maximizes their difficulties. . . . There should be no question in either your or General Abrams' mind that we want to devote the necessary assets" (subsequently specifying air power).

Describing our relations with Peking in mid-May, after the bombing and mining had started, Kissinger asserts: "(Chinese) U.N. Ambassador Huang Hua repeated the official line that China stood behind its friends. But he did not demur when I pointed out that we had warned Peking half a dozen times of our determination to react strongly if Hanoi sought to impose a military solution. Nor did our actions in Vietnam prevent Huang Hua from encouraging a visit by me to Peking in June. *We had not only achieved a free hand in Vietnam; we would be able to continue at the same time . . . our foreign policy*" vis-a-vis China and the Soviet Union.

Speaking further about NVN and the American domestic situation, Kissinger states: "Our twin summits had undoubtedly engendered a sense of isolation in the North. We were seeing their effects on the morale of the North Vietnamese leadership, population and armed forces. And they had greatly strengthened Nixon's domestic position, thus removing Hanoi's key weapon of leverage on us." I was not privy to Dr. Kissinger's insights in 1972, of course, but I had read intelligence reports about NVN's leaders withholding information about the Moscow and Peking summits from their people (an information gap quickly filled by U.S. and South Vietnamese propaganda radio broadcasts) and had gathered as much about U.S. domestic policies (which Kissinger describes as "Hanoi's key weapon") from the press.

The ultimate decision to exercise the Vinh amphibious option would have been President Nixon's. Of his attitudes at this time, Dr. Kissinger says: "As I have repeatedly shown, Nixon was exceedingly suspicious of negotiations in general (unless he had a nearly ironclad guarantee of success) and especially with the North Vietnamese. He doubted that anything would ever come of them; as his election prospects improved, he saw no reason to pursue them . . . (later) Nixon saw no possibility of progress (in the peace talks) until after the election and probably did not even desire it. *Even then, he preferred escalation before sitting down to negotiate.*"

But, what escalation? The bombing and mining cards already had been played. Unless they were tragically overconfident in U.S. firepower and technical superiority alone to bring an end to the war, the president and his top security adviser apparently would have seriously considered a limited operation, such as a combined U.S.-South Vietnamese amphibious assault on Vinh. The bombing, mining and military defeats in the South might be compared to a series of left jabs that "set up" a boxing opponent, but, sadly, the amphibious "right upper-

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cut" against Vinh was never launched.

The failure to recognize and exploit this amphibious opportunity and to demonstrate clear American determination by necessary commitment of U.S. ground troops was a costly one for the peoples of Southeast Asia, for the United States and ultimately for the Free World. Although no one can be certain that the outcome would have been otherwise, I believe that the amphibious option at Vinh in mid-1972 offered the United States a reasonably good chance of avoiding the 1975 debacle. It's too late for recriminations now; Indochina is lost. But lessons can still be learned.

Questions also emerge. If the amphibious opportunity at Vinh was apparent to a mere captain-turned-civilian-analyst in Saigon, what were the generals and admirals, the ambitious staff officers and intelligence "experts" in Washington thinking about? I have seen no indication that any of them ever saw the Vinh opportunity during May through June 1972 when NVN was most vulnerable. Are our intelligence and operational bureaucracies any more coordinated today, or are they perhaps too immersed in planning "shoestring" covert operations and quantifying data "trees" to see the "forest" of their enemy's strategic vulnerability?

Epilogue

In response to my initial publication, several Marines wrote letters in the March '83 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette*, con-

firming Navy-Marine Corps capabilities against Vinh. Lieutenant Colonel Gerald P. Averill, USMC (Ret.) wrote that contingency plans for Task Force 79 on Okinawa in the early 1960s called for a landing by multiple Marine divisions at Vinh, intended to link up with elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps coming into NVN from the Mu Gia Pass. These plans had been approved up to Joint Chiefs of Staff level.

Lieutenant Colonel V.D. Stauch, Jr., USMC (Ret.) was a logistics/engineer instructor at the Staff Planning School at Landing Force Training Command, Pacific in 1969. He was one of several Marine and Army instructors who developed an amphibious operations instructional vehicle, "Tiger Claw," which used photos and terrain features of the Vinh area for planning brigade, regimental and battalion landing team operations. As early as 1967-68, Vinh appeared to be the critical staging area for NVA forces and logistics, and the instructors wondered why Vinh hadn't been assaulted even earlier.

An amphibious operation at Vinh also was the graduation staff problem at the USMC Command & Staff College. An earlier problem — an amphibious operation at Da Nang — was executed in 1965!

