



SOF IN THE PHILIPPINES



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1988**

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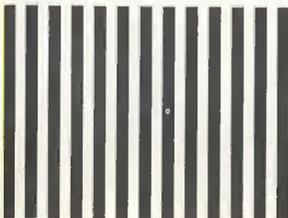


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MAIMING FOR MARX

Peter G. Kokalis

Land mines pave leftist road to liberation in El Salvador **24**

NIGHT FIGHT AT MORRO

Rob Schultheis

SOF correspondent plays deadly game of hide-and-seek with Spetsnaz commandos along Afghanistan-Pakistan border **26**

AIRBORNE RECON

John Coleman

SOF looks in on Fort Bragg's Scout Recon and Surveillance Course **30**

SIEGE AT CUITO CUANAVALÉ

Al J. Venter

Angola's ComBloc-backed government is losing control of more of the country. When will the cost of propping up this puppet government be too high? **36**

PHILIPPINE PATROL

Gene Scroft

SOF staffer joins jungle patrol with government troops searching for elusive communist NPA **44**

POPPIES TO THE PEOPLE

Frank van der Waal

Soviets turn Afghan crop into hard cash on Western European drug market **52**

THE LEBANESE CONNECTION

Collin Knox

Bekaa Valley narcotics fuel endless conflict in Lebanon and abroad **54**

DEADLY DECEPTION

Ken Gaudet

Q-Car draws ambush near Angolan border **62**

HAMMERED, SICKLED & HUNG OVER

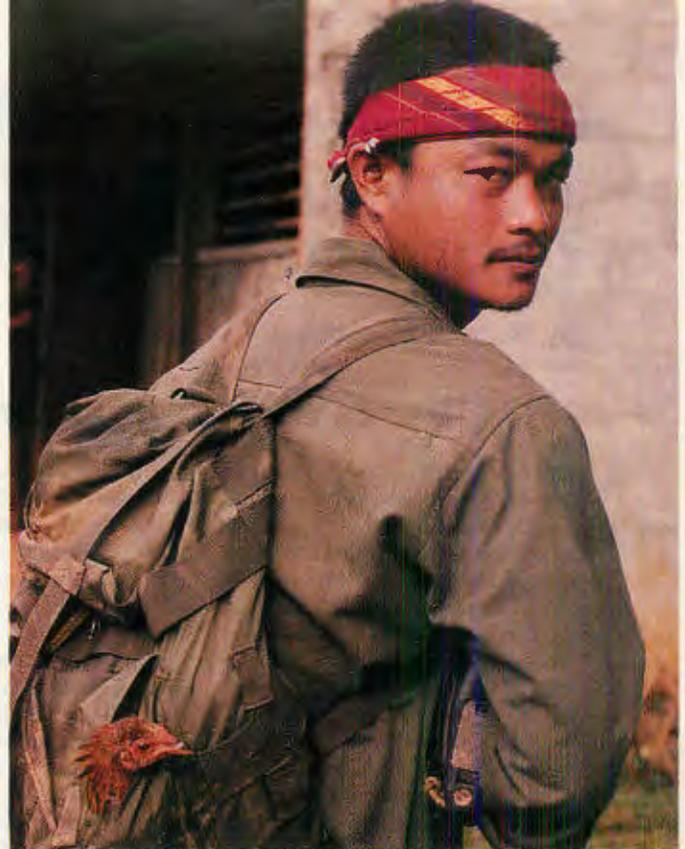
David C. Isby

SOF examines rampant alcoholism in Soviet military **64**

SPECTRES OVER LAOS

Isaac Staats

Surrounded Spike Team spends hot night in Prairie Fire AO **66**



Philippines— Page 44

COVER: The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Almost nine years later, Moscow is showing signs of throwing in the towel — Soviet troop withdrawals are supposed to commence on 15 May 1988. If this pullout actually happens, it will be a historic blow to Soviet military adventurism, which up until now has been irreversibly expansionist, regardless of the high cost in lives and materiel. Still, the Afghan mujahideen aren't persuaded by Soviet diplomatic rhetoric and continue to press the attack. Pick up the action with SOF correspondent Rob Schultheis along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border on page 26. Photo: John Jameson
COVER INSET: Hard-hitting SOF staffer Gene Scroft recently spent several months in the Philippines gathering intel on how government forces are dealing with the growing communist NPA insurgents. The first in his series of Philippine exclusives begins on page 44. Photo: Gene Scroft

Command Guidance 2

Give freedom a chance

FLAK 5

Heat over HEAT

Bulletin Board 8

SOF in the Soviet press

Adventure

Quartermaster 12

Falcon electronic sight

In Review 14

The Mask of Command

Combat Weaponcraft 18

Checking up on the checkout

I Was There 22

Duc xing

Supply Locker 86

Advertisers Index 89

Classified 91

Parting Shot 96

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown



Give Freedom a Chance

MANY Americans and, more importantly, their representatives in Washington are doing Moscow's bidding in the interest of "peace." House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, has championed a phrase coined by the late John Lennon — "give peace a chance."

The difference, of course, is that when John Lennon sang those lines from his bed in the company of Yoko Ono and Timothy Leary, the fate of democracy wasn't threatened by his words. But when the Speaker of the House says it, he makes demagoguery the foundation of U.S. foreign policy and undermines a principle that defines our nation.

Specifically, building a foreign policy around a late-60s anti-war song is bumper-sticker statesmanship at its best: The lyrics say nothing about the nature of that peace nor what sacrifices must be made to achieve it.

In the case of Nicaragua, it is individual freedom that is being sacrificed for Comandante Ortega's empty promise of peace — a tradeoff our forefathers would have risked their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to prevent. They knew from bitter experience that peace, without freedom, means servitude. Unfortunately, the muddled minds of today's well-intentioned leftists regard freedom as an expendable commodity, and the enemies of democracy know it.

The Sandinista *comandantes* have no intention of fostering a pluralistic, democratic society. They are, by their own admission, a Marxist-Leninist vanguard who will use the brutal, coercive resources of their police state to consolidate and maintain power at the expense of liberty

and human rights. They have also proclaimed that their Marxist revolution is "without borders." So much for Rep. Wright's pipe dream of a peaceful future for Central America.

Humanitarian aid for the contras, which Rep. Wright says "we surely owe them," isn't going to rescue individual Nicaraguans from their Sandinista oppressors nor protect Nicaragua's neighbors from Marxist revolutions without borders. The most it will do is assuage the guilt Mr. Wright and his leftist groupies (including the 12 Republicans who broke rank with their president) might feel after having denied the freedom fighters the wherewithal to carry on the good fight for democracy.

When Central Americans, like the Vietnamese boat people, begin fleeing en masse to the United States to escape Sandinista adventurism and oppression, will the Democrats admit their mistake? Probably not. And when it is left to the United States to help defend the sovereignty of those countries fighting Sandinista-backed communist insurgencies, will they show the resolve to combat those insurgencies? Again, probably not.

You see, as Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden and other leftist leaders proved after Vietnam, demagogues have short memories, and there are always other windmills to slay. ✕

Soldier of Fortune Magazine's El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund continues to collect military equipment, uniforms, boots and cash donations for shipment to the democratic resistance forces opposing the Sandinista regime. Your contributions are always welcome and are greatly appreciated.

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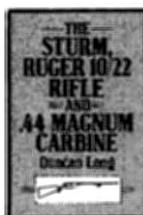
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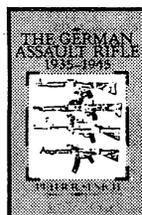
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KEMP SUPPORTS FREEDOM FIGHTERS...

Sirs:

In the March 1988 SOF, a letter writer asked which presidential candidates support anti-communist freedom fighters. You mentioned that among Republicans, George Bush and Bob Dole support freedom fighters. Why didn't you also mention that Jack Kemp is a strong supporter of people fighting for their freedom against communism?

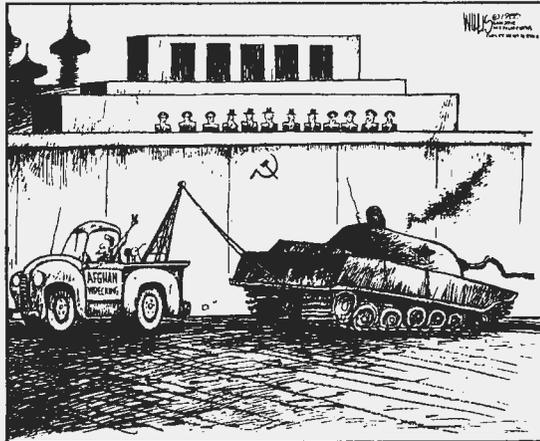
Not only does Mr. Kemp support freedom fighters, he's also a strong supporter of gun owners' rights. Bob Dole has supported our Second Amendment rights, but his support is not absolute. For example, he supports the seven-day waiting period bill, which would create the framework for a New York City-style gun law for the entire country. George Bush has occasionally made efforts in support of gun owners, but only enough to make it seem that he supports gun owners' rights, not because he strongly supports the Second Amendment.

I thought it was a serious oversight not to mention Jack Kemp, who supports freedom fighters and gun owners because they are causes he believes in, not just to get votes.

Peter Karr
Evanston, Illinois



FLAK



SUVOROV WAS SPETSNAZ?...

Sirs:

In reference to "Spetsnaz Invades America" [SOF, January '88], the authors state that "there has never been a Spetsnaz defector to the West." What about the book *Inside the Aquarium: The Making of a Top Soviet Spy*, by Viktor Suvorov? Mr. Suvorov states that he was "recruited from the Soviet Tank Corps into Spetsnaz, attaining the rank of captain," and subsequently served as a successful agent in the GRU (Soviet military intelligence). Is there any truth to his claim?

Jim Tepes
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Viktor Suvorov, the assumed name of a Soviet defector, has written four books on the Soviet military since his defection. His most recent book, Spetsnaz: The Story of the Soviet SAS, has just been published in London.

Suvorov is believed to be Vladimir Resun, a GRU agent who defected to the West several years ago. Although he most certainly served in the GRU, nothing in his previous statements would suggest that he ever served in Spetsnaz units. Jim Shortt, a noted student of Soviet special forces, has said that mistakes and contradictions in Suvorov's new book strongly indicate that Suvorov didn't serve in Spetsnaz. According to Shortt, the book contains little new information and has "all the hallmarks of bad academic research."

OUT OF NEW JERSEY...

Sirs:

Let me start by saying that my family has lived in New Jersey for the last four generations.

Recently I applied for a "yellow card," a Firearms Purchase and Operators Permit. This is a privilege and not a right in New Jersey. My first attempt failed because my references panicked. My second attempt failed because my fingerprints were smudged. Then they lost my application. I applied again; they lost it again. Since permits are acquired through the local police force, I challenged the officer in charge and was told some astonishing things. The man threw three of my applications in my face (I'd paid \$46 each time I applied, nonrefundable). I told the cop about the Second Amendment and he told me, "Not anymore" and "There won't be a Constitution when we're through with it!"

This is a state where a judge said, "The Constitution has no bearing in this court. I am the law."

I'd had enough, so I left for good.
J.W.

Sunnyvale, California

HEAT OVER HEAT DESCRIPTION...

Sirs:

In the January SOF, the sidebar called "PG-7 Grenade: Method of Operation" in the article "Guns Behind the Great Wall Part 4" contains the following misinformation: "The explosion is focused . . . into a super-hot gas jet. This jet burns through armor plate."

While the gas jet is indeed super-hot, it cannot be expected to burn through armor plate, nor is that the principle by which this works. Ask anyone who makes a living with a super-hot oxy-acetylene torch how long it will take to burn through 330mm of steel plate. HEAT is just a useful acronym.

The method by which this works is well-explained in publications that can be purchased through your own magazine. But, of course, you knew that. Otherwise, the article and the rest of the magazine were the usual well-researched material we've come to take for granted.

Richard B. Douglas
Syracuse, New York

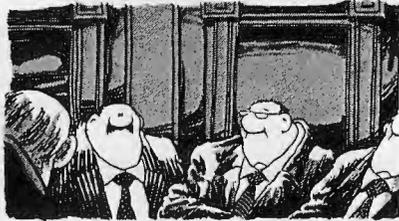
SOF Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis replies: "In attempting to

Meanwhile in the Kremlin, the debate rages on.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD SUSPEND SANDINISTA AID AND GIVE THE ARIAS PEACE PLAN A CHANCE TO CULTIVATE PEACE AND FREEDOM.

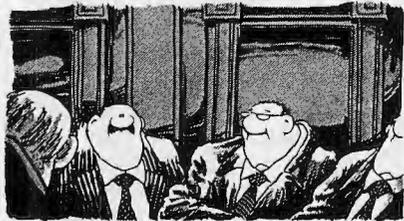


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THAT WAS A JOKE, COMRADES.

THERE ARE MANY FUNNY PEOPLE IN SIBERIA, VLADIMIR.



omit overly technical material, I glossed over the mechanics of jet formation and performance and may have erroneously left the impression that the jet cuts through the metal somewhat like an acetylene torch. While the process is extremely involved, it works something like this: When the PG-7 grenade strikes the target, detonation is initiated from the base, the detonating wave passes through the explosive and collapses the hollow cone toward the hollow axis. The molten metal of the copper cone, plus the detonating wave and the explosive gases all center on the axis and move forward in the form of a jet, at tremendous speed (about 32,800 fps), to strike

and pierce the target by means of their momentum, not the heat generated.

"In reference to the same article, another reader wrote in to say that 'The much-repeated statement that mesh wire fencing may short the fuzing current is in error. Also, the piling of sandbags on an AFV will only increase the standoff/penetration of the HEAT warhead.' He is wrong on both counts, as SOF staffer Bob Jordan, who used the RPG-7 extensively in Rhodesia, can testify. Increasing or decreasing the standoff distance from the optimum will certainly degrade the shaped charge's ability to penetrate armor plate."

PARTING SHOT COUNTERFIRE...

Sirs:

Re: SOF, March 1988, Parting Shot.

I must register a complaint about the referenced article, particularly the centered sketch of what appears to be a terrorist in a ski mask speaking into a microphone, with an unattributed quotation below the sketch alleging criminal activity on my part in connection with a bombing attempt against Edén Pastora in May 1984.

About all that I know of the Christic Institute, the subject of the article, is that it exists. I know nothing about its allegations in the RICO lawsuit it is bringing against General Singlaub and others. In particular, I know nothing about, and had nothing to do with, anyone

named Amac Galil nor with an attempt to kill Edén Pastora.

My problem with the centered sketch and quotation is that they are simply left hanging out there, emphasized to attract attention, and could very well leave the impression with most of SOF's readers that I did, in fact, have some connection with the alleged events — or perhaps with some sort of terrorist activities.

The quotation seems gratuitous to me; it adds nothing to the article and, without any editorial clarification, leaves a completely misleading impression about me and my alleged activities. I have no idea who Source #24 is or on what basis he could possibly have made such a statement.

I have made a sworn statement in connection with the RICO case. It

includes my statements under oath that the contents of the affidavit of Daniel Sheehan and the amended complaint filed in that case are false as they relate to me and my activities; that I have no personal first-hand knowledge of the allegations in that case; that I was never in any country in Central America in 1984; that I did not train members of the so-called contras in 1984; I have never met John Hull, Amac Galil or Per Anker Hansen; I have no knowledge of the La Penca bombing and was not involved in it, directly or indirectly; and that the inference and allegations relating to me and any possible involvement in training anyone in the use of C-4 anti-personnel explosive to be used in the La Penca bombing are false.

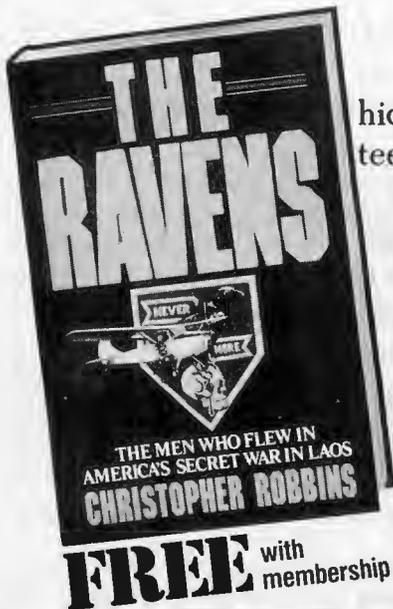
You would do me and your readers a favor if you would publish this letter in an effort to clarify the otherwise misleading reference to me. I have no quarrel with the contents of the article itself, although I don't know enough about the people, organizations and activities under discussion to add any meaningful comments about it. But please correct the misimpression that was left from your Parting Shot article in the March issue of SOF.

John H. Harper
Arlington, Virginia

Guilty as charged. We were squeezing too much copy into too little space, and the line crediting the quote under the drawing to an affidavit filed by attorney Daniel Sheehan in December 1986 got chopped. We know that the claim by Source #24 that Harper, Robert K. Brown and General Singlaub were involved in the La Penca bombing attempt against Edén Pastora is utter nonsense.

LETTERS

Your input has made FLAK one of SOF's most popular columns. Write and tell us your opinion of SOF or any subject you consider worth our readers' attention. We reserve the right to edit for content and brevity. Send letters to FLAK, c/o SOF, PO Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. ✉



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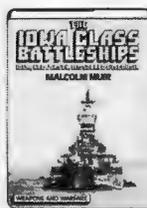
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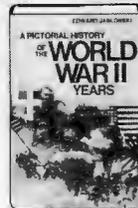
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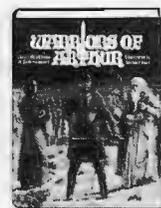
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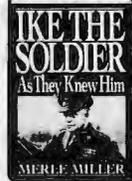
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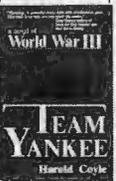
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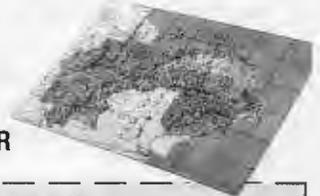


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REUNIONS

Seabees

The Navy Seabee Veterans of America are holding their 42nd annual national convention and reunion in La Crosse, Wisconsin, from 3 to 7 August 1988. For information contact: Navy Seabee Veterans of America, SVA, Island X-19, PO Box 1002, La Crosse, WI 54602-1002.

716th MPs

The 716th MPs, Companies A, B and C, are having their second reunion in Omaha, Nebraska, on 1 October 1988. For information contact: Duane Hursey, Route 1, Box 187, Shelby, IA 51570; phone (712) 544-2662.

HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

Conservative Caucus of Lower Delaware, Melvin King, James Reese, Thomas Hill, Christopher Marquette, Robert J. Redmond Jr., Ronald S. Hall, Broderick Mollere, Michael S. Bilson.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund contributors:

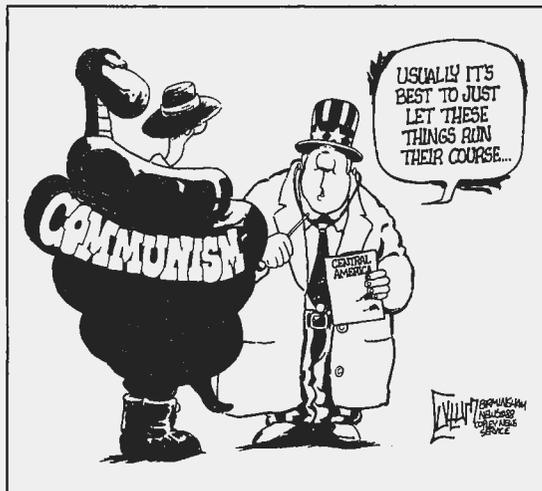
Ronald S. Hall, Broderick Mollere.