Major C.D. Melson was assistant operations officer for 1st Bn, 9th Marines, a part of the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade aboard the USS *Denver* during May 1972, when he says there were 5,000 Marines, 50

helicopters and 16 amphibious ships available to support Vietnamese Marines. While sorting incoming message traffic, he received the battalion operations order which assigned objectives of a village and ferry crossings south of Vinh. His unit, as part of a battalion- to regimental-sized force, was to land and "seize, occupy and defend" a portion of the NVN coast. Maps, aerial photos and orders were issued down to company level, but the plans were never carried out. In his opinion, "U.S. Marines were ready, willing and able to conduct an amphibious operation at Vinh if called upon to do so, and such an operation had been considered at least at some high headquarters."

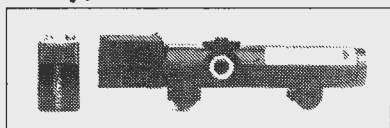
Lieutenant Colonel Stauch's conclusion is especially poignant. "On reflection, I suspect we all know men whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Memorial who, knowing the facts and risks, would also wonder why we didn't take Vinh." ✖

BURMA

Continued from page 51

together with numerous RPG rounds and about 20 packs of cheroots. I asked Maj. Johnny if I could go along with them and get a little closer look at the action. He gave me a dumbfounded look, then suggested that tomorrow might be better, when the situa-

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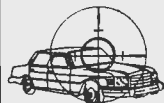
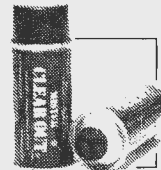
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tion was more settled.

In the meantime, reinforcements were being sent for from Karen bases nearby at Mah Pokay and Mae Salit, so I figured what the hell, I can wait. There seemed little more to do than try to get some sleep. I was shown a hooch and bunked down for the night.

Gunfire woke me at 0600 hours, though it had resumed before dawn. I found Maj. Johnny at his usual post and learned that his men were still trying unsuccessfully to dislodge the Burmese from two small pockets of resistance. Of the original 40 or so defenders they estimated that there were now 10 to 12 on their right flank and only three or four on the left, but these latter were securely dug in behind a natural rock formation, making it all but impossible to flush them out.

An estimated 70 Burmese reinforcements were already pressing from another front. Although the Karen had learned through a radio intercept that they had killed the leader, Captain Win Kycing, it was now touch and go as to the success of the mission.

An 82mm Chinese-made recoilless rifle was brought into action to try to soften up the Burmese while Karen reinforcements were marshaled. The heavy guns continued their dueling and we continued to take refuge in the trenches. A too-close-for-comfort incoming round sent fragments clipping the lip of the trench as I bobbed up to get photos of the crouching soldiers. An unnecessary reminder of the fleeting nature of life.

A 60mm mortar was also in action as I jogged to the command bunker for breakfast, this time scoring salt and fish-paste and a dash of cooking oil along with my rice. Raw tobacco and papers were offered for a smoke. Most Karen use a variety of dried leaf to roll their cigarettes. What I held appeared to be an official typescript paper from brigade HQ, complete with stamps. Well, the tobacco burned just the same for it.

By 1030 hours there was no longer any barrage, just sporadic fire, indicating an end of the operation. As far as I could tell, the result of this Karen operation on Duck Mountain was far from conclusive. Then I was informed that the arrival of numerous Burmese reinforcements had made it necessary for the Karen to withdraw from the mountain. At this moment I spotted a rather dejected-looking Maj. Johnny coming up the trench line.

This wasn't the time for a postmortem. By 1215 hours we were heading back to 7th Brigade HQ with one badly wounded attacker in the jeep with us. He had suffered severe burns from a rifle-launched grenade. Later would follow the pile of captured weapons and ammo that I saw: one 3-inch mortar, an 82mm mortar base-plate, several rifles and about 50 assorted rounds of 75mm recoilless and 82mm mortar ammo.

We dropped the wounded man at the 7th Brigade hospital and pulled up at HQ just as reinforcements from Mah Pokay arrived, some 50-odd soldiers ready and equipped

for action. "The planning is not too good," said one. "Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose," said another. I pondered these words for the rest of the day.

It wasn't until the following day that I was able to get brigade commander Col. Hte Maung's assessment of the op. In contrast to others who implied that lack of reinforcements was to blame for the withdrawal, the colonel calmly stated, "Our goal was not to occupy this position, but to test the enemy . . . his morale, his condition and his strength."

If that were indeed the case, the operation was an expensive probe. Apart from the ammo expended, the Karen suffered two killed and 11 wounded; the Burmese, according to radio intercepts, had the same number dead and 21 wounded.













"Next time," the colonel continued, "we will occupy this position and the rest of the hills."

I wished the colonel and the men of 7th Brigade luck and promised that I'd take up the invitation to return again, hopefully on the turning tide of success. Transport was laid on for me to travel north to a river landing from where I hoped to hitch a ride up to Karen GHQ at Marniplaw.

This drive took several hours and we passed more refugee camps on the Thai side before stopping at the Karen camp of Mae Tha Ree on the Moei River. This enclave,

Continued on page 96

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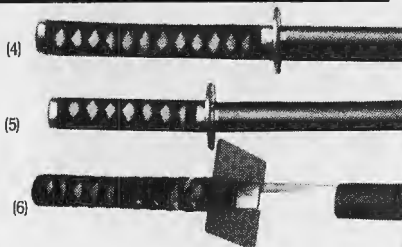
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like Mae La, is still holding out against the persistent Burmese drive to throttle the Karen.

Not so fortunate was Mae Tha Wa, which we passed later on. High up on a mountain-top, Burmese garrisons now occupy what was formerly another Karen outpost. After the fall of Mae Tha Wa (the loss of which is more of a nuisance than a catastrophe, since Karen boat travel on this section of the Moei has had to be suspended), the Burmese boasted: "Within a few days we will finish the Karen!" That was in 1984. The Karen have so far stood firm and are still holding their ground.

Leaving the main road we slugged through the jungle for 90 minutes on a track passable only in the dry season, to emerge at Klaw Tay Lu on the river. Here my escort left me with the promise that a boat would be along soon. I hoped so. This was no village, just an eating stall and lumberyard.

I was in luck. A longboat pulled up and I joined two Karen women on a pleasant 40-minute cruise along the jungle-banked waterway of the Moei until I was dropped at Marniplaw. Though I wasn't expected (this was my first visit to GHQ), I was nonetheless welcomed ashore and ushered to the luxurious guest house.

Strategically located behind an arc of mountain range near where the Moei joins the Salween River, Marniplaw is the principal bastion of Karen resistance in the fight for freedom against the Burmese. This is the Pentagon of free Karenland, known here as Kawthoolei, and office of General Bo Mya, president of the political wing of the KNLA, the Karen National Union (KNU).

General Bo Mya is a veteran soldier, a grunt from way back, before "the Nam" was invented. During World War II he served as a guerrilla with Force 136, the British-inspired anti-Japanese insurgents responsible for untold havoc behind enemy lines.

After the war and before the independence of Burma he served in the Union Military Police. As with the other ethnic minorities of Burma after independence, the Karen bridled under the domination of the lowland Burmese, and began their revolution in January 1949, which Bo Mya joined with the rank of company commander in the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO).

Today Bo Mya heads the revamped Karen armed forces, which consist of the combat troops of the KNLA and the village police units of the KNDO — claimed to total anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 men, although this is probably an inflated figure.

Nevertheless, Bo Mya stands tall and defiant. Munching on betel nut, the Karen leader dismissed the severity of the ongoing Burmese offensives, observing that if Western countries came to their aid they would be able to drive the Burmese back to Rangoon.

"Ne Win has the support of the great nations, and that has prolonged his rule over

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Burma," said Bo Mya. "If he stood alone against us, or if aid was equally given to us as well as the Burmese, then Ne Win would be defeated."

Of course the Karen are not standing alone against the Burmese. Together with nine other ethnic minorities they have formed an umbrella organization called the National Democratic Front (NDF), which aims to unify their political aspirations as well as coordinate their military operations.

The KNU, however, still rankles at the military alliance the NDF signed in March 1986 with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), citing the communists' divergent political aims and involvement in the narcotics trade as obstacles to partnership. This difference of opinion was in part responsible for Bo Mya's replacement as NDF chairman at the 2nd Congress of the NDF held at Marniplaw in May/June 1987.

But the struggle goes on. In the comfortable guest house with beds and mosquito nets and meals laid on by a Rangoon-trained chef, it can be hard to visualize the hardships of the men in the field unless you've been there yourself.

At 1730 hours each day — Burma Standard Time — a bugler sounds the Last Post as the Karen flag is lowered for the day, then carried under armed escort in a dignified march to the GHQ offices.

The Karen revolution is made of both the ritual and the substance, a mixture of past

glories, some of which are anachronistically reminiscent of the British colonial rule, and present-day hardships. It has been in progress for nearly 40 years and, while final victory isn't yet just around the corner, neither is defeat.

As I departed for the Thai trading village of Mae Sam Lep on the Salween River, the Karen flag was flying at the masthead again. I waved a salute. My boat was named "River of No Return," and I prayed that they were as wrong with the sentiment as they were with the spelling, and we cast off on the final leg homeward. ✕

PRC'S TANK KILLER

Continued from page 81

wing nut.

A spare parts and tool kit is provided with each Type 69 launcher. Disassembly procedures at the operator's level are quite simple. Using a brass or rubber mallet, tap out the pistol grip's front retaining pin. Swing the pistol grip down to the rear to separate it from the launcher tube. With the open-end wrench on the combo tool, remove the firing pin cap by turning it counterclockwise, then drop out the firing pin, return spring and guide. No further disassembly should be attempted. A shotgun-type rod with expandable jag tip, carried in the assistant

gunner's bag, should be used to clean and lubricate the launcher tube's smooth bore. Clean the hammer mechanism and remove all cardboard residue left from the booster. Reassemble in the reverse order.