Refugee Relief International Inc. contributors:

William Kiff; Kenneth Schustereit — in honor of Ollie North; Michael A. Mitchell, DO; A.W. Cordiale.

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

BULLETIN BOARD



SOF UNDER IVAN'S SKIN...

Moscow's own *Literaturnaya Gazeta* has an article on Afghanistan entitled "Conspiracy" in their 20 October 1987 edition that fingers two SOF contributors, David Isby and Gene Scroft, as being ruthless enemies of the Afghan people.

Isby is described as the one who "attained U.S. sanctions from Congress in order to arm Afghan counter-revolutionaries with Stinger [anti-aircraft] missiles." The article then accuses the Committee for a Free Afghanistan (CFA), of which Isby is a senior board member, of being "a tool of the CIA . . . a committee of chameleons" and provoking bloodshed in Afghanistan (apparently they don't think the Soviet invasion in 1979 was provocation enough). It goes so far as to say that the CFA "is trying to destroy Afghan armistice with American-made Stingers."

CFA destroying the Afghan armistice? Nice try, Ivan.

As for Gene Scroft, they quote from his articles "Yank in Afghanistan" and "Holy War Combat Tour" (see SOF, December '86 and January '87) as examples of how bloodthirsty the mujahideen are compared to the honorable, peace-loving communist Afghan quislings who have been, among other things, sending young Afghans to re-education camps in the Soviet Union and trying to "liberate" Afghanistan from itself. Figure that one out.

We're happy Ivan is such an avid reader of SOF. Just so there's no mistake about our views, let us reiterate — we hope the Sovs continue to get their collective butts kicked until they retreat from Afghanistan.

The CFA is an excellent source of information on that conflict. Give them a call at (202) 546-7577.

RIOTS IN NICARAGUA...

Hundreds of anti-Sandinista rioters, protesting a failed economy and forced military recruiting, took to the streets of Monimbo, Nicaragua, on 8 February 1988. Chanting anti-government slogans, the angered crowd pelted the local police station with rocks and set fire to cars. The following night an even larger group of demonstrators set up barricades of burning tires. Interior Minister Tomás Borge personally led a force of paramilitary units to deal with the demonstrators. They broke up the crowd with clubs, battered journalists and seized news film.

Sandinista military reaction in Monimbo was restrained by the fact that nearly a decade ago, this Indian shantytown was the site of the first major urban insurrection against Anastasio Somoza, and ever since official speeches have been peppered with references to "heroic Monimbo."

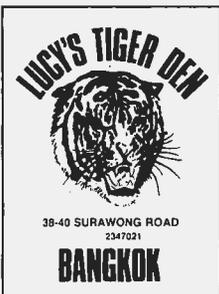
Even so, some Sandinistas are apparently losing patience with opponents and are threatening to clamp down hard again. "We may not have a state of emergency anymore, but it's not legal . . . to publish calls to resist the draft," says Nelba Blandon, spokeswoman for the Interior Ministry.

Such a crackdown might not be necessary, as many Nicaraguans are simply too demoralized and exhausted to oppose the well-entrenched Marxist regime in Managua. "People are devoting most of their time just to surviving; there aren't enough hours in the day to protest too," says one diplomat. "Besides," says Miriam Mejia as she stands outside her dilapidated store, whose outside walls have been painted with pro-Sandinista propaganda, "I'd love to paint over it, but there's no paint!"

DON'T STEP IN THE GLASNOST!...

Remember in 1987 when thousands of Latvians held a demonstration just outside Red Square in Moscow? And remember how it was heralded in the news media as a great symbol of the new

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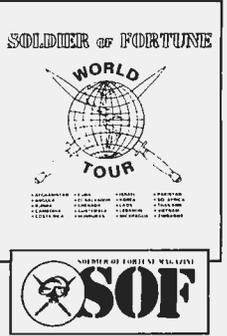
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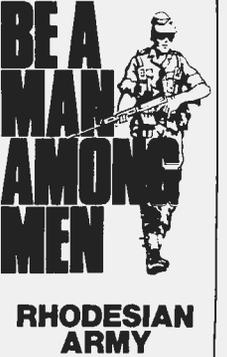
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freedoms allowed by Gorby's *glasnost*? Well, once again, only half the news was fit to print.

While Latvians demonstrated in Moscow, Soviet troops and tanks were moving into Riga, Latvia's capital, under orders from Gorbachev. Martial law had been declared in retribution for the lawless conduct of the demonstrators. Consequently, hundreds of Latvians were summarily beaten, arrested and jailed in Riga while Western reporters gleefully handed the Soviets a propaganda victory in Red Square.

Then in February 1988, the Red Army converged on the Armenian capital of Yerevan to break up what were reported as the largest unsanctioned gatherings in Soviet history (witnesses claim over a million demonstrators participated). A senior Politburo official was quoted as saying there had been "human victims" (read "casualties") of the daily unrest there.

These reports substantiate what SOF has always suspected: *Glasnost* doesn't extend beyond Moscow city limits. Why should it, since Moscow is where Western attention is focused? For while the Soviets publicly claim that *glasnost* means "openness," a quick glance at a Russian/English dictionary tells the real story — *glasnost* means "publicity" in English. Get the picture?

Looks like the West has been sold yet another length of rope with which to hang itself.

ETHIOPIAN CROWD CONTROL...

Troops of the Ethiopian communist Mengistu government opened fire 22 February 1988 on thousands of unarmed peasants at a food relief center for drought victims. The 26 February edition of the *Wall Street Journal* reports that at least 20 peasants were killed, many more wounded.

Foreign relief workers who witnessed the shootings say that government troops became agitated when peasants resisted forced resettlement, apparently remembering the Mengistu government's last resettlement effort, which resulted in the deaths of 100,000 of those resettled.

The Mengistu government denies the allegations, stating that this, as with all of its previous resettlement programs, was strictly "voluntary."



CONTRA BONDS...

Public fund-raising for the democratic resistance in Nicaragua is vitally important now that the U.S. House of Representatives has voted to cut off aid. The Washington, DC-based Council for Inter-American Security (CIS) has come up with an idea that should have been instituted long ago — selling Nicaraguan freedom bonds.

In the words of CIS President L. Francis Bouchev, these zero-coupon bonds would be "a means for legitimate, legal and fully public fund-raising for the democratic forces." Bouchev and his organization's 185,000 members and supporters are prepared to organize "a high-level committee of prominent U.S. citizens to assist in the marketing and sale of these securities."

For more information on this "neat idea" whose time has come, contact: Council for Inter-American Security, 122 C Street NW, Suite 330, Washington, DC; phone (202) 543-6622.



SPETSNAZ IN ALASKA...

The Pentagon is reporting growing evidence that Soviet special forces (Spetsnaz) may be secretly training on the isolated beaches of Alaska's windswept St. Lawrence Island, located 40 miles southeast of Siberia in the Bering Sea. Officials say the covert landing site is apparently being used to train Spetsnaz personnel on how to penetrate U.S. territory.

First Sergeant Renard Nichols of the Alaska National Guard in Nome says, "They [Soviets] have an antenna field on Big Diomed. It could be that they're pre-positioning some satellite communications equipment. They also may be setting up caches. Or they could be exercising to see if they can come onto the island undetected."

U.S. intelligence sources report that Soviet-made military gear, including a gas mask with filters for a new chemical agent, a life raft half buried in the sand, shoulder-board insignia from Soviet uniforms, fuel drums with Soviet markings and buoys with explosive charges have been recovered in the area. Fresh boot prints have also been spotted heading inland.

"I don't want to speculate," says Major General John Schaeffer, also of the Alaska National Guard. "We don't have a Soviet person on hand so we can completely verify this, but circumstantial evidence is that they're conducting some activity on the island."

SOF is currently investigating these allegations. Watch for our follow-up report in the months ahead. ✎

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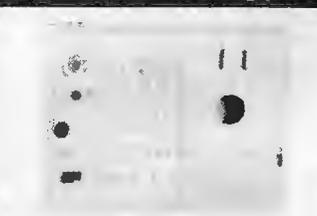
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by Tom Slizewski

FALCON SIGHT

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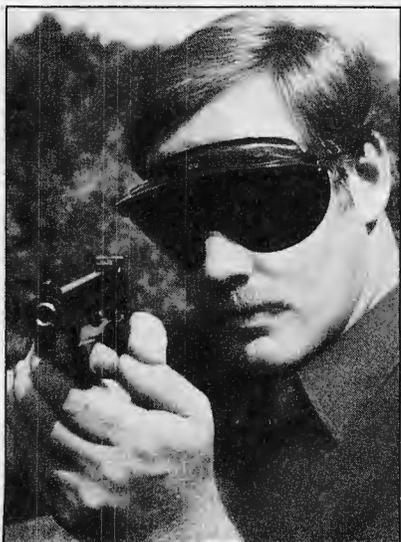
A leader has now emerged in this field — the Elbit Falcon electronic gunsight. Falcon features a tubeless large viewing port that doesn't require exact eye positioning, enabling you to sight in almost instantly. Falcon is made to tough U.S. military specifications and will fit almost any rifle, shotgun or handgun. Elbit recruited the Israel Defense Forces to help test and evaluate Falcon. It deserves a



serious look.

Both the AR-15/M16 standard and "Weaver-type" mounts are included in the \$249.90 suggested retail price (H-BAR and Carbine require special mounts). Installation

is a snap and requires no special tools. Take a look at the Elbit Falcon at your local gun shop or contact Elbit/Inframetrics, Dept. SOF, 12 Oak Park Dr., Bedford, MA 01730; phone (617) 275-8990.



doesn't promote tunnel vision and allows for full use of peripheral vision. They're comfortable, fog resistant and will fit over regular-sized eyeglasses.

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THE MASK OF COMMAND. By John Keegan. Viking Penguin Inc., Dept. SOF, 40 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010. 1987. 368 pages. Hardcover. \$18.95. Review by Tom Marks.

IN REVIEW



WHATEVER failures the U.S. armed forces have experienced over the last 20 years must ultimately be laid at the feet of their leadership. This contention has sparked considerable controversy in recent years and noted military historian John Keegan now adds a highly relevant work to the debate.

Leadership in war is the topic of **The Mask of Command**. Using four examples — Alexander the Great, Wellington, Grant and Hitler — Keegan makes a solid case for his claim that “the generalship of one age may not at all resemble that of another.” Ulti-

mately, Keegan asserts, to understand the great leaders of the past it is necessary to comprehend their “time and place.” Alexander the Great, for instance, was the perfect embodiment of the “heroic leadership” demanded by a warrior society in an age of close-in combat. Likewise, “Wellington, like it or not, had to command close at hand” since technology had not shrunk time and space to allow otherwise.

In contrast, Ulysses S. Grant appeared at a juncture when technology had shrunk time and space drastically, thereby expanding battlefield frontages. The result was that the heroic style of leadership was no longer feasi-

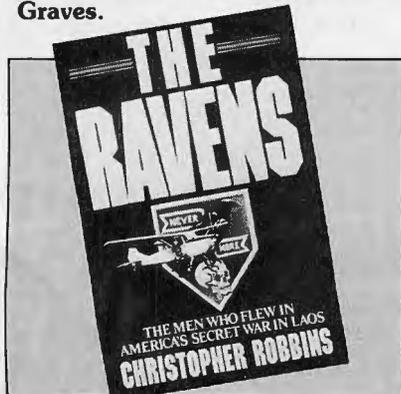
ble. Finally, there is Hitler, an example of what Keegan terms “false heroic” leadership. Hitler’s incorrect assumption that he could lead completely from the rear led to his defeat.

Keegan has found an insightful way of summarizing the lessons to be drawn from his four subjects. Ultimately, the commander’s dilemma boils down to two questions: “Where to stand, how often to be seen?” and “In front always, sometimes or never?”

The answer to the first question depends largely upon the society at hand. Technology and circumstances drive the second query. To the question “In front always, sometimes or never?” Alexander would have responded, “Always”; Wellington, “Sometimes”; Grant, “Not if I can help it”; and Hitler, “Never.” The answers are different, but only Hitler judged incorrectly.

Keegan’s lesson for American military leadership is clear: We have been unsuccessful because we have reduced military leadership to an industrial process. “Management” rather than “leadership” is the norm, the belief being that application of resources in correct measure according to invariant rules will result in a product — success. In addition, the required measure of heroism has disappeared amid the distribution of meaningless decorations for “service” and combat decorations given simply for having participated in a military operation. This is the “false heroic” approach writ large, with dire, predictable results for any army that practices it.

THE RAVENS. By Chris Robbins. Crown Publishers Inc., Dept. SOF, 225 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003. 1987. 420 pages. Hardcover. Review by Jim Graves.



THE “Other Theater” was the war just to the left of the one most of us fought and, though a secret war, enough tales drifted over from Laos that we had a vague idea of what was going on beyond the mountains.

Everything we heard about Laos was larger than life and stranger than fiction. Rumor had it that in Laos you could find covert Special Forces advisers and CIA paramilitary spooks, pilots right out of “Terry and the Pirates,” Stone Age native troops led by warlords, and the best bordellos in Asia — all players in a war that officially wasn’t.

But to hear even a whisper of the Ravens you had to have a really hot source. They were, according to rumor, a wild and outlandish group —

long haired; hard drinking; arrogant; wearing blue jeans, cowboy hats, Ray-Ban sunglasses and Rolexes — who flew overloaded O-1 Bird Dog single-engine prop planes low enough to collect leaves and take scalps.

Essentially it was all true. Ravens were FACs (forward air controllers) who spotted for the CIA’s secret army. Strictly a volunteer program, the Ravens were recruited from Air Force FACs in Vietnam after about six months duty there and enrolled in what was known as the “Steve Canyon Program.” From Vietnam they were sent to Thailand and then Laos.

In the field, the CIA and the Laotian generals ran the show. The Ravens were charged with controlling air strikes in support of the Laotian gov-

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ernment forces, Vang Pao's Hmong forces and lost Special Forces units against the Pathet Lao and the NVA (North Vietnamese Army).

The Ravens remain a unique, mysterious and mischievous group. They have a reunion organization known as the Edgar Allan Poe Literary Society. Some years ago Robbins and I were sitting in a Bangkok bar with a group of Society regulars when the talk turned to the war and luck. All the Ravens fished inside their shirts and pulled out gold Buddhas and tiger-tooth charms worn nearly featureless by death grips applied during thrills and spills over Laos. A ferocious discussion erupted among the Ravens over whose charm had more power. Points were proven by saying things like "Now this Buddha got me out the night I landed and refueled on the NVA-controlled airstrip at Muong Sai."

It was that kind of war, and Chris Robbins has done an outstanding job of describing it and capturing the kind of character who flew in it.

SURVIVE SAFELY ANYWHERE.
By John Wiseman. Crown Publishers, Dept. SOF, 225 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003. 1986. 288 pages. \$29.95. Review by Leroy Thompson.

JOHAN "Lofty" Wiseman, relying on his 26 years in the SAS, decided he could offer some guidance on the subject of survival for the general public. As he wrote his guidebook the thought that the book would reach #2 on the British non-fiction bestseller list was a long way from his mind.

The resulting book, **Survive Safely Anywhere**, may well be the most authoritative survival manual on the market. In Britain the book is titled *Survive Anywhere Safely* to draw on the SAS's well-known initials, but the editor in the States changed the title, apparently not having a clue what the SAS is.

Survive Safely Anywhere is so comprehensive and well-organized that even someone who has no desire to spend time in the wilderness will gain useful knowledge from reading it. Major sections of the book include: How to Survive, Strategies for Survival, Food, Reading the Signs, On the Move, First Aid, Survival at Sea, Disaster Survival and Rescue. Within these major sections information is organized into subsections for rapid reference. The book is even sturdily bound so that it can be carried aboard a boat or in a pack.

Survive Safely Anywhere is highly recommended for experts and laymen alike as an essential piece of kit for anyone venturing into the field. ✕

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HEARING the long initial burst from the machine gun brings joy to the young lieutenant's heart. After ordering his machine-gun team to lay down a base of fire, he confidently brings his men on line and barks out: "Number twos, give covering fire. Number ones, prepare to move. Move!"

Leapfrogging forward using fire and movement under the protective fire of the machine gun, the patrol nears its objective. The lieutenant now begins to prepare his men for the final assault.

"Prepare to charge," he yells. "Charge!"

Moving forward at the double, shooting into points of likely cover, the assault line is almost at the objective. Then, without warning, fire support from the machine gun stops abruptly, just when it is needed most! Instantly, confident aggression turns into fear as the lieutenant's asshole starts to eat his underwear. Five seconds later the assault line bogs down and goes to ground with only 50 meters to go. So close, and yet so far.

Now it's time to decide whether to continue or withdraw. After taking some casualties, the decision is clear: The assault line must start advancing — to the rear. During the hurried withdrawal, the lieutenant furiously asks himself: "What happened to the machine gun? Why did it stop?"

Only after gathering up his troops does he find out that the machine gunner ran out of ammunition. He was supposed to carry 500 rounds link but ended up carrying only 250. And the cost of this mistake was high — two of his buddies KIA.

You might blame the gunner and feel he should be shot as well for his error, but let me tell you who is really responsible — the lieutenant. Before the patrol went out, he failed to visually insure that the machine gunner had his full allocation of ammunition. *A final visual inspection by the unit leader (in this case not properly conducted) is one of the most important and yet most commonly overlooked steps in the preparation for battle.* It is important because leaving behind mission-essential items jeopardizes the lives of every patrol member. A hands-on equipment inspection by the unit leader is the only way to guarantee that your troops, as the commercial says, "don't leave home without it."

Let's examine the final inspection from the three perspectives of why, what and how.

"Why inspect at all?" is often heard, or "I trust my men to the point where I don't need to inspect them." Well, trust has nothing to do with carrying out hands-on inspections. It's a necessity. Even so, unit leaders often take for granted that everything has been



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

Checking Up on the Checkout



Inspections — who needs them? Only the winners. Learn why a troop's worst battlefield enemy is a commander, or a buddy, who doesn't give a damn. Photo: DoD

organized and that their troops know better than to leave behind any prescribed equipment. There is no justification for such an assumption.

The patrol leader should inspect all mission-essential items to insure that they are taken into battle in a combat-ready condition. Then why don't some patrol leaders inspect? Laziness and a don't-give-a-damn attitude are two of the reasons. I knew one patrol leader who didn't inspect because he thought he might offend his troops! Actually, the opposite is true: It's offensive not to inspect your troops because it means

A SOLDIER, WINNER AND FRIEND

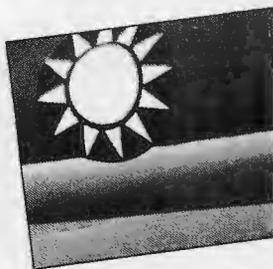
For over a decade, Jack Thompson has shared his extensive knowledge of soldiering and shooting with *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine readers. Jack served in the USMC in Vietnam for five years, battled terrorists in Rhodesia with the SAS and Selous Scouts for six years and has trained freedom fighters in Central America while providing bodyguard services for diplomatic personnel.

you don't care about their well-being or mission accomplishment.