Countermeasures

What if someone points an RPG-7V or Type 69 in your direction? Israeli armored vehicles can purportedly detonate the PG-7 warhead in flight by electronic means. Some have suggested protection by sandbags. It's not likely you'll be near an Israeli AFV when a PG-7 rocket is heading your way, and at least six layers of sandbags are required to stop the rocket. To date, the only practical countermeasure is the use of a chain-link fence set up 12 feet from an armored vehicle and somewhat further if you're protecting a bunker or building.

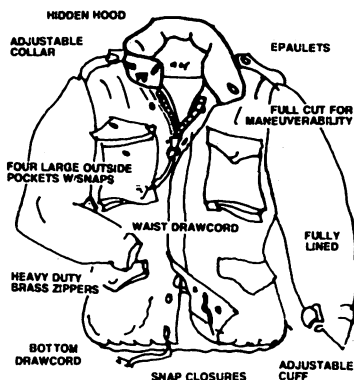
When the PG-7 rocket impacts on the chain-link mesh, any one of the following will occur. At least 50 percent of the time, the wire mesh will short-circuit the piezoelectric fuze and the warhead will fail to detonate. If the rocket does detonate, the gas jet dissipates into the air and you must contend with the copper slug only. If the rocket manages to penetrate the chain-link, the stabilizing fins will be ripped off and the warhead will usually veer off on an erratic flight path. Finally, the Soviet HEAT round's self-destruct mechanism might be triggered and the rocket will flop harmlessly about after making a popping sound. Re-

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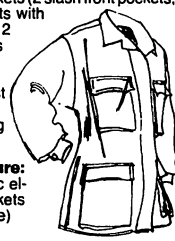
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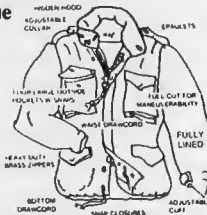
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member, for full effect the shaped-charge PG-7 warhead must make hard contact. Rounds impacting into soft ground are no more effective than the explosion of an aluminum beer can.

Chain-link fence material is not always available, cannot be issued with every vehicle and is useless when a vehicle is on the move. It is difficult to encircle large buildings and bunkers with mesh. Expect to see the RPG-7V and Type 69 for many more years in many more wars. With its modest improvements, PRC's Type 69 is the preferred version of an effective, battle-proven, man-portable antitank weapon. ✕

9TH INFANTRY DIV.

Continued from page 71

Now, how many HMMWVs can a Blackhawk helicopter lift? Answer: one, if you strip the vehicle down to the bare minimum. And how many HMMWVs are there in a light attack squad? Answer: two. Why two? Because that's how many dune buggies a Blackhawk helicopter can lift. See, it makes perfect sense.

By the mid-1980s the high technology light division had become the 9th Infantry Division (Motorized). Basic fighting units of the division are the light attack battalions and the combined arms battalions, which include both assault gun companies and motorized infantry companies. The motorized infantry is mounted in — you guessed it — the HMMWV.

The mixture of line companies in the combined arms battalions varies. Heavy combined arms battalions have two assault gun companies and one motorized infantry company, while light combined arms battalions have one assault gun company and two motorized infantry companies.

The battalion's combat support company has an anti-armor platoon (you got it — HMMWVs and TOWs), a scout platoon (HMMWVs and motorcycles) and a heavy mortar platoon. Headquarters and headquarters company has the usual maintenance, communications, medical and support platoons.

The light attack battalion is essentially the same as the combined arms battalion, except it has light attack companies instead of assault guns and motorized infantry.

The problem that faces both types of battalions, light attack and combined arms, is their vulnerability to Soviet tanks and artillery. The HMMWV can move faster than a tank, but only on roads. Cross country, tracked vehicles have at least equal mobility. This means that the motorized units cannot count on a mobility advantage over their heavier opponents.

In terms of armor protection, the HMMWV has about as much as any other pickup truck. Although there are some armor kits for these vehicles, they don't amount to much; they certainly won't stop rifle bullets, let alone 125mm main gun

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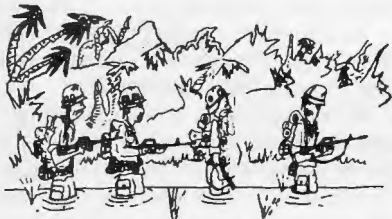
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rounds.

Another problem is that the TOW cannot be fired on the move; the vehicle has to go into a covered firing position, launch the missile and track the target until the missile gets there — which can be as much as 28 seconds later. In the meantime, the target (and all his friends) can shoot back. Troops serving with the motorized division estimate that they cannot fire more than two rounds from any position before the enemy zeros in on them.

With all these problems, the 9th Infantry Division has some strong points. First of all, it has good men. Faced with the almost impossible task of making such a combination of equipment work, and with little support from the rest of the Army, the men of the 9th have stressed the basics of soldiering. In the use of camouflage, cover, security and other measures, they're hard to beat.