What precisely are the essentials that need to be inspected? While serving in the SAS (Special Air Service) in Rhodesia, I used to personally inspect mission-essential items such as weapons for functioning and cleanliness; ammunition for dents, oxidation or bullets misaligned in their cases (which often happens to machine-gun links that have been carried for a long time); and machine-gun belts to make sure they were loaded correctly, since a round of ammo improperly loaded is a sure stoppage in combat. Radios were tested, as were all batteries and antennas; medical support checked for the drips, general painkillers such as morphine and demoral, and wound bandages; maps checked for the right area, compasses for any degree of error and radio and authentication codes gone over to insure current status. Also, depending on the mission, special equipment such as night-vision equipment, sound suppressors, electronic seismic intrusion devices and handheld radar were inspected.

How to inspect is a little more problematical than what to inspect. Just before going out on patrol in Rhodesia, I lined up my troops and individually inspected each man. I would check to see if magazines and canteens were full and that everyone had their own wound bandage. Then, any special equipment that a troop was required to carry was inspected to make sure that he actually had the item on his person and that he didn't leave something behind "accidentally-on-purpose" in order to shed a few unwanted pounds. Next, I made a quick check of his weapon to insure that it was cleaned and oiled. He would then be required to jump up and down a few times to see how much noise was made and see whether anything fell off. If there were problems, he would have to correct them immediately and be inspected again before leaving. Only after I inspected each man to my satisfaction would weapons be loaded and the patrol begun.

Continued on page 83



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IT was the end of April, 1970. At least that's the way I look at time now that I'm back in the world. To me right then, it was eight months to DEROS (Date Eligible for Return from Overseas).

I found myself one morning driving up Highway 1 in my Sheridan tank. Now, according to the Army, the M551 isn't really classified as a tank. Its official designation is Armored Reconnaissance/Airborne Assault Vehicle, or AR/AAV. But 16 tons of moving steel with a 152mm main gun that spits out HEAT (High Explosive Antitank) missiles and canister (explosive rounds containing 10,000 flechettes — steel darts — which work like giant shotgun shells) was a tank to me. I'm not sure what Charlie called it, but that doesn't really matter. Looking down the business end of it, I suppose you might want to call it "Sir."

On this particular day, mine was one vehicle in a long convoy of between 75 and 100 tanks, tracks (M113s), deuce-and-a-halves and jeeps. In addition, Cobra gunships of our Delta troop kept watch overhead. Unknown to any of us enlisted types, the 3/4 Cav was part of a much larger force heading for incursion into Cambodia.

We'd been given the honor of lead element that day, with my platoon taking point. Luckily for me, 1-5 drew the short straw and would take lead. That gave my tank the slack, or in this case the kick-back slot. I didn't have to monitor the radio for directions, just follow the leader.

Pulling off my commo helmet, I slipped on the much lighter headset that was plugged into my tape player and was soon groovin' to Hendrix: "Purple haze all in my brain..." It may not have been the same as my ride back home, but this big Coupe de Ville was the way to cruise in Vietnam.

Just as I was searching around for that pound cake and peaches I'd stashed, I felt the tapping of the TC's (tank commander's) boot on my shoulder. "Yea," I yelled up as I fumbled for my bulky helmet again. "One-five just threw a track and 6 wants us to move up and take point," he yelled back. That's just great, I thought. "Roger that." Hey, it don't mean nothin', I muttered to myself. I was getting tired of eating their dust anyway.

As we rolled by the immobilized tank, peace signs were exchanged with catcalls of "Get on with that flat, bro!" and "You want us to call Triple-A?" Well, at least it wasn't raining.

The situation ahead looked worse than the LA freeway at rush hour. Bicycles, cyclos and smoking Lumbretta mopeds bounced about, all stuffed to the max with little people carrying everything from market goods



I WAS THERE

by David White

Duc Xing



M551 Sheridan, which the Army designated an Armored Reconnaissance/Airborne Assault Vehicle, wasn't designed to win hearts and minds. The author, however, through careful handling of his M551, won a place in the hearts of many South Vietnamese. Photo: DoD

to farm animals. In addition, Hondas loaded down with three, sometimes four ARVN soldiers, all squeezed up real tight behind their buddies and smiling funny, added to the chaos on the road. And every kid on the block, running with his hand stretched out, yelled, "Candy, Joe?" hoping you'd frag him with Life Savers and Cs.

Being that I had the biggest gun at the intersection, I automatically had the green light. I kicked the big Detroit Diesel in the butt and, like magic, the seas parted.

I've got to say it, this convoy was an awesome sight to see. It resembled a ferocious, rumbling, fire-breathing dragon of steel that twisted its way along the narrow roads and tiny villages with a grace belying its size. Riding atop this mile-long monster sat these giants of war — American fighting men. I know, "You dinky däu, GI," but we did look bad.

Now, on a good day, old 1-6 could fly at 45 mph on the flat track; but with so many of these civilian types trying to share the road with me, the order of the day was to proceed cautiously with

little or no casualties.

Suddenly, without warning, she darted right out in front of my tank. She was so small and quick, I almost didn't see her. Just because she had her four or five "baby-sans" in tow didn't give her the right of way! Five meters and closing also didn't give me much time to explain about the rising cost of my insurance rates if I squashed her. So I locked both sides up, ASAP!

Catapulting over the front deck came our cooler, three cans of ammo, a half-case of C-rats and a shitload of assorted equipment I could have sworn I tied down before the trip. Along with the equipment came our loader. He de-assed that tank faster than if I'd dumped a load of fire ants down his shorts.

With the column starting to bunch up behind us, the radio burst to life with shouts of, "What's going on up there?" And putting the chain of command to good use, the TC started screaming on down to me, "What the hell are you doing?"

"Didn't you see 'em?" I said.

"Who!"

"The ducks."

"What dinks?"

"Ducks! Not dinks. A bunch of little ducks just ran right out in front of me. I almost killed 'em."

Before he could "Roger that," the people alongside the road started to come out of shock and began to laugh. Dusting himself off, our loader shook his head, looked up at me with this silly-ass grin and got me busting up too. In a matter of minutes we were packed up and rolling again. The only one who didn't seem to have a sense of humor was the TC. Guess he was too occupied with trying to explain to the brass our unscheduled pit stop. Still, I don't think that was any reason to stay mad at me for the remainder of his tour.

The way I see it, our goal in South Vietnam wasn't just to stop the tide of communism but to show the Vietnamese people that we cared about them and their way of life. By the looks on those villagers' faces that day, I believe we won some hearts and minds.

Quackers, anyone? ✕



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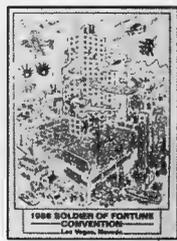


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MAIMING FOR MARX

Land Mines Pave Leftist Road to Liberation

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

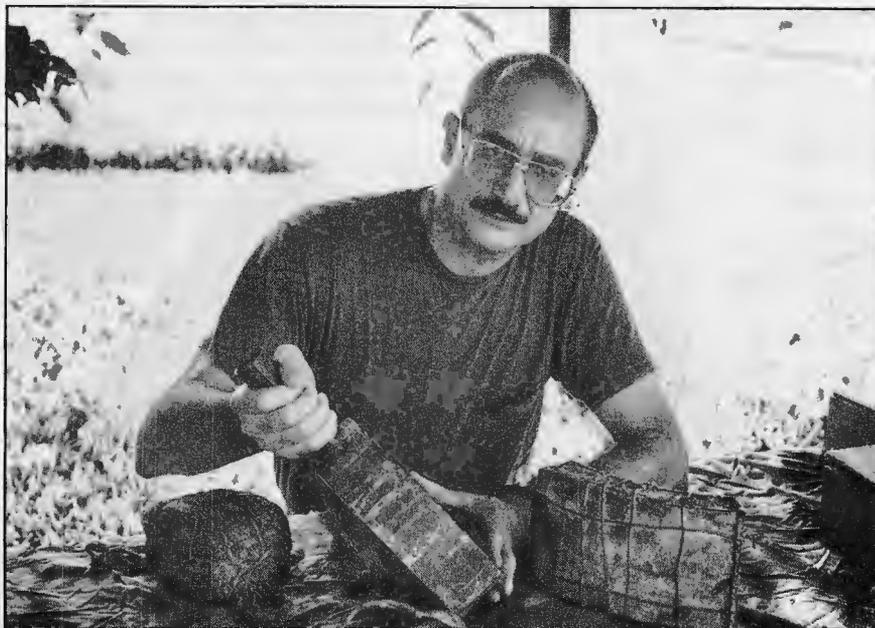
MINES. Their very mention fills the soldier's heart with terror and freezes his forward movement. They are, in my opinion, the most disgusting devices employed in warfare. Totally impersonal and usually indiscriminate, they cross the final boundary of whatever small thread of chivalry remains on the modern battlefield.

While the Salvadoran army is proscribed by the U.S. government from using napalm, cluster bombs or miniguns, the communist terrorists are restricted by nothing more than the limits of their fiendish imaginations. Concluding that a total military victory is now impossible, the Salvadoran guerrillas have accelerated their use of antipersonnel mines in an attempt to immobilize the army and disrupt the country's social and economic infrastructure. During the past two and a half years, guerrilla mines have resulted in more than 2,000 civilian casualties and an average of seven military WIA per day. As the Gs now move only in small groups and avoid contact with the army whenever possible, most of the army's recent casualties are a result of mines.

Mines are utilized by the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) terrorists in two roles — tactical and defensive. Tactical mines are of two types: small antipersonnel mines and larger antitransport mines in the U.S. M18A1 claymore configuration, which are usually command-detonated. Tactical mines are placed along the anticipated routes of army movement and, if not detonated, they can be recovered. Salvadoran troops are frequently drawn into antipersonnel mine fields by enemy fire.

Defensive mines are located around guerrilla encampments, in areas of strategic importance (such as Guazapa volcano) and surrounding potential helicopter landing zones. Oriented to ensure the guerrillas' security, defensive mines are more or less permanently emplaced.

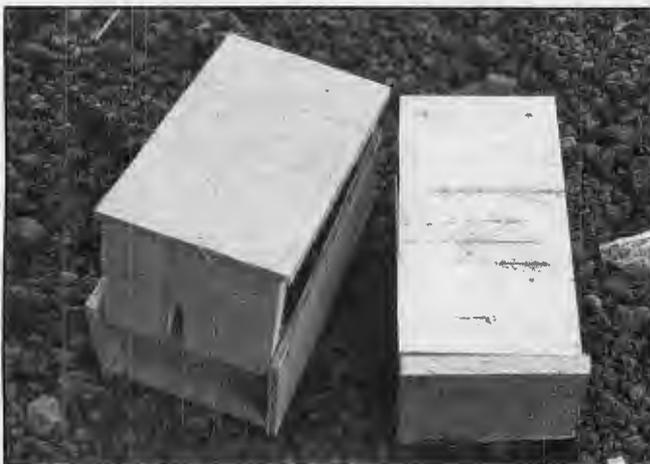
With the exception of the detonators, all



ABOVE: SOF Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis examines an array of guerrilla mines in El Salvador. From left to right: satchel charge made with a burlap cover, omnidirectional *Rayo de la Muerte*, claymore and Soviet-type box mine.

BELOW: *Mina Atlacatl*, an antipersonnel mine fabricated with a wood body and patterned directly after the Russian PMD-6, PMD-7 and PMD-7ts series.

BELOW: Guerrilla satchel charge, homemade black powder contained by burlap, is thrown over fences and onto roofs when attacking Salvadoran army compounds.



materials used in the construction of guerrilla mines are of indigenous origin. Detonators are activated by electrical, chemical or mechanical initiators. Sulfuric acid is the most common ingredient encountered in the chemical initiators. When a glass vial containing the sulfuric acid is crushed, contact with an oxidizer (usually potassium chlorate or perchlorate) surrounding the vial (or in another vial taped to the acid bottle) results in instant ignition. This system was first used to ignite bottles of gasoline by British Army troops during World War II.

Mechanical initiators use a spring-loaded striker to ignite the explosive train by percussion. Most of the mechanical initiators found in El Salvador have white plastic bodies.

Electrical initiators are either designed specifically for this type of initiation or have been jury-rigged by the addition of the base of a flashlight bulb to a fuse-type blasting cap. Small flashlight batteries are used to provide the electric current required after the circuit has been completed. All of the mechanical and electrical initiators I have examined in El Salvador appear to have detonators of Soviet origin.

Four types of explosives are used singly or in combination: TNT (flaked or solid), homemade black powder, aluminum powder and potassium chlorate with sugar. Aluminum powder is not used to trigger the primary explosive but to add flash effect, which helps ignite combustibles. Potassium chlorate and sugar are extremely unstable and must be handled with great caution.

Mines using fragments in addition to the explosive charge contain nails, screws, bits of scrap metal and, most frequently, hack-sawed segments of 3/16-inch smooth bar (mild steel reinforcing rods without concrete-gripping ridges) sometimes fixed in a matrix of beeswax.

Mine bodies take on many shapes and have been fabricated from a number of different items including plastic PVC pipe,



ABOVE: *Rayo de la Muerte*, a large, omnidirectional claymore-type mine with rebar fragments set in a matrix of beeswax.

BELOW: Initiators employed are, from top to bottom, homemade electrical type made with base of flashlight bulb, mechanical pull type with plastic body, acid and electrical types with detonators of Soviet origin.



BELOW: Small, omnidirectional antipersonnel mine made from a tin can filled with TNT and 3/16-inch rebar fragments.



tin cans, empty 90mm shell casings, sheet-metal, burlap bags and wood.

Most of the small antipersonnel mines I have seen are constructed from PVC pipe and when combined with non-metallic acid initiators are difficult to locate with standard metal detectors.

Many of the guerrilla mines have been named by the Salvadoran army after the units that first encountered them. *Mina Atlacatl* (named after the Atlacatl Immediate Reaction Battalion) is fabricated with a wood casing and is a direct copy of the Soviet PMD-6, PMD-7 and PMD-7ts series of antipersonnel mines. The explosive charge is usually TNT and there are three methods of initiation: electrical, mechanical and an indigenous system that involves a percussion-detonated cap that ignites a photoflash cube and black powder which in turn sets off a capsule of pyrotechnic fulminate.

Mina Anti-Transporte Arce-1 (named after the Arce Immediate Reaction Battalion) is an electrically command-detonated claymore employed in guerrilla ambushes of the open, stake-bed trucks the Salvadoran army is so fond of tooling about in. A circular-shaped, omnidirectional version of this claymore has been dubbed *Rayo de la Muerte* (Ray of Death).

The Gs employ satchel charges encased in burlap for attacking army compounds, large anti-vehicular mines and, in the manner of their Russian mentors in Afghanistan, a small mine called the *Papa* (Pope or potato) which is hidden in loaves of bread. They also booby-trap army radios, pistols, rifles, canteens, cooking pots and dead bodies.

Mina Caza-Yanqui (Yankee-Chasing Mine) is a large, omnidirectional defensive mine placed around guerrilla encampments. Cylindrical in shape, this electrically command-detonated device contains a large amount of steel fragments. *Mina Soberania*, although similar in configuration to the *Mina Caza-Yanqui*, is designed to attack

Continued on page 78

BELOW: Antipersonnel and antitransport claymore mines with sheet-metal bodies are usually command-detonated.



SOF AFGHANISTAN

NIGHT FIGHT AT MORRO

American Journalist Evades Spetsnaz on Pak Border

by Rob Schultheis



ABOVE: Twin Chinese Type 75-1 14.5mm ("Ziqriat") anti-aircraft machine guns on ridges and mountaintops blast away at MiGs flying to guerrilla targets in the north. Photo: Ed Grazda

IT was my fourth trip into wartime Afghanistan: another long-distance trudge with the mujahideen over jagged, dry mountains and through dusty deserts, bombed-out villages and cratered farmlands. Photographer Ed Grazda and I had traveled to the outskirts of Jalalabad, Afghanistan's fifth largest city, to watch an attack on a Soviet outpost. The attack never came off, thanks to a wave of bombing raids and a counterattack by a Soviet armored convoy. Now we were on our way back to the Pakistan border, accompanied by only a pair of unarmed Afghans, horsemen on their way to Pakistan to trade.

We set out in the early afternoon from a teahouse deep in guerrilla-held territory, high up one of the irrigated valleys south of



Mujahid with
PRC Type 69 (RPG-7) at Morro
on Pakistan /Afghanistan border.
This guerrilla camp, or *markaz*,
safeguards mujahideen infiltration and
supply routes. Pakistan is visible in the
background. Photo: Ed Grazda

Jalalabad. Unlike most of the eastern Afghanistan countryside, this valley hadn't been bombed heavily: There were crops in the fields, women and children in the villages, but few young men — most of them were away, off fighting with the mujahideen. Old peasants waved to us as we went by and kids shouted, "*Salaam aleikum*" (peace be with you). The people had seen us on our way to Jalalabad with the guerrillas, and they knew we were good foreigners, friends, unlike the hated *shuravi* (atheistic animals), as the Afghans call the Russians.

We were supposed to ride to the Pakistan border. I had a dreadful set of blisters, thanks to a too-tight set of new boots, and the mujahideen who introduced us to the horsemen, being hospitable Afghans, didn't



Author Rob Schultheis finally rests his blistered feet at Landi Kotal, Pakistan, after a frantic night spent avoiding Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the Tirah in Pakistan. Photo: Ed Grazda

FROM MOTHER JONES TO SOF

Rob Schultheis is an experienced foreign correspondent who has traveled deep into Afghanistan numerous times, filing articles for publications as diverse as *Newsweek*, *Mother Jones* and now *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. When he's home, Schultheis lives in the mountains of Colorado.

want me to have to walk the whole way. There was a problem, though: The horsemen had already overloaded their two steeds with huge, unwieldy bundles of trade goods. We were supposed to perch atop the lurching loads and hang on to the ropes to keep from falling, but it was easier said than done on the narrow up-and-down trails. We had gone less than 200 yards when the load I was sitting on shifted, dumping me into a knee-deep irrigation ditch. Grazda and the two Afghans guffawed loudly, but less than two minutes later Ed's horse twitched and sent him sprawling over a low stone wall. We decided to walk as much of the way to the border as we could.