They have also taken some tactics that are only vague concepts in the rest of the Army and hammered them out on the ground. One of these is the concept of the Engagement Area (EA). In essence, an EA is a large-scale ambush. The 9th Infantry Division has developed this to a fine art.

The engagement area, as practiced by the 9th Infantry Division, is a meticulous process. The tentative engagement area is selected by a process of thorough terrain analysis and application of all available intelligence. Motorized units move to "hide" positions by infiltration, and the engagement area is reconnoitered. Positions are selected for each TOW vehicle, and the positions are staked — one stake marking the front bumper and one for the center of the left front wheel. This ensures that the vehicles can rapidly pull into firing position in darkness or under cover of smoke and be precisely in position, with full coverage of the assigned sector of fire.

Target reference points are selected within the engagement area and made known to every gunner. The engagement area is checked for dead space and escape routes. Aircraft, helicopter gunships and artillery — especially cannon-launched guided projectiles (CLGP) such as Copperheads — are included in the planning to supplement and enhance effects of the TOWs.

As the enemy approaches, friendly scouts — aided by other intelligence assets, such as recon and spotting aircraft — keep him under surveillance. As he enters the seemingly empty engagement area, motorized units move from hide positions to firing positions. But during these two minutes, motorized units can expect to *kill their weight*.

Before the enemy realizes what has happened, our motorized troops are gone.

Then the process is repeated. Two or more battalions may be "stacked" along the enemy's probable route of advance, and they may leap-frog back, alternating engagement areas, until the enemy is destroyed.

In training, these tactics work well — but at a cost. Thin-skinned HMMWVs aren't

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combat vehicles, and casualties are high even when everything works perfectly. In actual combat, they would undoubtedly be just as high. The 9th Infantry Division has proved that their ideas and tactics are sound — but the equipment they have isn't really up to the job. They deserve something better than cast-offs and compromises.

We do need a force with the portability of light forces and the punch of heavy forces, but we can't change the realities of battle. If we intend to send the 9th Infantry Division into combat, it should go with equipment that can do the job and survive. We need a real wheeled armored personnel carrier and a real tracked assault gun — one with an honest-to-God gun — and it's time the Army stopped going around in circles and produced them. With equipment like that, the boys in the 9th Infantry Division would be real winners. ✕

SALVO MGs

Continued from page 55

I had never fired one with the heavy mount and could not believe how accurate it was. At 25 yards I put 50 rounds in a 1-inch hole. Soon everyone wanted to fire it.

It didn't take us long to go through five cans of ammo (with no malfunctions, I might add). I put my hand on the jacket and found it warm, but not hot. I unscrewed the front plug and tipped the gun up to drain out the water. It was as warm as a good cup of coffee.

Back in our room we stripped it and gave it a good bath. I'd fallen in love.

We set the Browning up in our living room and it soon became quite a conversation piece. Next day I returned to the armory and picked up five more cans of ammo. I asked Col. Kimball if it would be OK to keep the Browning. If the base were ever attacked it would come in handy. He said he didn't care since I already had the MG checked out of the armory.

That evening Col. Kimball suggested using the Browning for base defense. We kicked the thought around for awhile and realized it wouldn't be a bad idea to employ the Madsens as well. There was plenty of ammo and, instead of letting them sit and age, we might as well put them to good use.

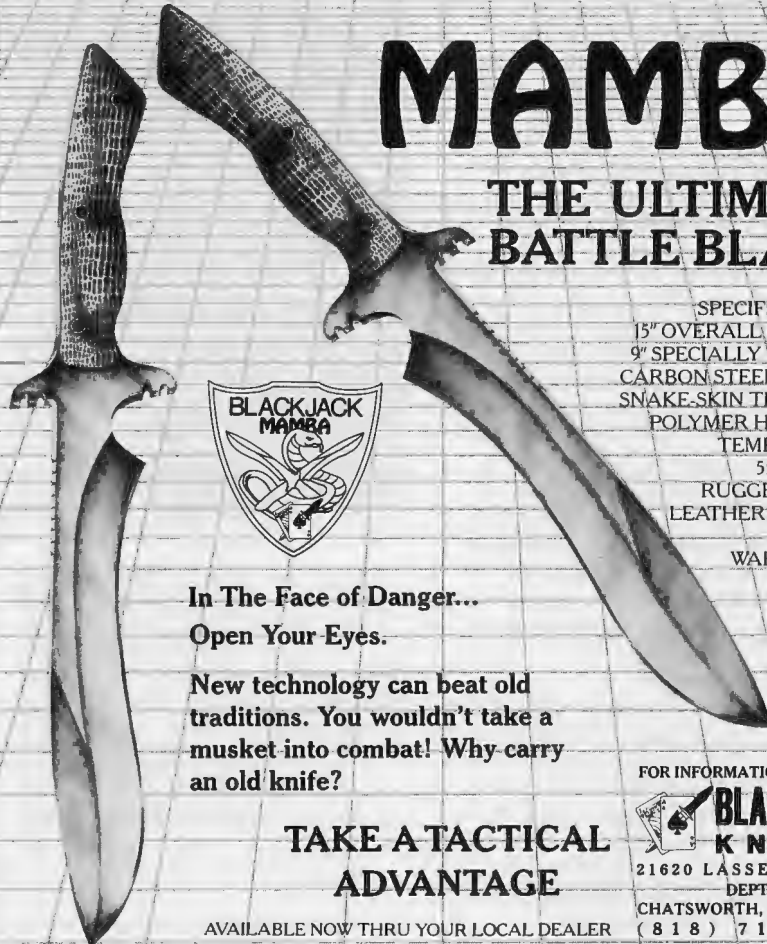
The next day we talked to the base commander, Colonel Casanova, about our idea, and he liked it.

He didn't know there was so much ammo available for these weapons or that they even worked. He asked me if I would set up a training program. I told him I'd be happy to do just that.

After we left his office we went to the armory and picked up the remaining Brownings as well as 25 Madsens. Our house soon became wall-to-wall MGs. I'd never taken a Madsen apart before and neither had anyone else. Luckily it's fairly easy to do.

With the help of a half-dozen troops we got the guns cleaned and in working order in

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no time. Next day we went to the range to test fire them. The Madsen is a select-fire weapon, and in full auto fires approximately 500 rounds per minute. It's very similar to shooting a Browning Automatic Rifle.

To my surprise we had very few problems. When we had a malfunction we culled parts from broken weapons to repair others. In all we ended up with 20 fully functional MGs.

After a week of training, the Madsens went to war. The Brownings stayed at Santa Ana and replaced the M60s for base defense.

If guns could talk I wonder what story the M1917A1 would tell. How'd it wind up in a box in a remote armory in El Salvador? Had it seen action in the Ardennes? Or had it sat unused in this armory for over 40 years waiting for its day? I suppose we'll never know.

But one thing is certain. If the Gs ever attack the Courtel at Santa Ana, they'll hear the voice of Mr. Browning's masterpiece defending liberty yet one more time. ✕

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 28

necessary. The quickest way to do this is, after placing the wound bandage over the wound, to secure the plastic wrapper that the bandage came in over the bandage and tape it around the edges to form an airtight seal. Without this seal, the lung can't function properly.

Drips/Drugs/Documentation — Start an intravenous (IV, or "drip") flow, then treat for pain and document your procedures. Once the heart and lungs are working and the major holes have been plugged up, preventing shock is your main concern. The IV replaces lost body fluids, while the painkiller, usually morphine (except in the case of head or sucking chest wounds), relieves suffering and produces a feeling of well-being in the injured person. Be sure to inject the painkiller into a large muscle, preferably the buttock. After this, write down the time of the injection and, if possible, the patient's blood type on a piece of tape placed on the forehead. With such vital information readily visible, treatment by successive medical personnel is more controlled. If nothing else, it prevents an accidental drug overdose of painkillers, as the time of the last injection is clearly marked.

Evacuation — Transport the injured person out of the combat zone, hopefully to a medical facility. The most important consideration here is to avoid making the injury worse. Try to keep the injured area elevated and as immobile as possible while watching for excessive bleeding.

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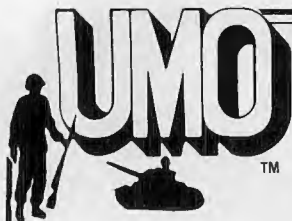
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FLAK

Continued from page 6

featured various speakers against our involvement in Central America. I tried to organize a group to protest them, but only a couple others responded.

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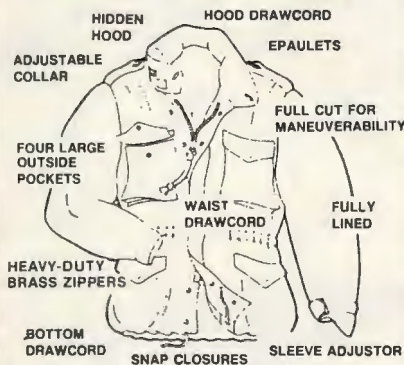
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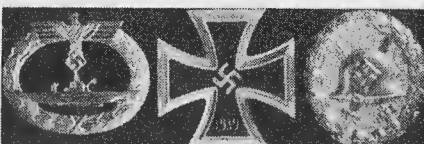
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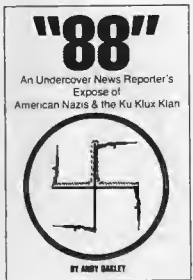


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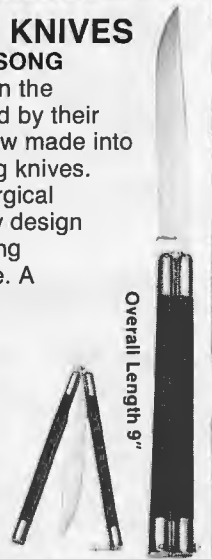
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PARTING SHOT

WE'VE had years of bullshit from the media about Vietnam, running the gamut from hippie psychosis ("Apocalypse Now") through self-hatred ("The Deer Hunter") to politically motivated anti-war films like "Platoon." (And unless you saw how Oliver Stone twisted a few facts into a gigantic lie in "Salvador," you can't appreciate how well he continued to use this classic disinformation technique in "Platoon.")