We traveled on down the valley, over a saddle into another irrigated valley and to-





LEFT: Mujahideen escort armed with Chinese-made folding-stock AK assault rifles and RPG-7s finally caught up to author and photographer on the nightmarish journey out of Afghanistan to Landi Kotal, Pakistan. Photo: Ed Grazda



ABOVE: Mujahideen camp at Morro protects this section of the border with Pakistan, safeguarding mujahideen infiltration and supply routes. Muj are armed with Chinese Type 56 and 56-1 Kalashnikovs. Photo: Ed Grazda

ward the edge of the Soviet-occupied plains. By midafternoon we were passing close by a Soviet fire base that the guerrillas had pointed out to us on the way in, a clump of dug-in emplacements about two miles away. The horsemen told Ed to hide his cameras under his *patou*, the blanket all Afghans, and Afghan-dressed journalists, wear over their shoulders. The Soviets, they said, watch the trails with binoculars and if they see mujahideen or other suspicious-looking characters, they often call in air strikes or helicopter commandos.

In the early afternoon the trail was crowded with timber merchants hauling logs to Pakistan, refugees and occasional bands of guerrillas bound for the battlefield. But as the afternoon wore on, the traffic thinned out, then virtually disappeared. We soon found out why. As we climbed the pass that leads into the Nazian River Valley, the gorge that leads north to the border crossing, we met a crowd of refugees — peasant families. The Soviets were putting on a new offensive, they told us, and troops were pushing up into the lower Nazian Valley; if we didn't hurry, they would cut off our

escape route to Pakistan.

We hurried on, half-walking, half-trotting in the heat and the dust. The temperature must have been in the high 90s or low 100s, but there was no slowing, no stopping. We descended to the Nazian River to the first bombed-out village along the valley floor. On our way in, there had been a few guerrillas and civilians here; now everyone was gone, fled. The horsemen readjusted the loads on the packhorses and told Ed and me to saddle up. We still had a long way to go and our position was perilous, to say the least. The mujahideen had fled the valley and there was nothing between us and the Soviet convoy, nothing at all. Any second a covey of Mi-24 and Mi-8 Soviet attack heli-

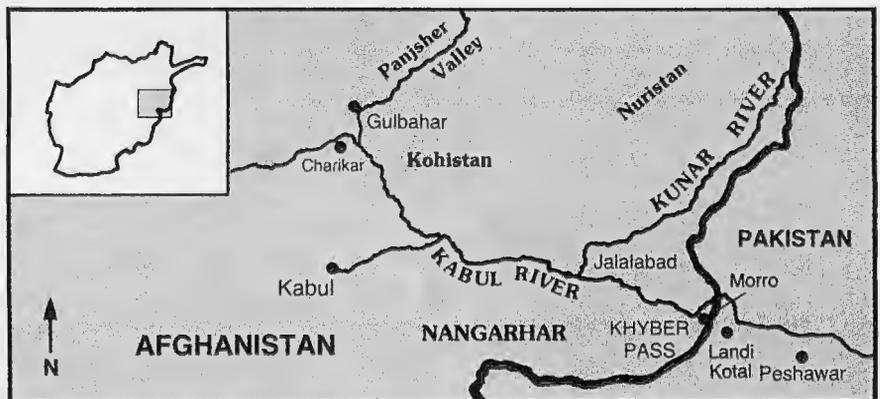
copters might fly up the valley or a Spetsnaz patrol might appear on the mountainside above us . . . or a slow-moving Su-7B Sukhoi fighter cruising at low altitude, looking for something to bomb, rocket or shoot.

But we were lucky that afternoon. The Soviets never caught up to us. We traveled up the Nazian River on horseback until dusk, then we continued on foot up the steep ravine that led to the ridge top that marked the border with Pakistan. Night fell — we clambered up the slippery slopes through mud, water, loose rock. At 2100 hours we were just below Morro, the guerrilla *markaz* (camp) that guarded this section of the border, safeguarding mujahideen infiltration and supply routes. The horsemen called out and a guerrilla sentry answered. A few minutes later we were being escorted to a tent just on the Afghanistan side of the border, less than 100 yards from Pakistan. The next day, the guerrillas told us, a group of mujahideen would escort us to Landi Kotal, the nearest town in Pakistan, a hard day's journey away. We thought we were safe, but we were, unfortunately, mistaken. Afghanistan is like that. You never know when disaster is going to strike.

The next morning we sat in a tent 50 feet inside Pakistan, just over the crest of the ridge, and watched Soviet MiGs scream overhead en route to guerrilla targets to the north. The *markaz's* single anti-aircraft gun, a double-barreled Chinese 12.7mm DShK "Dashika" heavy machine gun (HMG), blasted away at the MiGs, along with a host of other 12.7mm and 14.5mm HMGs on distant ridges and mountaintops.

We couldn't go from Morro to Landi Kotal because the Soviet advance was continuing and the mujahideen at Morro couldn't spare any men to escort us across the Tirah, the valley that lay between Morro

Mujahideen camp at Morro, just inside Afghanistan, where author narrowly escaped death or capture by Soviet Spetsnaz troops.

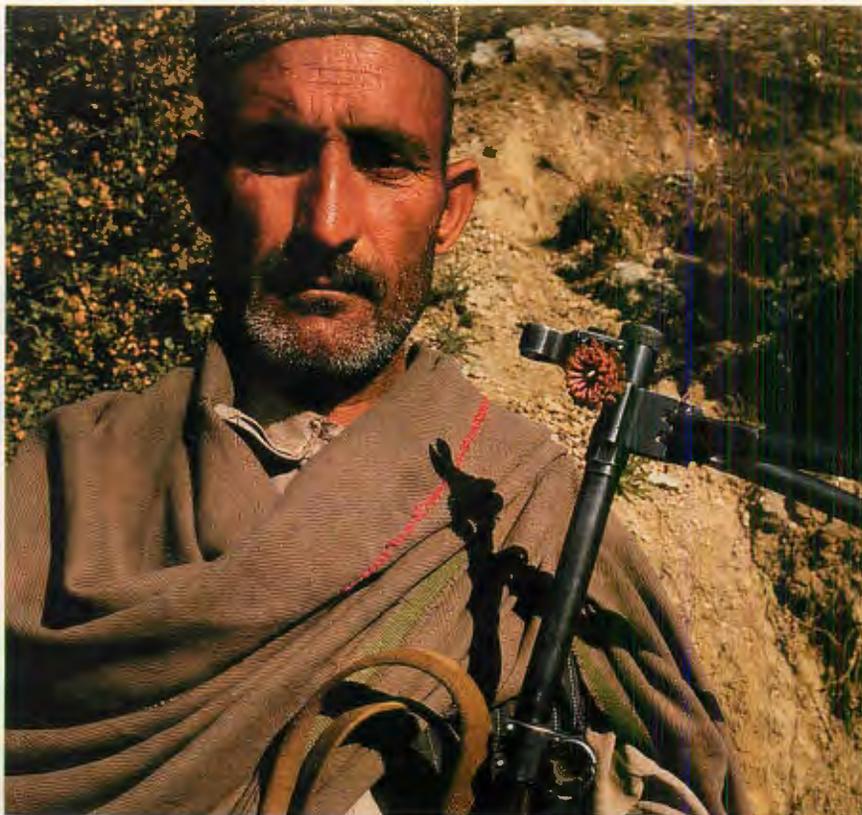


and Landi Kotal. Usually you don't need an armed escort to cross the Tirah, but right then you did. The week before, the mujahideen had captured a caravan carrying 2,000 AK-47 assault rifles sent by the Soviets to the Tirah tribesmen to get them to take up arms against the mujahideen and the Pakistani government. The Tirah people were angry and until they could reach some kind of accord with the mujahideen, travel across their territory would be hazardous at best.

We sat and waited and listened to the distant bombs rumble. I shot some videotape of the Dashika firing to go with the footage I had shot outside Jalalabad of a napalm attack by six MiGs. Ed and I talked with Morro's commander, a jolly one-legged old gent who had lost his other leg just below the hip to a Russian bomb. The old man wanted to know if I could help him find a better artificial leg, a modern plastic one, in Peshawar. His old one, an antique contraption of leather, wood and metal, was

Continued on page 77

RIGHT: Mujahid armed with RPD light machine gun is part of group that drove Soviets off ridgeline near Morro after heavy fighting. Photo: Ed Grazda



MOONLIGHT IN AFGHANISTAN

Rabat was our last overnight position in Afghanistan's Paktia Province. The 100 "muj" (mujahideen) traveling in our five-vehicle convoy would strain the resources of the small and desperately poor village, but we were warmly welcomed, not just because of traditional hospitality, but because of the presence of Soviet and Afghan puppet soldiers in a base just a few kilometers away.

Rabat's mosque, and usually the ad-hoc hotel for traveling muj, was located in one end of the largest mud-brick building in the village and was too small to accommodate our party. A quick recon of the facility convinced me that I would rather sleep outdoors and risk the vicious Paktian scorpions than endure the snores of 100 muj in a small, hot room.

Therefore, some of the commanders and I settled in on Afghan carpets at the village's outdoor mosque, a simple leveled-off earthen platform outlined in stones, one pointing southwest and notched to indicate the direction of Mecca. An unexpectedly generous meal of rice, goat, yogurt, curds, buttermilk (goat) and Afghan bread was followed by the evening prayer and then endless tea and stories. Having little else in this world, the Afghans enjoy their tea and stories immensely.

As it got dark, a full moon rose over the hills, bathing the scene in a luminescence that added just the right



Full moon over Rabat, Afghanistan. Photo: Jim Graves

Rabat's outdoor mosque, where *Soldier of Fortune Magazine's* managing editor and mujahideen commanders settled in for a night of tea and stories. Photo: Jim Graves



atmosphere. A friend of mine describes traveling with the muj in Afghanistan as "The Last Great Adventure." Having had a bath that day, a good meal and tea while listening to fierce tribesmen tell stories under a wonderful moon in an exotic locale, I was inclined to agree.

For some reason, the village *malik* (chief) told some of the young men to go inside the mosque and bring out oil lanterns. Seeing them moving up with the lanterns, I turned to Abdul, my escort officer from the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, and said that the lanterns would spoil the effect. Since I was the guest, when my comment was translated to the *malik*, he immediately ordered the lanterns taken away.

The village imam, a real old-timer with a voice capable of a call to prayer that could be heard the length and breadth of the valley, and whom I had considered about half mad, rocked back and forth, then said something in Pashto which had everyone laughing. Abdul translated: "Ah," said the imam, "people think that the Russians come here for politics, but it's not true. The Russians have come to steal our fresh air, our fruit and our moonlight, and we'll fight them for our moonlight."

I laughed too. Later I realized the mad old imam had struck closer to the truth about why the Afghans are winning and the Russians losing than anyone I'd heard.

When they're willing to fight you over their moonlight, you've got a problem.

— Jim Graves

STILL, cold air enveloped the woods like an icy, but crystal clear, fog. Early morning sun was just breaking through the dense forest, its rays glinting off the damp, multi-hued greens and browns of ramrod-straight pines, earth-hugging shrub and undergrowth.

It was quiet in the cold. Even through the tangled brush you could hear a twig snap 50 meters away. The men of 3rd Squad, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment Scouts, 82nd Airborne Division, made sure they didn't snap any twigs. There were only seven of them. In the area where they were operating there was a battalion of between 650 and 700 insurgents of the Popular Liberation Force — hardcore fighters who knew the terrain well.

Third Squad moved softly through the woods, Specialist Fourth Class Matthew Stoic, the squad leader, in front; Sergeant Jay Seale and Spec.4 John Labis, the two attached snipers, bringing up the rear. For I-505, the mission was to conduct consolidation counterinsurgency operations in targeted area of responsibility CAT, to destroy insurgent forces. That mission had wound its way down the chain of command to 3rd Squad. As scouts, their job wasn't to "destroy" anything or anyone but to find the enemy, report its locations and strengths, then let the rest of the task force sort it out. As they knew well, 82nd Airborne Division scouts are not designed to be fighters but skilled reconnaissance personnel — the eyes and ears of their battalion.

They went to ground in a temporary patrol base. Stoic and his Radiotelephone

AIRBORNE RECON

SOF Looks at 82nd's Scout Course

Text & Photos by John Coleman

RIGHT: Sergeant Jay Seale, I-505 Scout sniper and Ranger School grad, points out route of movement for scout patrol.

BELOW: Sergeant Michael Crouse, 1st Squad leader, cammies up before patrol ops.



Operator (RTO), Private First Class Richard Dicesare, moved off to set up a field-expedited 292 antenna to establish comms with their boss, First Lieutenant Brian Bulatao. Specialist Fourth Class Eddie Torres, the assistant patrol leader, was left in command. They closed up their 360-degree defense and waited.

About 100 meters away, they spotted movement through the undergrowth. Guerrillas, probably one of the roving bands of around 20-25 men, moving their way. In seconds, Torres and the others packed it up and moved out, back toward their last established rally point. They'd give Stoic and Dicesare an hour to link with them, then continue the mission — with or without their squad leader and RTO.

Movement was fast but controlled. It was a bit warmer now, but the squad was still cold. They'd inserted into the area last night by rubber boat, gotten wet, and were still wet. It was only a minor annoyance now as they occupied the rally point. Did the guerrillas pick up their presence? Where were Stoic and Dicesare? Captured, or . . .

Without warning, the Gs hit their position. No chance to run. M16 fire shattered the still forest, bodies crashed and fell in the green woods.

It wasn't a good morning for 3rd Squad.

But they learned from it. That's why the 1-505 Scouts were at the 82nd's Scout Reconnaissance and Surveillance Course (SRSC) tucked away in the backwoods of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, at the site of the old XVIII Airborne Corps' Reconnaissance Commando (RECONDO) school.

Without much ceremony, Torres and the rest of 3rd Squad were taken prisoner by SRSC instructor Staff Sergeant Daniel Fer-

Scout Reconnaissance and Surveillance Course (SRSC) instructor Staff Sergeant Daniel Ferrell goes over Stay Behind Operations class with 1-505 Scout platoon.

“One prime axiom of scouts: Don't get caught.”

rell and his opposition force (OPFOR) troops and marched back to Airborne Leaders' Course (ALC) headquarters, the controlling element for SRSC.

Later they'd be released to continue the rest of the three-day field training exercise, which culminated their 11-day course. But their few hours of captivity were an event they weren't likely to forget, even if it were only a training exercise. Perhaps it was an easy introduction to just how hard captivity *would* be if they were compromised and captured by a not-so-friendly enemy. It was a training point that validated one prime axiom of scouts: Don't get caught.

ALC's SRSC is designed to insure that they don't. It's a fine-tuning course that all 10 division scout platoons are required to attend. It hones skills infantry scouts have already developed through their own unit training programs.

“There are no distractions here,” Major Orlando Rivera, ALC's commandant, told me the first day I landed in the wilds of Fort Bragg. “It makes scouts better scouts. The leadership is able to prepare as if for actual wartime missions; they can do troop-leading procedures — give warning orders, conduct inspections and rehearsals — and carry out the mission.”

Accordingly, SRSC's stated mission is to “Provide the environment and resources necessary for scout platoons to become proficient in scout operations and skills as part

of Army of Excellence transition,” as well as “Serve as a vehicle for esprit and team building,” and “Provide the environment, resources and training to assist Ranger School candidates to prepare for Ranger School.” In terms of the last mission, the push is on in the 82nd to Ranger-qualify as many scouts as possible — an added plus for individuals, squads and platoons when it comes down to lurking through the woods to find the enemy.

For the most part, SRSC is not as grueling as Ranger School but its hours are long and the training as interesting and varied. An average SRSC day has the attending scout platoon standing first formation at 0520 hours, physical training (PT) from 0530-0630 hours and then approximately 12 lectures, demonstrations and hands-on training classes until 2130 hours that night. As an added factor, 1-505 Scouts trained in weather that rarely topped 50 degrees during the day — and got a helluva lot colder at night. Since cold weather seemed to be tracking me all over the United States, and because I carried plenty of “hawk” gear, it was really a small matter as far as I was concerned, especially considering the warm welcome I received from the 82nd.

Soldier of Fortune Magazine has had good comms with the 82nd since my visit to Fort Bragg back in mid-1986, which resulted in our feature article “One Shot, One Kill” (SOF, December '86) on XVIII Airborne Corps' Sniper School. In a phone conversation with their public affairs shop in late 1987, I inquired if the 82nd had any similar courses in the mill. The answer was affirmative — SRSC — and my request to cover it for SOF was quickly approved up the chain, the final OK coming from U.S. Army Forces Command.

SRSC instructor Hoyt Frazier runs scouts through pre-RTJ helicopter exit drills.



When I hit the street at Bragg, I checked in with Major Gardner Nason, the 82nd's Public Affairs Officer (PAO), who turned me over to Maj. Rivera, who in turn gave me the go-ahead to "see everything, talk with everybody and enjoy yourself." It was a reception similar to what I'd received from the 9th Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade only a few weeks earlier, and I appreciated it. It would be a good opportunity to check out training in America's front-line, rapid-deployment division.

After a day or so of ice-breaking, SRSC staff and 1-505's Scouts became used to me hanging around in the background snapping photos. Because the training program was fairly intense at times, I pretty much stayed out of the way and simply tagged along as an observer, throwing most of my questions at the training cadre rather than the scout platoon. My objective wasn't to report on any particular platoon (1-505 Scouts just happened to be the platoon in training at the time) but rather to concentrate on the course and what it had to offer. Was it a worthwhile effort? Did it offer training applicable to troops who might be at war within 48 hours?

Pretty tough questions. But then, the 82nd's scouts might be doing their job, for real, anywhere in the world, within hours. I'd watch training with an impartial, but critical, eye.

Sniper Squad firing was my intro to the course, run out on Bragg's Range 66D. In a relatively recent move, the Army had integrated snipers into scout platoons, thus creating a fourth squad comprised of six snipers in the platoon. Depending upon the

mission, two-man sniper teams from that squad may be attached to one of the other three scout squads for a variety of purposes, or they may be independently deployed.

Although snipers are primarily intelligence gatherers, their basic mission is to engage selected enemy targets or targets of opportunity. That's why we were out on 66D. It was a refresher shoot, targets from 300-600 meters, both stationary and moving. Unfortunately, the snipers were still armed with the M21 Sniper Weapon System (SWS), a modified M14 developed during

the early Vietnam days (fortunately, the Army has adopted Remington Arms Company's bolt-action 7.62x51mm M24 SWS topped with Leupold & Stevens, Inc.'s Model M3-10X scope, which should hit the inventory this year).

Even so, they hit fairly well during the timed shoots, the only problems arising with the moving targets at distance: Figuring the right lead had a couple of the newer snipers putting rounds in front or behind. Nonetheless, I knew I wouldn't want to be a "selected enemy target" with these guys

RIGHT: Rough Terrain Jump (RTJ) gear and pre-jump training at 82nd Airborne's SRSC.

BELOW: SRSC instructor conducts pre-jump on 1-505 Scout at "oh-dark-thirty."



behind the trigger.

Day Three of the course revolved around some classroom instruction but mostly field work near ALC headquarters. A stalking exercise was set up for the scouts and a stalk/shoot for the snipers in which they had to close on an "enemy" position, identify numbered and lettered signs (and in the case of the snipers, shoot), and then exfiltrate without being detected.

I set up with 1st Lt. Bulatao and Staff Sergeant Paul Turpin, the scout platoon sergeant, on a sandy, grass-covered berm facing the exercise area. There was plenty of cover for the infiltrating scouts, but even so it'd be a tough exercise: The "enemy" knew they were coming, knew the direction they'd be coming from and had binoculars and M49 spotting scopes trained on the area.