These movies have been complemented by a variety of "Vietnam" programs on TV, generally focusing again on self-hatred, self-violence, anti-Americanism and lots of gore. Either on movies or TV, we Vietnam combat types were clearly the scum of the earth then and probably are now.

In the middle of this hostile aridity, the new TV series "Tour of Duty" stands out like an oasis in the desert. It is set in 1967, like "Platoon." It is also about real people, which "Platoon" wasn't. Most surprisingly, it is aired by CBS, of all networks. I am normally of the opinion that the management and news personnel of CBS ought to be shot for treason. Then, a few months ago

on CBS, Dan Rather told the truth about Soviet policies of genocide in Afghanistan. Now, with "Tour of Duty," CBS has earned a full reprieve.

"Tour of Duty" is about a platoon, and most particularly the experiences of a new lieutenant (Stephen Caffrey) hooked up with a combat-wise third-tour sergeant (played with stunning assurance and conviction by Terence Knox). The action is all in the bush, which is where platoons in fact make their money — no rear-area filler crap in this series. In the very first episode, you get to meet the troops and execute a patrol, running into NVA regulars coming south in strength, which is what was going on in '67. The second episode lets you get into Charlie's tunnel systems, and in the third episode the platoon relocates people of a small hamlet to a "secure" area, observing a little VC/NVA conflict along the way.

Throughout the series the attention to accurate detail is impressive. I can remember no other fictional portrayal of Vietnam where mines and booby traps are such a big part of the daily routine, just as they were in fact, if seldom in fiction. (Apparently getting your balls blown off by a Bouncing

Betty isn't as visually interesting as getting gut-shot by an AK-47 round.) If you ever motored around the trails on point, you'll appreciate this truth.

In fact, "Tour of Duty" reveals more truth about Vietnam than we've ever seen from the mainstream media. Sure, some things are a little off. The fourth episode takes the platoon up along the Lao border in support of a Green Beret team running a Nha Trang-ordered SOG special Ho Chi Minh Trail op. SOG operations originated in Saigon with MACV and did not involve 5th Special Forces headquarters in Nha Trang. The Hawaiian location is very correctly tropical, but too damned neat and clean for Asia. But the real brilliance of "Tour of Duty" (aside from the outstanding scripts) lies in the entire cast, rather than just one or two lead actors. The ensemble achieves the impossible: They make you lose 20 years and believe. But right now, "Tour of Duty" is languishing around 45th out of 65 programs in the fall TV lineup. Pass the word to your buddies and then on to CBS. This is a little bit of truth about Vietnam, and we just can't afford to lose it.

— Karl Phaler ✕
Photo: DoD



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 - Zippered Sleeve Pocket with Pencil Holder
- Choose: Black or Sage Green Outer Shell Color.
 Sizes: S, M, L and XL.
 \$94.25/each. Item #C-550

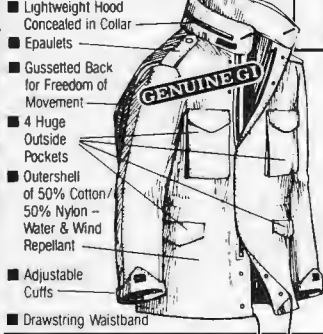


USAF Flight Jacket

These flight jackets are issued to military fliers and are designated Type MA1 for Intermediate Cold. (This means that it is the medium weight jacket, designed for comfort in a temperature zone of about 20° to 55° F.) Look for the military designation, sizes and stock numbers inside the left pocket. The outer shell and lining are 100% nylon making the jacket completely wind and waterproof. The interlining is 100% polyester fibertill for the highest degree of warmth per ounce. This jacket is reversible, outside in your choice of either sage green or blue and the inside is survival orange. It features: two hip pockets outside as well as inside, sewn pen and pencil holders plus zippered easy access storage pocket in the left sleeve. This a snappy, convenient, warm, fully functional jacket and it happens to be the latest fashion trend.

Field Jacket - Type M65

in one form or another, this jacket has been the military workhorse for over 40 years and is still going strong.
 The field jacket is designed for 3 season wear. In winter you can button in the liner (see below) or wear a vest or heavy sweater under it.



- Lightweight Hood Concealed in Collar
- Epaulets
- Gusseted Back for Freedom of Movement
- 4 Huge Outside Pockets
- Outershell of 50% Cotton/50% Nylon - Water & Wind Repellent
- Adjustable Cuffs
- Drawstring Waistband

Watch Cap - 100% Wool -

- Tight Ribbed Weave
 - Roll Down to Cover Ears When Desired
 - One Size Fits All
 - Choose Color - Black or Olive Drab (OD) Green
- Item #N-355 \$6.00 each.