I asked Staff Sergeant William Gunter, the SRSC instructor running the exercise, how scouts usually did on this exercise. "About 50/50. The wind today will help them out. Usually it's the bush movement that gives them away."

Bush movement or not, we didn't spot a single scout from our vantage point on the berm until late in the exercise, when they started running out of time and started moving too quickly. As I wrote in my notes: "Good ex, good training, good troops. Probably pull it off in combat."

Following right behind the stalk were two other short field exercises, both good, both begging for more time and emphasis in the course. The first was ingenious in its simplicity: a walk down a road to identify well-known objects — rucksack, slingrope, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) round, boot, Kevlar helmet, pineapple grenade and others — planted off to the sides. It was a drill in attention to detail, item number one

SRSC instructors shout out "encouragement" while this scout heads for earth.

Scouts lift off for early morning RTJ out of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter.



on a scout's list of survival and mission-accomplishment techniques.

The second ex — tracking — was, like the first, good in intent and vital to scouts, but too short on time. Three scouts were sent out into a defined area. The remainder of their squad was tasked with tracking them down. As anyone who's done it, or tried to do it, will tell you, tracking is no easy task unless you've been brought up in an environment where you do it all the time.

Staff Sergeant Turpin told me later that tracking/anti-tracking was one of the platoon's weak points simply because training manuals, and even decent civilian books, on the subject just weren't available. By itself, tracking could form its own month-long class; SRSC could only devote a couple

hours of classroom and field work to it.

After lunch, when the temperature jumped up to a balmy 50 degrees or so, SSgt. Ferrell, a hard-charger who had taught at Fort Campbell's 101st Air Assault School, ran the platoon through its paces on the selection/occupation/construction of hides, another critical aspect of scout/sniper training. In essence, a hide is a rectangular hole in the ground, with strong overhead cover and concealment, that will hold two men for an indefinite period while they observe targeted areas. It has a number of applications: for scouts, usually in stay-behind operations while friendly forces withdraw and the enemy advances; for snipers the same, or during deployment behind enemy front lines.

For one platoon member at least, Spec.4 Labis, hides were old hat. I had watched him emerge from one he and his sniper-tear partner had dug during the sniper school he'd attended, and that SOF covered, back in 1986. The rest, if they hadn't done it before, would get their chance to dig and occupy one during the upcoming field training exercise (FTX).

Later that evening, back in my room in Fayetteville ("Fayette-Nam" as it used to be called), I wrote up my notes from the day. They read, in part: "SRSC looks pretty good for a unit course, fairly well organized, important subject material. Ferrell a first-rate instructor. Troops seem interested, good break from garrison for them. [One NCO from the platoon] told me it wasn't all that 'high speed' of a course, but the younger troops needed the work."

Granted, it wasn't a by-the-numbers operation, but it was a good foundation builder for the younger PFCs and Spec.4s in terms of learning what it takes to be a proficient

Staff Sergeant Paul Turpin, 1-505 Scout platoon sergeant (right), waits in first lift for UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter RTJ.



(make that read “one-who-stays-alive-in-combat”) scout.

Day Four took us back into the classroom for the most part, with a schedule of classes that had everyone’s notebook jammed full by day’s end: Scout/Sniper Log-Book/Sketching, Basic Knots, Field-Expedient Antennas (with corresponding practical application near ALC headquarters. Interestingly, the troops couldn’t raise ALC headquarters, which was no more than 300 meters away, with their expedient antennas, but they *could* converse with Range Control, some dozen or so kilometers distant), Initial Planning/Coordinations, Load Considerations, LZ/PZ (landing zone/pickup zone) Preparation and Marking, Ground-to-Air Transmissions, Medevac Request, Drop-Zone Operation, Fighting Light, and Fundamentals of Scout Operations Area/Route/Zone Recon/Screen.

It was a lot to assimilate and I wondered just how much took hold. But, assuming that these scouts had heard it all at some time before, and knowing that Army training generally runs along the lines of “instillation in memory via repetition in instruction,” I figured it was a good value day. Yet, having sat through hours of such classes myself in the past, I had to wonder about the value of class after class without the benefit of a hands-on exercise in between. Ideally, from what I’d heard, seen and done, classroom work should come in the morning when the troops are fresh and alert; afternoons, especially immediately

after lunch, should be devoted to practical field training.

I took off early that afternoon to liaise with the XVIII Airborne Corps’ and JFK Special Warfare Center’s PAOs, then wrapped myself around a beer and my notes from the day. They were short, general impressions: “Weather holding clear and cold. Classroom most of the day — [Major] Rivera says the pace picks up tomorrow. Big problem — *no one* had any combat time excepting Frazier [Grenada], so they take it all from the books. Wonder how many would last the first week in Nicaragua or Afghanistan doing combat OJT [on-the-job training]?”

Day Five pulled the platoon out of the classroom and onto the rappelling and Pro-Life Tower. This was the kind of training the troops had been waiting for, the stuff that sets scouts apart from everyone else. Rappelling, a means of roping into the target area when no chopper LZs are available, was new to a few of the scouts but old hat to most. Rig into a Swiss or mountain rope seat, hook on to the 120-foot doubled nylon rope with your D-ring, then “on rap-

pel!” Staff Sergeant Frazier, instructor for the training, cut no slack. You either did it the right way or you didn’t do it at all.

They mostly did it right.

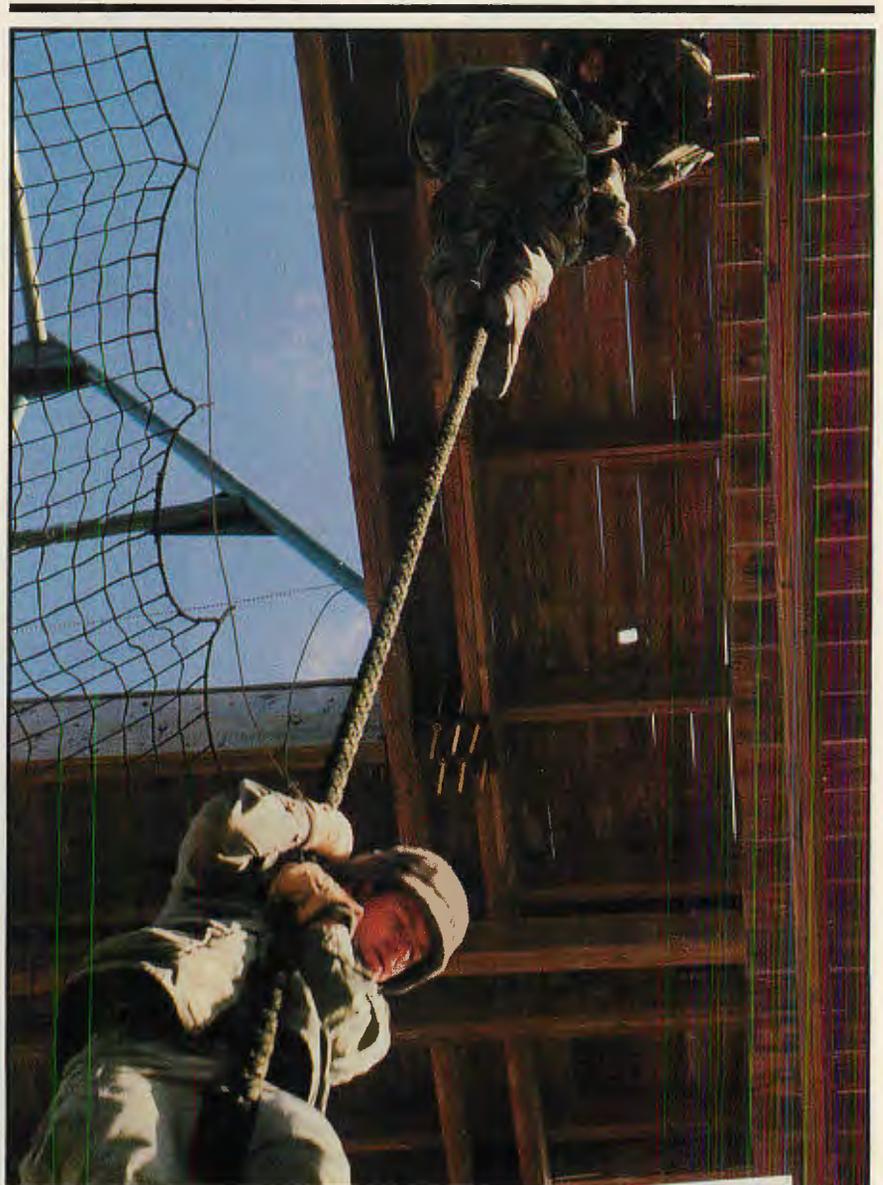
First phase consisted of a “Hollywood” rappel — no weapon or equipment. Frazier was up on the tower, “encouraging” the troops to kick out smartly, hold a good “L” position on the way down and look where the hell they were going. Second phase was a repeat, but this time with full combat gear. Frazier’s encouragement was more pointed: “Get that goddamned break hand tucked up under your ass or you’re gonna crash and burn!” It was sweet music, the only kind troops really hear and understand — and remember.

After everyone in the platoon was relatively proficient in the fine art of heaving themselves off a steady platform into the breeze, at least to Frazier’s satisfaction, they split into two groups: one to stay on for Fast Rope, and the other to SSgt. Ferrell’s Rough Terrain Jump (RTJ) familiarization training.

Hoyt Frazier is the type of instructor who’s going to keep troops alive in combat.

RIGHT: Fast Rope descent. According to SRSC instructor Staff Sergeant Hoyt Frazier, a 75th Ranger vet of Grenada, a Ranger platoon can unass a CH-47 helicopter in 26 seconds using this technique.

BELOW: It’s “Sit in the door!” and “Go!” for these scouts.



He's seen bullets fly, spent a lot of time with the Rangers and knows what he's talking about. He's also aggressive and commanding; the type who'll be in the running for a command-sergeant-major slot one of these days.

"It took 26 seconds for a Ranger platoon to unass a CH-47 using Fast Rope," he told us, holding up a 2½-inch diameter rope. Fast Rope is a fairly new innovation to the Army but certainly not a new concept. Remember how firemen, when the alarm sounded, used to jump onto a brass pole and slide down from the second to the first floor of the fire station? That, in essence, is Fast Rope. A combat force flies in by chopper, out goes the rope and, like firemen, the troops jump out, grab hold and slide down, using gloves and the insoles of their boots to control their descent. When you hit the ground your best deal is to do a quick parachute landing fall out of the way because the guy right above is coming down at a quick rate of knots.

There's a big advantage to Fast Rope over rappelling, and that's speed. On rappel, you're limited to four ropes at best and the time it takes for a man to hook on to the rope, clear the chopper, rappel down and then clear the rope. That means a hovering helicopter, which is not only detrimental to the chopper and crew in combat but also tends to compromise the incoming troops. With Fast Rope the chopper flares up over the target area, the Fast Rope goes out, the troops jump out and slide down in a flash and a blur and the rope is kicked out after them. Twenty-six seconds for a platoon? How long for a four-man scout insertion? Those troops would be in and gone before any enemy force could react.

Across the camp at the Pro-Life Tower, SSgt. Ferrell was running scouts through RTJ training. Most paras, at one time or

"Those troops would be in and gone before any enemy force could react."

another, have hit the trees, but it sure wasn't on purpose. In an RTJ, the purpose is to hit the trees; scouts aren't always going to find a nice, clear drop zone (DZ) in combat and the Army knows it. Suited out in RTJ gear (tough, camouflaged outerwear with a built-in rappelling line and face-protected helmet) with rucks fastened to the front, the scouts were hauled up the tower on a parachute harness, simulating a tree landing. The object of the exercise is to then rig yourself and gear for a quick rappel back down to earth.

Coupled with RTJ training was a stability operations (STABO) run-through. Just as DZs aren't always available for parachute insertion, nor LZs for chopper landing, there isn't always a nicely cleared area available for extraction. Enter STABO. A chopper flares into the scouts' area, nylon ropes are kicked out and, using a STABO harness or expedient rope seat, scouts hook on to the rope and are whisked out of the AO. You've got to put a lot of faith into the chopper pilots during STABO; little things like making sure you've got enough vertical height before he blasts off forward, dragging you through trees and across mountain-

Scouts practice bounding overwatch during small boat operations. Boat crews alternate covering each other while moving downriver.

tops (and that's happened in the past).

Although not all that mentally demanding, this was the type of training that put SRSC a cut above most other unit courses. It fit into the school's three stated missions, it was an individual and platoon confidence builder and they'd also be using most of it during their upcoming FTX. Most importantly, however, it was the kind of stuff that would make these scouts better combat soldiers.

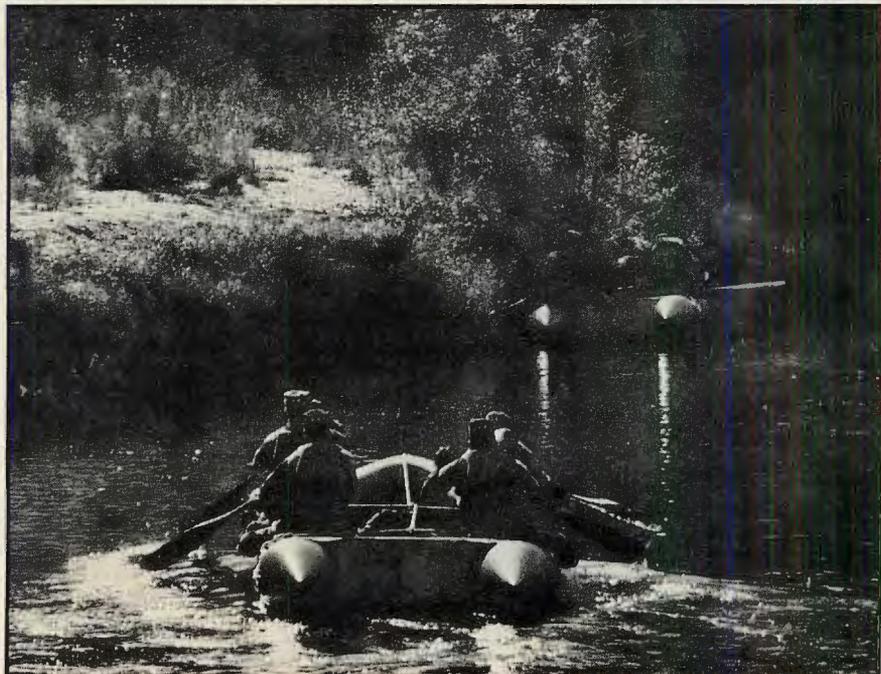
"Now we're cooking," my notes of the day read. "Rappel, Fast Rope, RTJ and STABO — how many 19- and 20-year olds ever get to do this? The kind of stuff that makes Army life fun and challenging. They'll walk away from SRSC a bit more cocky, maybe help keep them alive in the bush."

The first half of Day Six of SRSC's course again put the scouts out for hands-on work, this time for rope bridges and water insertion techniques — namely rubber boats — again FTX-applicable training. It was cold and wet work but went smoothly because most of the scouts had done it before. Training was starting to wind down in terms of classroom and field instruction — ropes and boats were last. That afternoon, their boss, 1st Lt. Bulatao, received his FTX operations order (OPORD) from Maj. Rivera.

And a slick and well-prepared OPORD it was, too, perhaps one of the best I'd ever seen either in training or combat: 21 pages comprising a comprehensive OPORD itself, an intelligence annex, an appendix giving the general situation concerning the not-so-mythical country of Matanzas in Central America, an in-depth "Area of Operations Geographical and Intelligence Brief" (detailing the weather, terrain, politics, economy, sociology and psychology of Matan-

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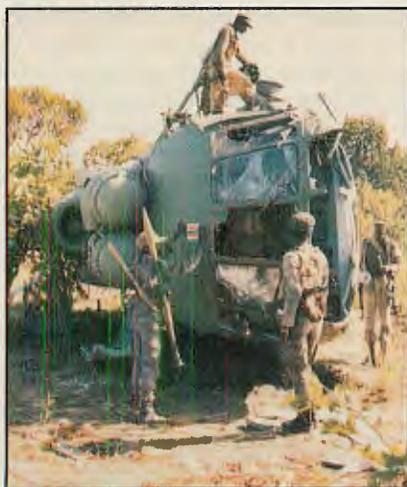
82nd Airborne scout on patrol.



by Al J. Venter

Photos Courtesy of the Author

When Will It Cost the Comms Too Much?



AFRICA WATCHER

South Africa-based writer/photographer Al J. Venter is *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine contributing editor for Africa.

ABOVE: Extremely tenuous logistics lines in central Angola involve much of ammunition required for attacks being carried by hand across waterways such as this one in Longa. Here UNITA troops pass along South African 81mm M-61 high-explosive mortar rounds.

ABOVE LEFT: UNITA soldiers inspect remains of Angolan Air Force Soviet-built Mi-17 transport/gunship chopper shot down by Stinger missiles in vicinity of Luvuei in early November 1987. Soldiers carry Chinese Type 56-1 folding-stock assault rifles while troop in center has RPG-7 (rocket-propelled grenade) launcher sans telescopic sight.

LEFT: Rebel soldier inspects pod which became detached from Soviet-built Mi-17 shot down by Stinger antiaircraft missile.

RIGHT: Soviet-built GAZ-66 truck in flames after UNITA attack on Lucusse.



SIEGE

AT CUITO CUANAVALÉ



BY January 1988, fighting around the southeast Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale had escalated into the heaviest of the 14-year civil war between FAPLA (Army for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola, the communist Angolan government army) and the anti-communist guerrillas of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola).

What is significant about the battle for Cuito Cuanavale — which has already been dubbed “Angola’s Dien Bien Phu” — is that Angolan and Cuban air forces have been prominent participants and hundreds of Cuban soldiers have been involved in the defense of the city during this siege. Attack aircraft making ground-strike forays have included Soviet-built MiG-21s and MiG-23s as well as Soviet Sukhoi fighter-bombers flown by East German and Cuban pilots. Furthermore, in a desperate bid to hold off Savimbi’s forces, the Angolans have reportedly resorted to the use of chemical warfare. With UNITA literally at the gates of the city as this article goes to press, Cuito Cuanavale could well be the worst defeat for FAPLA in 12 years.

American-supplied Stinger anti-aircraft missiles have taken a sizable toll, although recent indications are that Angolan and communist air force pilots have developed a reasonably effective counter-tactic of “low approach, guns blazing” in a bid to disorient UNITA ground personnel. By January 1988, weekly communist aircraft losses to the Stingers were considerably less than they had been several months before, but they are still numbered in terms of dozens for the overall six-month period.

Reports from Lisbon, Spain, indicate that UNITA’s ground attackers (supported by South African specialists and technicians) lobbed up to 200 155mm shells a day into the beleaguered town from South African G5 and self-propelled G6 howitzers. Cuito Cuanavale is reported to be in shambles: its buildings destroyed and its radar network knocked out. The removal of Cuito Cuanavale from the overall Angolan radar network grid creates a serious gap in the aerial defenses of south Angola, a situation which the Soviet Union has spent billions of dollars trying to prevent. Aircraft that were left behind at the airstrip also became casualties of this ongoing battle.

Reports indicate that by the end of January the condition of Cuito Cuanavale’s defenders had become desperate. There were no medical supplies for treating seriously wounded FAPLA and Cuban troops. Also, UNITA cut all approach roads to Cuito, so

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South African 155mm G5 howitzer. Anti-communist forces have used G5s and self-propelled G6s to pound the southeastern Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale, knocking out its entire radar network.

there were no food supplies coming in. The matter was further exacerbated by the fact that several large bridges around the town were blown up by UNITA and South African artillery, completely isolating the place from the outside world. Although the Angolan Air Force (AAF) had attempted to drop in supplies by air, the practice was discontinued after two AAF Soviet-made Ilyushin transport planes were knocked out by Stingers during their approach runs. The Angolan news agency, AIM, reported in Lisbon during the last week of January that Cuban ground forces had started moving toward Cuito, but there was little they could do about relieving conditions without massive supplies of arms and armor. With the rainy season and with the bridges blown, they could not cross swollen rivers to get closer to the target area.

It is significant that last year's successful FAPLA offensive against Dr. Savimbi's stronghold at Jamba was launched from Cuito Cuanavale. Angolan government losses during the recent Cuban- and Soviet-backed offensive in eastern Angola have exceeded 10,000 killed. Current estimates indicate that a similar number have been wounded. Losses by Savimbi's UNITA movement have been conservatively estimated at about 3,000 killed and twice that number wounded. The South African army has acknowledged that about 30 of its soldiers and airmen have died in the offensive, which began in August 1987.

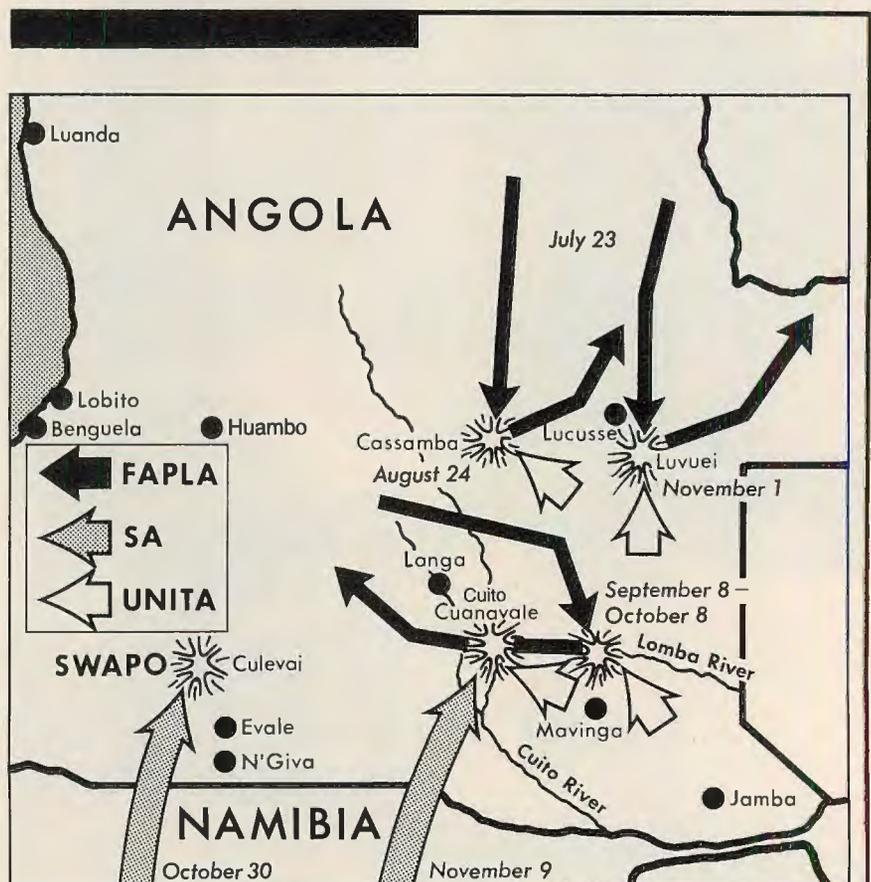
Additionally, South African forces that came to the aid of Savimbi in a bid to prevent a breakthrough to the UNITA headquarters in southeast Angola have captured several state-of-the-art Soviet missile and radar systems, "between 60 and 80" new and undamaged T-54/55 Soviet tanks and large numbers of armored and logistical vehicles, according to South African intelligence sources. More significantly, Cuban losses during the campaign are estimated at several dozen killed and two pilots captured following the downing of a MiG-23 by a Stinger. Three Soviet senior personnel are known to have died in one attack in the north.

More ominous is the report that, for the first time in southern Africa, the Soviet-backed forces used chemical weapons along



the northern UNITA-held fringe of the campaign in an area between Cassamba and Lucusse (see map). American observers attached to UNITA forces are aware of the new development, as are the South Africans

who have in their possession film of victims who were exposed to Soviet chemical warfare. Some of these victims are being treated by South African medical specialists. The South African public has not yet been advised



Sites of recent battles between FAPLA and UNITA forces in Angola.

of Cuban and Soviet use of chemical weapons in the Angolan war for fear of adverse reaction back home. It is only a question of time, however, before rumor and unofficial reports force the issue into the open.

It is interesting that, with current ongoing military operations in this corner of lower

west Africa, South Africa has replaced Israel as the source of captured, new-generation Soviet military weapons systems. Brought back behind South African lines were more than a dozen complete SAM-8 (surface-to-air missile) anti-aircraft systems, two SAM-13s and what have been

termed "five SAM-14 and SAM-16s," although there is no indication how many of each of these two systems were taken intact. An unknown number of SAM-9s were also captured. Several Soviet Flat Face target acquisition radar systems were also captured and are in the possession of the South



Photo sequence illustrates method of operation of UNITA forces in eastern, central and northern Angola — regions where communist Angolan government



still operates railways. UNITA forces concentrate in certain areas and then move into attack position on small track carts.



LEFT AND CENTER: White explosive charges are laid on track of bridge to be blown. RIGHT: Charges are detonated and bridge is blown.

UNITA SABOTAGES VITAL RAIL LINK

Sabotage of the vital and strategic Lobito rail link continues after more than a dozen years of civil war in Angola. These pictures — taken during an actual operation near the city of Huambo in central Angola — show the extremely effective modus operandi that has kept the line inoperable for so long.

During the Portuguese colonial period, which ended with a military coup d'état in Portugal in April 1974, this vital rail link connected the large and modern Angolan port of Lobito over a distance of more than 1,000 miles with several independent black nations in the interior. Much of the copper and other minerals of the mines of Zambia and Zaire were routed for export through Lobito. More than 50 percent of the imports required by these nations were ferried from Lobito into the interior.

Now, with the rail link cut, Angola and other countries in the region have to route their produce (both exports and imports) through South African ports, making them economically dependent on the white-controlled government. The Tan-Zam railway line, built specifically by the communist Chinese to circumvent such a need, can handle only a tiny proportion of the needs of Zambia through the Tanzanian capital and port

of Dar es Salaam.

The rail line has an interesting history. It was built by the Portuguese, using largely forced labor, before World War II in a bid to open up much of the African interior. It achieved this through collaboration with Belgian interests in the erstwhile Belgian Congo (Zaire) and British authorities in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Run effectively, it certainly helped promote development in vast reaches of the Black Continent where there had been nothing before. It was also used extensively by the Portuguese army during the 1960-74 colonial war that eventually ended Portugal's rule in Africa. In all that time it was never really effectively cut by the guerrillas.

Following the civil war among several Angolan national movements, in which the Soviets supported the present governing MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and the West gave succor to the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) and thereafter to Dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, various interests laid claim to sectors of the rail link. Each, in turn, destroyed much of the railway system in a bid to make the whole inoperable for the rest. In this task, Savimbi's UNITA movement has been the most successful.

Large sections of rail have been removed (allegedly about 200 miles, although there has been no independent

confirmation of this figure) and most of the bridges that were built by the Portuguese destroyed and rolling stock sabotaged. It has been estimated by independent German and French sources that even if the war were to end today, it would take a concerted Western effort at least four years to get the line operating again against an expenditure of \$2.7 billion. But since the civil war shows no signs of abating, there is little likelihood of this happening.

These pictures show UNITA soldiers during an operation immediately east of the second largest city in Angola, Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa), headquarters of Dr. Jonas Savimbi until he was driven out by Cuban-backed FAPLA (military wing of the MPLA) forces. Troops arrive with equipment on a flatcar across one of the stretches of still-usable line in the interior. At the bridge intended for destruction, they carefully and professionally lay out *plastique* (of French origin, incidentally). Then the blast.

An estimated 200 bridges and connection links have been destroyed in this manner, giving strength to the theory being bandied about in some quarters that even if Dr. Jonas Savimbi were eventually to achieve a measure of power in Angola, he would not be interested in linking his country to potentially equally unstable black states to the immediate east of Angola.

SIEGE



CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

There has long been confusion as to the exact number of Cuban soldiers based in Angola. Part of the answer was provided by a member of the Cuban Ministry of Defense on a visit to Maputo, Mozambique, in January 1988. He admitted to (and was quoted by the Angolan news agency, AIM, in Lisbon, Spain) a total of "about 40,000" Cubans currently serving in Angola.

It is likely that this tally includes the recent move of another 9,400 Cuban soldiers airlifted from Havana by Soviet transport aircraft into Luanda following the military debacle in southeast Angola toward the end of 1987.

That relations between the Cubans and ordinary Angolans (as opposed to highly placed Angolans in senior government positions) are strained is no longer a secret. Cubans have been spat upon while walking in the streets of Luanda. Open abuse is commonplace from native Angolans who accuse their Hispanic *compadres* of compounding their catastrophic economic situation and prolonging conflict in other parts of the country. Obviously, the war against Savimbi, who seeks to divide the country and foist his own personality on the political scene, though regarded as necessary, is not a popular one.

The issue is also highlighted by the fact that Cubans on active service in Angola are not allowed to move about alone in any of the towns or cities in which they are stationed. Nor are they now permitted to fraternize with the locals because of a fairly severe AIDS problem which has surfaced in Luanda, Huambo and other centers during the past year. The AIDS problem is severe enough to have curtailed the provision of Angolan blood to Cuban casualties in

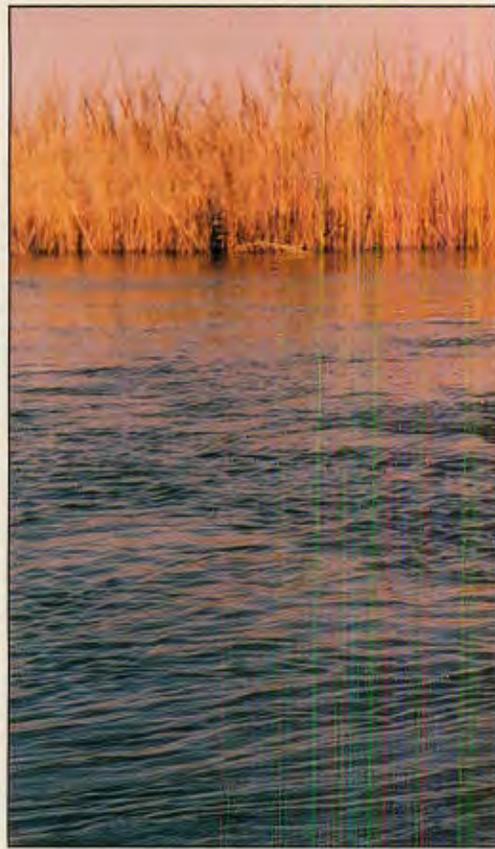
April or May 1987. Much of this blood was found to be the newly discovered HIV sero-positive strain. All blood supplies for Cuban and other Warsaw Pact personnel serving in Angola now comes from Eastern Europe, principally East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

There is also tension between Cuban forces and the Angolan army (FAPLA). The Angolans resent Cuban control over their units: Most Angolan commanders are answerable to a Cuban regional commander. They deplore the fact that Cubans live under more favorable conditions than their own men, are fitted out with better equipment and supplied with superior food. Most of all, they deplore the fact that Cuban army contingents are strictly segregated from the rest. Some FAPLA officers were able to confide to their South African colleagues during the Joint Monitoring Commission, which was implemented following a cease-fire in January 1984 in southern Angola, that this form of segregation was tantamount to apartheid.

Perhaps the most serious charge made by some captured FAPLA officers during the recent offensive was that Cuban officers had a habit of calling for evacuation helicopters as soon as the going became rough. This had a drastic effect on FAPLA morale in the firing line.

Also, the majority of FAPLA officers regard the Cuban command structure in their country with some suspicion for the simple reason that, in almost a dozen campaigns in which Cubans have been involved against South African forces since 1975, not one has ended in victory for the home team.

For this reason alone, the Cubans are sensitive about their role in Angola; also because of the massive defeat suffered during the latter part of 1987, which forced Havana to pump in almost 10,000 more of its troops, if only to maintain the status quo in Luanda.

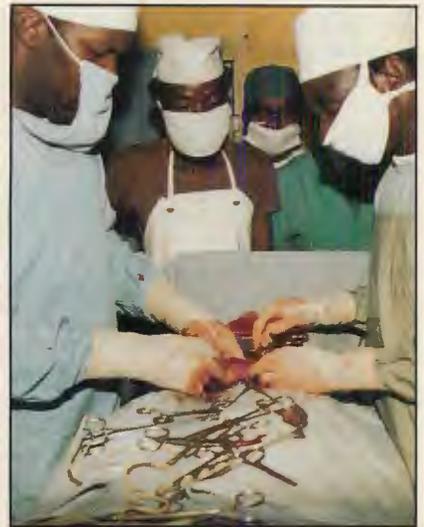


ABOVE LEFT: UNITA soldiers go over Soviet T-34/85 medium tanks captured in central Angola after taking Cassamba. Soldier on right has folding-stock Chinese Type 56-1 slung across his back.

RIGHT: Remains of Soviet-built Mi-24 helicopter gunship are brought back to UNITA base at Jamba in southeastern Angola. Troop at left has Chinese Type 56-1 folding-stock assault rifle, while troop on right in background has Portuguese G3-A2 with see-through magazine slung across his back.

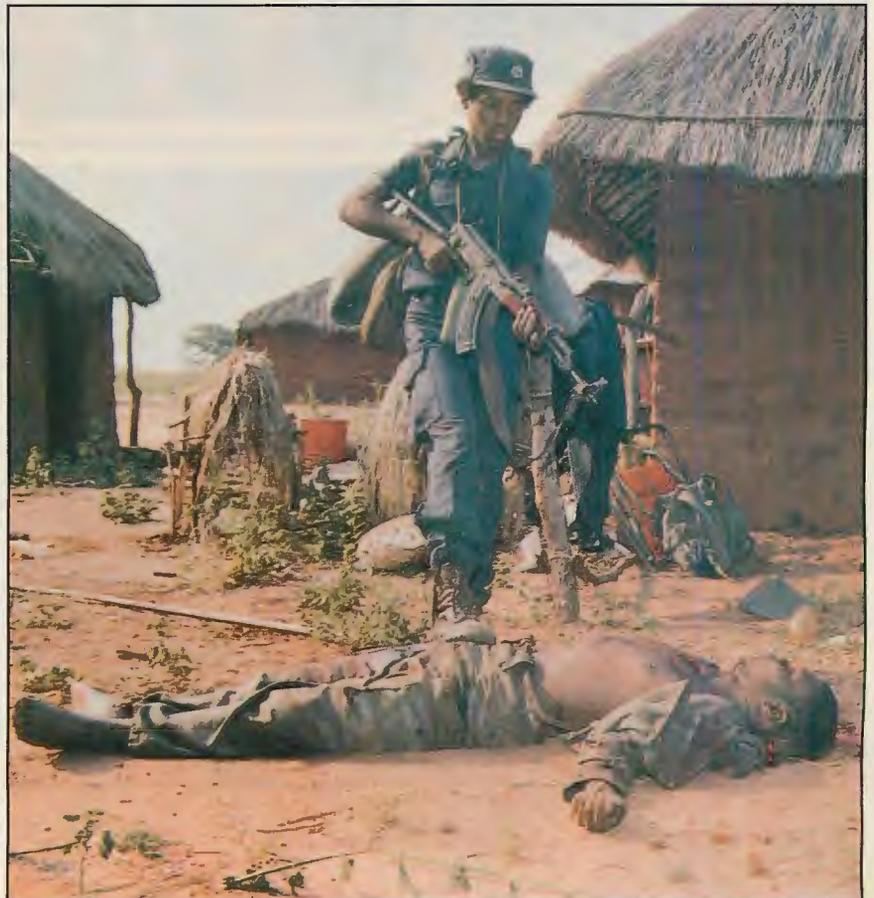
BELOW RIGHT: Soviet high-explosive bomb (note Cyrillic writing on tail fin) is checked in open area after aborted counteroffensive by FAPLA forces at Cassamba. UNITA soldiers carry Chinese Type 56-1 folding-stock assault rifles.

FAR RIGHT: Communist FAPLA soldier with chest and neck wounds lies dead after being accosted by a UNITA soldier armed with Chinese Type 56-1 folding-stock assault rifle.



ABOVE: UNITA doctors performing post-battle surgery in improvised hospital near Cuito Cuanavale.

LEFT: UNITA army being ferried across strong waterway near Longa, the scene of heavy fighting in recent months.



SIEGE

African Defence Force (SADF). Other equipment brought back intact and in what was termed "great quantity" were items as diverse as large numbers of Soviet 82mm mortars, AGS-17 grenade launchers, five TMM mobile bridges, as well as a wide variety of East Bloc artillery, some of which has already been deployed by Dr. Savimbi's UNITA movement.

In terms of value and tonnage, Soviet equipment losses are estimated at between \$1 and \$2 billion and amount to about twice the tonnage (roughly 50,000 tons) of hardware taken during the mammoth Operation Protea of 1981. Depots the size of football fields are being put aside along the South-West Africa/Angola border to house and

Continued on page 79



ABOVE LEFT: UNITA soldier obtains primitive medication for leg wound deep in Angolan bush.

ABOVE: UNITA forces armed with Chinese Type 56 assault rifles line up for parade at Jamba. Banner with likeness of UNITA leader Dr. Jonas Savimbi is in background.

LEFT: South African 155mm G6 self-propelled howitzer. G6s and towed G5s have been instrumental in the siege of Cuito Cuanavale by anti-communist UNITA forces.



FIRST CONVENTIONAL ARMOR ONSLAUGHT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Events in southeast Angola during the latter part of 1987 were highlighted by the first full-scale tank-on-tank armored battle yet fought in the subcontinent.

When Angolan government forces (FAPLA) launched their two-pronged onslaught southward out of Cuito Cuanavale in early November, they did not count on any substantial South African involvement in the war. The South African economy, though on the upgrade, is still under heavy pressure following the collapse of the Rand. Also, a state of emergency still exists in most major South African urban areas, and civil unrest — while less extreme than the previous level of intensity — continues.