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Ballacava (One Hole) Face Mask



Masks are lightweight non-itch, non-allergic; 100% stretch acrylic woven in a bulky knit. Maximum protection from wind and cold.

Knit Face Mask

- 3 holes for maximum protection.
- Choose: Black or Olive Drab (OD)
- Green. ITEM #N-300. \$5.95/each.
- Camouflage (Reverse to bright orange) ITEM #N-390. \$6.95/each.

Ballacava (One Hole) Face Mask

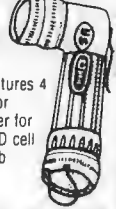
- One hole accommodates eyeglasses or other equipment.
- Black. ITEM #N-395. \$5.95/each.

Special Forces Green Beret

Jaunty and daring and classy - like the professional's who wear them. These are official regulation berets of 100% vat dyed wool and meeting all military specs. Made expressly for us by the prime government contractor. Also available Official headgear for: Airborne Qualified (Maroon), Ranger Commandos (Black), Artillery & Guardian Angels (Red), Commando Dress (Camouflage). Sizes - 6 7/8 to 7 3/4.

Angle Head Flashlite

This is the heavy duty plastic flashlight issued to all military units. The flashlight is waterproof, non-glare and features 4 different lenses which can be easily installed or removed. It can clip onto the belt or suspender for hands free operation; operates on 2 standard D cell batteries and comes complete with a spare bulb. Brand new, sold in the GI box.



Black Commando Dog Tag Set

(A Kaufman's Exclusive): 2 GI stainless steel tags specially treated to be non-glare flat black plus 2 black (4" and 24") ball chains. \$6.00/set

Regulation GI Dog Tags

set of 2 stainless steel tags and 2 stainless chains (4" and 24") Item #X-670 \$4.00/set. Want us to print them? WE'LL PRINT ANYTHING up to 6 lines and 15 spaces per line. Printing Item #X-885 only \$1.50 per tag (\$3.00/set).

Dog Tag Silencers

black, non-glare rubber bumpers for tags. Item #X-655 \$1.25/pair.

M65 Liner

designed to be buttoned into the M65 Field Jacket, these liners are lightweight, polyester-fibertill, and very warm. Order same size as your field jacket. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL Item #C-475 \$19.00/ea

Ranger Combat Cap - Woodland Camouflage

latest Army issue. This winterweight cap features lined flaps which can fold out to keep your ears warm and tuck into the hat when the weather's balmy. Sizes run small. Also available in Olive Drab (OD) Green. Item #N-270. Sizes: 7, 7-1/4, 7-1/2, 7-3/4. \$8.50/each.



Drill Instructor/Smokey the Bear Hat

Formally called the Campaign Hat, this is a really fine quality pressed felt headpiece. A hat with character. No one who wears it escapes a personality change. An uncontrollable urge to shout orders or hear abuses, pursue flammers or write traffic tickets. Let your true or wistful self be heard. Commercially manufactured to exacting specs. Sizes 6-7/8 to 7-3/4. Item #N-300 \$19.75/each.



Genuine Leather Chin Strap

Item #N-305 \$2.00/each.

Acorn Hat Cord

(as shown) Item #N-310 \$7.75/each. (Specify color: silver, gold metallic, black/gold, metallic, yellow, red or light blue)

CAMOUFLAGE

Commando Camouflage Headnet - Spandouflage

Expandable camouflage mesh fits comfortably on any size head. Cool in summer, warm in winter, this revolutionary new mesh material can be cut (but will not unravel) to form eye-holes for the comfort of eyeglass wearers. Choose: Woodland Camouflage, Desert Camouflage or Solid Black. Item #Q-275. \$6.00/each; 2 for \$11.00.



Camouflage Face Paint

Each metal tube contains 2 colors of facepaint which can be easily removed with soap and water. Current military issue. Choose: Woodland Camo (green & loam); desert camo (light green & sand); snow camo (white & loam). \$2.75/tube; 2 tubes for \$5.00. Item #Q-260

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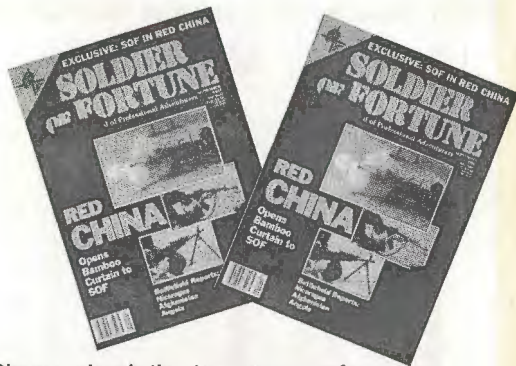
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