For these reasons, and because South Africa has in recent years shown itself sensitive to overseas criticism, particularly from Western Europe and the United States, Angolan President Dos Santos and his Cuban, Soviet and East German advisers gambled that South Africa would not involve itself in the conflict during a dry-season offensive against Dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. Therefore, when FAPLA launched an armored thrust down the dry riverbed of the Lomba River toward Jamba in southeast Angola, imagine their surprise at finding scores of newly refurbished South African Olifant (Elephant) main battle tanks ready to take up the cudgels on behalf of Savimbi's rebel movement.

During the battle that followed in the sandy bush country of what the Portuguese term *Terras do fim Mundo* (Land at the End of the Earth), all but 10 of the 72 Soviet T-55 tanks that were thrust into battle were either knocked out or captured within the first 36 hours. The last 10 were taken intact by South Afri-

Centurion Olifant (Elephant) main battle tank refurbished by Armscor engineers in South Africa.

can forces a few days later, after their crews had fled into the bush. This provided the South African military arsenal with the kind of hardware it is known to have been seeking but had been unable to buy because of a decade-old United Nations arms embargo. For their part, the South Africans had two of their Olifants immobilized: One lost a set of tracks after it hit a land mine, the other took a shell through the engine casing. Both were later repaired in situ by South African engineers.

What is significant about the involvement of South African tanks (Pretoria is not prepared to commit itself to the actual numbers involved) is that the South African Defence Force was able to move large numbers of heavy armor (the Olifant is based on the British Centurion heavy frame) without the enemy getting wind of the move. This is all the more remarkable because the tanks obviously had to be moved overland en masse, partly by rail and the balance of the journey by low loaders. It was a huge logistical exercise carried out in secret.

This 2,000-kilometer journey was undertaken largely through South-West Africa/Namibia, a land where SWAPO (South-West African People's Organization) still has massive political influence. Had SWAPO supporters known about the move, they certainly would have told their compatriots in Angola. It would have been impractical to take the more direct route through Botswana without alerting the enemy, even if this were politically possible. The journey was accomplished by moving only at night and (according to debriefings of captured Cuban, FAPLA and SWAPO personnel) the arrival of South African armor was as much of a surprise to the Angolans as it was to those few South

Africans who heard about the event afterward.

Having achieved a fairly remarkable success in the first southern African tank battle, the Olifant appears to have made a creditable showing of a variety of modifications applied by Armscor specialists in South Africa. Almost all these new-generation versions have been developed from batches of derelict Centurion tanks that the South Africans have acquired over the years from countries as diverse as Britain, Iraq, Jordan and India.

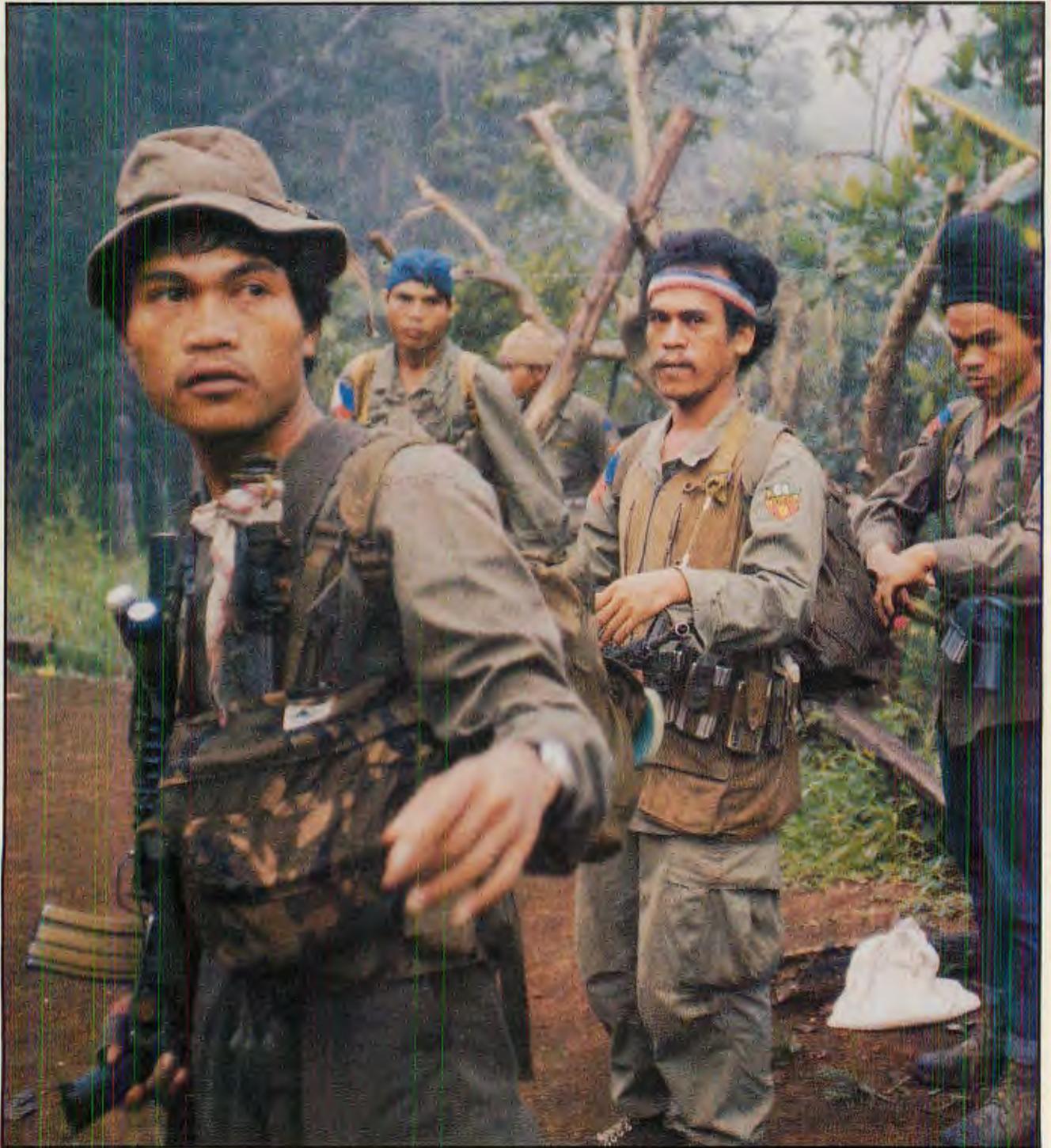
During the early 1970s, South African agents are known to have acquired 200 obsolete Centurions from the Indian army, shipped them over to Africa by barge and then stripped them down to their shells. Anywhere else in the world these rusty hulks would have been sold for scrap. But because of the United Nations arms embargo, Armscor of necessity set to work using state-of-the-art technology and a good infusion of European and Israeli expertise to create the Olifant, literally from the ground up.

The tank's laser sighting devices are Israeli, the engines West German, the guns South African and the hundreds of other innovations are from countries around the globe. Many have been adapted with equipment taken off knocked-out Soviet T-54/55 tanks from previous cross-border operations, such as Operation Protea and Operation Askari.

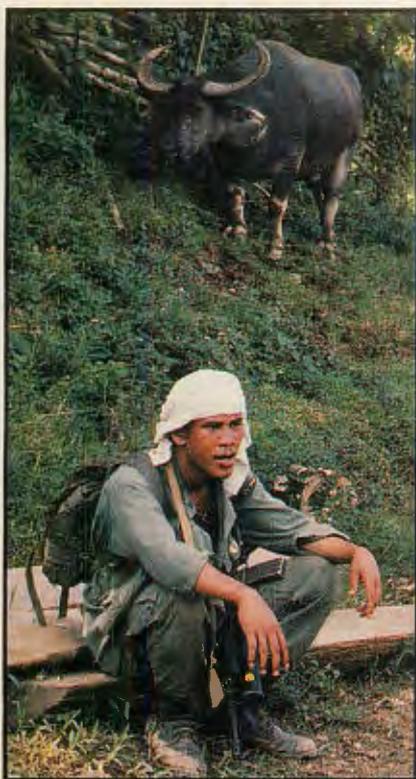
So successful has this program become that several countries have lately approached South Africa to refurbish their own obsolete Centurions. Armscor remains noncommittal about whether it is helping either Iraq or Iran in this respect.

The end result is that the South African army now sits with dozens of brand-new Soviet T-55 tanks and enough spares to keep them operational for a decade.

Sergeant Dagoc of Philippine army prepares to move out after spending night along the trail.



PHILIPPINE PATROL



Philippine army soldier takes a break during long patrol as water buffalo looks on.



Author Gene Scroft (left) in Philippine village of Vilauarte.

SOF Staffer in the Field Against NPA

**Text & Photos
by Gene Scroft**

THE point man suddenly crouched and I heard the sound of a round being chambered somewhere very near. I quickly surveyed the dense Philippine jungle and felt the adrenaline flowing through my body. Every instinct told me that all hell was about to break loose.

I had come to Mindanao expecting action. It's the second largest island in the Philippine archipelago and, though rich in gold and timber, has always been a trouble spot. Americans discovered the volatility of the region when they first encountered the Moslem Moro tribesmen after gaining control of the islands from the Spanish in the 1890s. The soldiers found that the standard-issue .38-caliber round failed to stop the bolo-wielding warriors who tied cords tightly around their arms and testicles in preparation for death in battle. Arsenal-rebuilt Army M1873 single-action revolvers in .45 Long Colt caliber were issued to American troops specifically for their ability to stop these fanatic charges with finality at close range, and the success of the .45-caliber round influenced later adoption of the M1911 pistol in .45 ACP. Luckily for the GIs, the .45 rounds worked extremely well.

Today the armed Moslem threat is represented by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The government has been largely successful in controlling the MNLF because Moslems account for only about 35 percent of the population of Mindanao and because of the tendency of the Moros to fight pitched battles in places where the

SOLDIER WRITER

Gene Scroft was an experienced soldier before he became a combat correspondent, and his experience has served him well. A West Point graduate who served in the 75th Rangers and the 82nd Airborne before becoming a full-time

adventurer, Scroft has filed stories with SOF from war zones all over the globe. For more of his adventures, see "Holy War Combat Tour" (December '86), "Yank in Afghanistan" (January '87), "War Zone Bocay" (September '87) and "Beirut's Christian Commandos" (October '87).



Map check during Sergeant Dagoc's patrol. Map clearly shows plan to surround objective C using various checkpoints in hope of forcing enemy to flee into an ambush at checkpoint J. Plan failed due to improper coordination and navigation.

"Any way you look at it, poor security is a fatal flaw for men at war."

government's superior firepower can overcome their determination. As of this writing there is an effective cease-fire between the two sides, but violence remains just below the surface.

Major General Caesar Tapia, commander of the Philippine forces in the southern islands, realizes that his main threat now comes from the guerrillas of the communist New People's Army (NPA). The NPA flourished under the corrupt rule of Ferdinand Marcos and, although the institution of the democratic government of President Aquino has removed the main impetus for NPA growth, there are still an estimated 24,000 NPA guerrillas roaming the Philippine countryside.

The general told me to see his hard-charging 2nd Brigade commander in Davao, Colonel Ramberto Saavedra, if I wanted to see action against the communists. Saavedra took command in February 1987 and in that short time has been able to transform an area once known as "Murder City" into the country's model counterinsurgency example.

Saavedra knows that his men need to be trained in this type of warfare. With this in mind he started his own patrolling course based on the Philippine army's Scout-Ranger school. In the colonel's course, even test missions are combat operations against the NPA. It wasn't enough for the colonel that the class made contact with the enemy on their first mission. He was sending them out again; this time I would get to go along.

Our plan was to send a company-sized element split along two axes of advance toward our objective, the village of Vilauarte. Local communities consistently give information on NPA activities to the army, and in this case they indicated that between 50 and 100 communists were operating from this village. One team was to occupy the hill to the north of the village while the other team occupied the high ground to the south. We hoped to force the enemy to fight or to flee in the direction of a waiting ambush provided by an adjacent battalion.

At 2300 hours we were delivered to our line of departure in 2.5-ton trucks. With only about 12 operational helicopters available in the entire southern command, it is

impossible to provide air support to all operations. This actually may be a blessing in disguise. Lack of air resources forces the army to cover ground on foot, effectively giving them a presence in areas that they would otherwise merely fly over. Helicopters, while useful for quick movement and medevac, don't guarantee success, as Americans know from bitter experience.

As soon as we started walking, the unit's poor training became obvious. Our team leader, Sergeant Dagoc, spent most of his time running back and forth along the column trying to maintain control. A forward location in the column and a few silent hand signals would have been more effective, but he seemed ignorant of these basic techniques.

At 2400 hours the patrol halted. What I assumed to be a temporary halt lasted all night, with troops sleeping, and in many cases snoring, all along the line. Sgt. Dagoc said that he wasn't sure of his location and wanted to wait for daylight to get a local guide. American trainees spend many sleepless nights huddled under ponchos with map and compass trying to figure out where they are; Filipino soldiers could use some similar training before they are sent on combat missions. At dawn we prepared our morning meal at a small house whose occu-

pants had fled at our noisy approach.

Prepackaged field rations are an unnecessary luxury in the Philippine army. The rice and canned sardines that the troops carry give them all the carbohydrates and protein any soldiers need, and the abundant fruits and vegetables available in the countryside give delicious variety and balance to the diet. Filipino officers like to tell the story of an American military representative who was horrified by the lack of U.S.-style rations, while the Filipino soldiers were bragging to him about how well they ate.

Inadequate security was a far more serious problem than the quality of the chow. Even a small enemy force could have overpowered our meager two-man security element and slaughtered the lounging troops. Any way you look at it, poor security is a fatal flaw for men at war.

An hour after we moved toward our objective, we heard voices coming from a rubber-tree orchard. The patrol silently surrounded the area and was not detected until a water buffalo got wind of it and stampeded in the opposite direction. The voices belonged to a group of civilians, who told us that there were no NPA in the area. Although the troops treated them with courtesy, there was terror in their eyes. Was it something that NPA or soldiers had done to them in the past, or were they actually guerrillas in fear of being exposed? Who knows — insurgencies are always ambiguous.

The patrol finally got off the road when we could see Vilauarte. As soon as we moved to occupy the hilltop, we were engulfed in bamboo and elephant grass sharp enough to cut exposed skin. The point man was daunted by the thick grass and hesitated to move forward. I realized that we had to occupy the hilltop soon and, since I was traveling right behind the point in hopes of getting some good action photographs, I took the lead and started breaking a trail.

The vegetation was so thick that the only way to make a path was to lie on top of it. When we finally reached the ridge, we discovered a fresh trail leading to the top of the hill. Being unarmed, I slowed to a crawl so that the soldier behind me would move out front. He didn't take the hint. When I slowed down, he did the same. When I stopped, he stopped. What the hell — I gave him my camera and took his rifle. With our



There are approximately 7,000 islands in the Republic of the Philippines. This story concerns communist insurgencies on the two largest islands, Mindanao in the south and Luzon in the north.



This Cadillac Gage Commando V-150 armored vehicle is armed with a .50-caliber HMG and an M60 machine gun. Various versions of the V-150 provide most of the armored firepower for the Philippine armed forces.

weapons at the ready, we slowly moved up the trail, half expecting to encounter the entire NPA. What we found were the remnants of a small fire and a beaten-down area that had recently served as an NPA observation post. Unfortunately, the communists had fled.

From this vantage point we could clearly see the village. While the sergeant prepared to call in our position, I decided to get my bearings. I didn't have a map, but my compass indicated that we were south of the village. The operation order stated that we should be on the high ground to the north. A quick check of the sergeant's map verified my suspicion that we had occupied the other team's attack position. Improper coordination allowed us to reach the objective before the other team and blew our chances to surround the enemy, but it saved us from engaging in a costly firefight with our sister unit.

We entered the village the next morning. No effort was made to secure the routes into the village, and the team didn't bother sweeping to the far side of it. No one seemed concerned that a large NPA force could be at the other end. Christ, I was concerned. Luckily for us, the communists had left the day before.

The villagers were gathered together and given a pro-government speech by Sgt. Dagoc. As the sole representative of the greatest democracy on earth, I felt obliged to also say something. Using Vietnam as an example of the kind of utopia the NPA offered the Philippines, I told them how Ho Chi Minh had killed thousands of Vietnamese farmers who resisted forced collectivization of their farms. I also explained that under NPA rule they would work for



General Acension is happily greeted upon his arrival for 37th birthday of Philippine marine corps; his departure was less festive.

SPECTER OF DEATH

As I helped the crewmen secure the bodies to the deck of the patrol boat, the ever-present specter of death that haunts every soldier's life became vividly real.

Scattered on the heaving deck were the badly mauled bodies of seven Filipino soldiers, including the deputy South Com commander, Brigadier General Alturo Acension. All were killed in a tragic helicopter accident, and I should have been one of them.

Earlier that day I accompanied the general (at 43, the youngest general in the Philippine armed forces) to the 37th anniversary of the marine battalion on the southern island of Basilan. While we rode the UH-1 helicopter to the island, I

could see that he was truly anxious to attend. Acension was a marine officer and, like marines the world over, he took great pride in his corps.

The ceremony was impressive, with a marching band, birthday cake and appropriate speeches by local politicians. At the end of the ceremonies the general told me that we would return by PT boat rather than aircraft due to the inclement weather. One look at the sky convinced me this was a wise decision.

When I arrived at the dock the general wasn't there. A colonel drove up and explained that he had decided to take the helicopter after all. When he asked me if I would like to go along, I didn't hesitate to accept. Somehow a four-hour passage in rough seas didn't appeal to me. By the time we arrived at the landing zone, the general had already left. When we got back to the dock, the boat had also left. I wasn't overly happy about being stranded on this remote island, but my disappointment soon evaporated when we learned that the helicopter had crashed only minutes after takeoff, killing all those on board.

At 0200 hours I left the island as I had originally intended, on the patrol boat with the general. Only I was alive and standing and he lay dead and broken under a loosely wrapped poncho.

A country at war can ill afford to lose its outstanding leaders in transportation accidents, but men who follow the profession of arms understand, as did the general, that during war or peace, death is their constant companion.

meager wages under a government landlord rather than own their own property. This got their attention. I doubt that these people had ever heard this before. I guess that the NPA doesn't publicize communist collectivization doctrine when recruiting in rural areas. I don't know if their attentiveness was genuine, but I felt better for the effort.

The soldiers were well-behaved in Vilauarte, but I did see a private steal some bananas from a small shop. When the troops saw that I didn't support this they started conspicuously paying for everything. They

would even show me the things they bought in order to explain how much they paid for them. Hardly the bloodthirsty marauders the NPA portray them to be.

When we returned to the brigade area, team leaders were called on to brief the deputy commander on the mission. One young man got up and completely fabricated an operation carried out in exact accordance with the operation order. The executive officer (XO) wasn't fooled in the least, as I had told him earlier what had really happened.

Sergeant Dagoc (left) questions civilians in enemy-controlled area. Girl's shirt (center) reads "People Power" — the Aquino government's motto.



REASSESSING RAMOS

I considered myself well-briefed on the Philippine situation before my assignment there. The American and Asian syndicated press made it clear that, if it weren't for loyalty to Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos, the military would topple the Aquino government. The August coup attempt by "Gringo" Honasan seemed to substantiate this view.

After spending some months in the Philippines and talking to military people from the rank of private to general, I found that most of what I had read in the States was pure fiction. Everybody who was willing to express an opinion — that is, almost everybody — said the same thing: Of all the Aquino government, the man they would most like to get rid of is Ramos.

Even though he was a policeman (Ramos was head of the Philippine Constabulary for 15 years under Marcos), the military accepted him as chief of

staff in the hope that he would end the corruption and political favoritism that had prevailed under the former dictator. They were even willing to hide their resentment of the fact that the constabulary under Ramos was largely responsible for the graft and the civilian abuses that still blacken the name of the military.

These early hopes were soon disappointed. Promotion of political favorites with little ability, and intrigue rather than dedication to winning the war were once again the rule at headquarters.

Honasan's coup attempt stemmed largely from his disappointment that Aquino fired his mentor, former Defense Minister Enrile, and he would never get the political power he had expected after helping to oust Marcos. Though he was something of a folk hero among the younger officers, senior commanders recognized Gringo's political ambitions and refused to support the coup. Loyalty to General Ramos had

little to do with it, but the complaints Honasan made against the chief of staff to legitimize his attempt were fully supported by the military.

In April 1988 about 30 senior officers from the Philippine Military Academy class of 1957 will retire. Ramos is a West Pointer from the class of 1950 and is long overdue for retirement. As chief of staff he doesn't have to retire until asked to do so by the president, but his timely and honorable departure, and a replacement who is respected by the armed forces, would do much to stabilize the present civil-military turbulence. The future of Philippine democracy may well hinge on Aquino's decision.

Editor's Note: After this article was written, Ramos was named defense minister and his deputy, another Philippine Constabulary man not trusted by the military, replaced him as armed forces chief.



Sergeant Dagoc examines civilian for stomach tattoos that many NPA guerrillas use as a recognition sign. He is carrying Philippine-manufactured M16A1 with M203 grenade launcher attached.

SUPPLIES AND NEED IN THE AFP

At first glance the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) look ready to fall apart. Troops march in rubber sandals, and civilian clothes tend to take the place of uniforms. Filipino soldiers perpetuate this impression by continually pointing out these deficiencies to foreign observers.

A closer look, however, reveals a more complex truth. On a recent patrol I asked a soldier who was wearing blue jeans and tennis shoes where his uniform and boots were. He explained that they were back at the barracks and that he had forgotten to bring them. Troops wear civilian clothes because they want to, not because they have to. Philippine army units generally allow their men to wear what they want in the field. This not only ruins discipline by fostering a bandit mentality but also makes it difficult for civilians to differentiate between the army and the NPA.

There are some legitimate complaints about equipment. Philippine-manu-

factured jungle boots fall apart after only a few missions, and certain types of ammunition — hand grenades and M203 rounds in particular — are scarce. A country that can produce its own AR-15 rifle surely has the industrial base to produce boots for its fighting men, but quality control at the procurement level is poor; hampered, as most things are in the Philippines, by self-promoting, less-than-honest politicians. If they can't make a boot that lasts, at least they should issue the soldiers some black sneakers, which are inexpensive and totally adequate for this type of jungle terrain.

Most of the Philippine army's equipment problems stem from the fact that the supply system has yet to catch up with the sevenfold expansion of the armed forces since the mid-1970s. Rather than massive military aid from other countries, a more efficient use of available assets will give the armed forces all they need to defeat the communists.

Then they will have to win the way wars have always been won: through guts, aggression and sweat.



Philippine army soldier rests during patrol. He wears blue jeans by choice, not out of need. Such laxity in uniform discipline creates a bandit mentality and makes it difficult for civilians to distinguish between government forces and the NPA.

During the patrol, a banana packing plant was burned down by the NPA for failure to pay extortion money. The army was preparing to go after them and, since I still wanted to see these boys in combat, I asked to go along.

The security guards at this packing plant said that they had been attacked by 200 NPA troops. This sounded farfetched. A good rule of thumb in these cases is to divide the number of guerrillas seen by frightened civilians by three. I'm sure that Custer might have some argument with this formula, but it's generally valid.

Locals again gave the military information as to the location of the communists. The operations officer of the battalion responsible for the area planned to use a force of 30 men to go after the NPA. While I doubted the numbers given by the civilians, an unsupported platoon seemed awfully weak to send against an enemy of unknown size. The operations officer wasn't concerned, he said, because he had a 105mm howitzer for fire support. Well, I hoped he had some nuke rounds for it because if we did run into 200 bad guys we'd need all the firepower we could get.

The operations officer also felt that the map didn't give the accurate location of our objective area. With that in mind he planned a three-day operation to an area where he thought our objective was located. The lieutenant who commanded the platoon listened to his instructions without asking any questions. As it turned out, the map was correct all along; the lieutenant had been to the area before and disregarded his instructions. Or, more likely, he couldn't read a map either and just followed his usual route to the objective. Such a screw-up could have been disastrous if we were forced to call for fire support using coded target reference points, as do most armies. Since this unit sent all of its locations in the clear over the radio, we would probably have been all right. One of the few cases I know of where a deficiency would cancel a mistake.

We moved out at 0300 hours. The platoon made rapid time down the road, but every time we passed through a sleeping village the dogs would raise hell. After our first encounter we should have given inhabited areas a wide berth. We didn't. The troops just threw rocks at the dogs which, of

**"Lack of leadership,
even more than lack of training,
is this army's biggest problem."**



ABOVE: This vehicle, coming from area controlled by New People's Army (NPA), was stopped and passengers were forced to lie on ground while they were questioned. They verified that 80 NPA were waiting over the hill in ambush.

BELOW: One of General Acension's support helicopters. Clouds in background soon produced a storm that would cause his death.



ABOVE: Some material captured from enemy security position: M1 Garand rifle, pictures of guerrillas, lists of personnel, bandages, homemade blasting machine and antipersonnel mine, red shirt inscribed with prayers that supposedly stops bullets, and a red and blue condom.



Cockfighting is a national sport in the Philippines and is enjoyed even on patrol.

course, only made them yap louder.

As with the first patrol, the platoon leader and his sergeant placed themselves in the center and the rear of the column. Though the officers at brigade swear that they train them to move toward the front, this "coincidence" indicated otherwise. This rearward position, along with the failure of the lead men to look behind them, caused the platoon to become too spread out to properly control. With no leaders in sight, I started giving instructions to the troops. I was obeyed largely because no one else was taking charge.

When the platoon entered a village very close to the objective, any semblance of military organization and leadership fell apart. The lieutenant and sergeant just sat there while the soldiers loitered around the small shops, which began to open for them. No security would have been put out at all if I hadn't told four soldiers to get off their butts and move to a position farther up the road. I shouldn't have had to do this stuff—I'm a journalist! Lack of leadership, even more than lack of training, is this army's biggest problem.

It was first light when we continued our movement. As if it were standard operating procedure, the platoon quickly spread out, with the leaders somewhere to the rear, unseen. As I tried to think of a polite way to tell the brigade commander about his troops' performance, the point man moved up to investigate a house at the side of the road. He quickly crouched, a round was chambered and the inevitable exchange of fire sent me rapidly to the side of the road. The lead man moved back to the road after his initial burst of fire and the steep banks prevented effective fire on the house. This, however, didn't stop the soldiers from firing

straight into the air on full automatic. Grenades would have been helpful, but we didn't have any. Fortunately for us, neither did the enemy.

NPA fire ceased within 30 seconds, but the soldiers were frozen in place. Then, thinking that they were being surrounded, they panicked and began to fire blindly to the other side of the road. After about five minutes (the lieutenant and sergeant were still nowhere to be seen) I followed two privates as they maneuvered to the left side of the house. One of them started firing wildly into the surrounding houses and stopped only when I yelled at him. No reason to cause civilian casualties when we weren't receiving any hostile fire.

By the time the house was secured the communists had, of course, fled but they left behind an M1 Garand rifle, an Icon handheld radio and a wealth of paperwork, including name rosters and weapons lists. A real bonanza for the intelligence people. Also left behind, interestingly enough, were hundreds of multicolored condoms.

The captured paperwork later indicated that the NPA had some type of birth-control civic-action program in the area. In the

canic islands lying about 500 miles off the coast of Southeast Asia, with total land area of 115,830 square miles. Only 7% of islands are over one square mile in area; largest islands are Luzon, Mindanao and Samar. Terrain is 65% mountainous, with narrow coastal lowlands.

Natural Resources: Timber, copper, nickel, iron, cobalt, silver, gold, petroleum.

Agriculture: Sugar, coconut products, rice, corn, pineapples, bananas.

Industries: Textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, wood products, food processing, electronics assembly.

Per Capita Income (1985): \$594 per annum.

Major Trading Partners: United States, Japan and European Economic Community (EEC).

PHILIPPINE FACTS AND FIGURES

Official Name: *Republika ng Pilipinas*, or Republic of the Philippines.

Government: Republic. President Corazon Aquino took power on 25 February 1986.

Branches: Executive (president), legislative (*Batasang Pambansa*, or National Assembly) and judicial (Supreme Court).

Population: 58,100,000 (1985 estimate).

Capital: Manila.

Monetary Unit: Peso.

Ethnic Groups: Malay, Chinese.

Languages: Pilipino, English, Spanish and dialects: Tagalog, Visayan, Ilocano.

Religions: Roman Catholic 85%, Islam 5%, Aglipayan (independent Philippine Christian) 4%, Protestant 3%, other 3%.

Geography: Consists of over 7,000 vol-

meantime, the troops had a great time blowing up the condoms like balloons. One of the soldiers discovered two red shirts with religious symbols drawn on them. When I saw them I thought that we had just made a big mistake. Local pro-government self-defense forces are often made up of religious cults that believe these shirts will protect them from bullets. Since these forces are also issued M1 Garand rifles, I feared that we had mistakenly attacked a self-defense unit. What we found next convinced me that I was wrong.

A homemade firing device was found with firing wires leading to the road. When the soldiers saw this they panicked again and began to shout and run for cover. The platoon sergeant was able to keep his head and traced the wires to two makeshift anti-personnel mines built like larger versions of the American claymore mine. The platoon had walked right by the well-camouflaged mines before the enemy was discovered. Later, I tested the firing device with a blasting cap and found that it didn't work. I wonder how many times the NPA frantically

Continued on page 73

POPPIES TO

Operation Kabul — Soviets Sponsor Drug Trade

Text & Photo by Frank van der Waal

ON the night of 14 May 1986, Rob Koning, a well-known "heavy" in the netherworld of Dutch crime, was found in the Amstel River, Amsterdam, dying of multiple gunshot wounds. Before dying in the hospital that same night, he tipped off Dutch police about a big drug shipment coming into Holland sometime in the near future. The assassination-style killing of Mr. Koning did not surprise Dutch narcotics officers because they knew him to be a major soft and hard drugs dealer in Holland and abroad. The tip he reportedly gave them, however, later made them think twice about who his assassin(s) may have been, for soon enough they would bag the largest shipment of pure heroin ever captured in Western Europe.

On the morning of 28 May 1986, Dutch customs and harbor police searched the 4,627-ton Soviet container-ship *Captain Tomson* in Rotterdam harbor. Hidden in several sealed crates of Afghan raisins packed in two separate containers, they found 220 kilograms of near pure Afghan heroin with an estimated street value of over 20 million dollars (40 million Dutch guilders), the single largest catch in Europe, ever.

According to Rotterdam police spokesman Mr. Hougee, from their investigation Dutch police (the newspapers were already involved, especially the daily *De Telegraaf*) were quickly able to draw several conclusions:

1. The heroin almost certainly originated in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan.
2. No products or cargo are exported out of Soviet-controlled areas without explicit Soviet inspection and authorization.
3. Rotterdam port authorities knew of no importation of Afghan raisins before this one, production of which (raisins) has been virtually nil in Afghanistan since autumn of 1979.
4. The two containers with heroin hidden among the raisins were transported by truck and train from Afghanistan to Riga on the Soviet Baltic coast. Leningrad usually serves as the embarkation point for Afghan products going to Western Europe.
5. Transport costs, according to the

manifest, were significantly higher than a regular cargo of raisins would have been — a strange way of running a business if a profit is to be made . . . on raisins.

According to both the Soviet Embassy in The Hague and the Trans World Marine Agency, which charters and runs Soviet cargoes into Rotterdam, they knew nothing of the carefully hidden narcotics. Strangely enough, when a Dutch journalist inquired at the Trans World Marine Agency office in Rotterdam, their spokesman, Mr. J. The van Zonneveld, threatened her with all nature of libel and other lawsuits before she could even ask a question. Two Dutch members of Parliament started asking questions and demanded an official explanation from the Soviets as it became more and more apparent that there had to have been Soviet governmental complicity throughout this affair. Not surprisingly, the Soviets said nothing and gave only very grudging cooperation to the investigating Dutch police and customs authorities, despite official requests.

A Dutch security service (BVD) source informed me that they had already been on the case and had an eye on Trans World Marine Agency, which is a branch of the Soviet Ministry of Maritime Affairs and reputedly is detailed with many missions for the Soviet military intelligence agency (GRU). Indeed, with the help of Lloyd's Shipping Register I learned that the *Captain Tomson* had made some interesting travels and that the Trans World Marine Agency has booked some particularly interesting freight.

According to Lloyd's Register of Shipping, from 1984 until the heroin find in 1986 the *Captain Tomson* had sailed from Riga in the Soviet Union to Esbjerg, Denmark, then on to London, Rotterdam and Antwerp before returning to Riga. At times the route varied, but this was the usual course. Interestingly enough, after contacting Danish police I found that twice after the *Captain Tomson* had been in Esbjerg, a week or so later there was a marked increase of available heroin on the Copenhagen and Odense drug markets. Esbjerg, by the way,



ABOVE: Trans World Marine Agency building, with their offices on the second floor, at Ruyterstraat 9 on North Island, right in the middle of Rotterdam harbor. The Soviet container-ship *Captain Tomson* and other Soviet freighters routing via Dutch ports are controlled through this office.

PURSuing LOW-LIFES IN LOW COUNTRIES

Of Dutch birth, Frank van der Waal has participated in Royal Dutch Marine Corps counterterrorist training activities and has been an undercover counterterrorist operative for various offices in the Netherlands and Belgium. Frank is currently associated with a Washington, DC-based counterterrorist think tank.

THE PEOPLE



is not a common place for a ship the size of the *Tomson* to visit, as it is a fishing harbor, not a large general-commerce port.

London, not too surprisingly, also had sudden infusions of heroin on the street some days after *Tomson* dockings, according to a London Metropolitan Police officer interviewed by telephone. He noted that Britain was trying to keep a closer eye on the *Tomson* and other such Soviet vessels and that the narcotics branch was trying to establish working ties with their Soviet counterparts. Whether or not this attempted liaison was successful he politely declined to state.

In June 1986 a Dutch reporter learned that the *Tomson* had a sister ship doing the same sort of work: It was named the *Sverdlev* and sailed out of Odessa on the Soviet Black Sea through the Bosphorus to Beirut, Lebanon, and at times would also route through Cyprus. Little could be learned about this vessel except for some speculation that it was used by the Soviet KGB to infiltrate agents and pick up information at Cyprus, Lebanon and Turkey. Also, it was stated by a Mossad (Israeli equivalent of the CIA) source in Amsterdam that this ship had carried weapons on behalf of or to the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization).

Two interesting things happened to these two ships after the drug intercept in Rotterdam: The *Tomson* sailed on a new route and the *Sverdlev* ceased, as far as could be checked, its sailing activities. Lloyd's Shipping Intelligence had nothing on the *Sverdlev* after July 1986 and the *Tomson's* route (surprise of surprises) now suddenly covered the *Sverdlev's* old area, at least in part! (See the accompanying map.) The new route of the *Tomson* then became Riga, Latvia; London, England; Genoa, Italy; Larnaca/Limassol, Cyprus; Antalya, Turkey; and Beirut, Lebanon (or Tripoli if Beirut's port is under fire).

All in all, a picture has emerged of the *Tomson* and its sister ship functioning as jack-of-all-trades vessels for the Soviet GRU and KGB. As a defecting KGB officer named Stanislav Levchenko remarked to me some years ago, "The West remains naive, especially where economic opportunities are at stake." In view of the rather

Continued on page 74



Interchanging routes of Captain Tomson and Sverdlev. Dot-dash line tracks route of Captain Tomson until 28 May 1986 narcotics bust in Rotterdam. Dotted line shows route of Sverdlev from 1984 through 1986.

THE LEBANESE

Bekaa Valley Drugs Fuel Endless Conflict

by Collin Knox

THE Bekaa Valley, a fertile crevasse five to 10 miles wide and 75 miles long, lies between Syria and the war-torn Lebanese heartland. Since the dawn of history, wars have been fought for control of this region, one of the most productive farming areas in the Middle East. Today, it is a state with no government. The legal authority of Lebanese President Amin Gemayel exacts no obedience here.

Thus, the Bekaa is an anarchic state with too many rulers. The Lebanese civil war has turned it into an enormous sanctuary for all the madmen of the Middle East. There is not a single faction, secret society, terrorist group or political movement in the region, and possibly beyond, that does not have a foothold in the Bekaa. Abu Nidal, the notorious Palestinian terrorist, holds court in Bar Elias; Islamic Jihad, which claims to have kidnapped several Westerners in Lebanon, operates from a base in Nabi Chit. Syrian spies have headquarters in Shtaura and Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards occupy military barracks overlooking the terrorist stronghold of Ba'albeck.

The mightiest of these rulers, however, is neither military nor political force. It is the drug trade, the industry that is helping to underwrite world terrorism.

The multibillion-dollar annual hashish trade, recently supplemented by opium and cocaine, has for years supported terrorists with ideologies ranging from communism to Islamic fundamentalism and has helped foment and feed the civil anarchy that has torn Lebanon apart. Lebanese drugs help pay for everything from hijacking-and-bombing spectacles in Europe and the Middle East to a simmering revolt by Moslem insurgents in the Philippines. Intelligence agencies say Syria is deeply involved in the heroin/cocaine/hashish trade at the highest levels through the activities of Rifaat Assad, the Paris-based brother of Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Narco dollars have become so important to Damascus that there is growing evidence that Iran is seeking an increased share. Over Syrian objections, the 5,000-strong pro-Iranian *Hezbollah* Shi'ite militia — at the direction of the Tehran government — has

established its own smuggling routes from the Syrian-controlled Bekaa into Europe and the Americas. In nearby Cyprus, intelligence sources say Iran is using drug profits not only to export the Islamic revolution and finance pro-Iranian terror but to help defray the crippling cost of the war with Iraq.

Iranian-backed Moslem extremists control the south Bekaa where, for generations, the inhabitants have been emigrating to South and Central America (where they are mistakenly known as *Los Turkos*, the Turks) and often run shops or export businesses. Some of them, aligned with the Colombian Medellin cartel, have switched to a very profitable export: Bekaa dealers pay high prices for coca base, which they can transform into high-grade cocaine, refined in little kitchens completely immune

NARCO-TERROR CHRONICLER

From January to September 1987, American journalist Collin Knox crisscrossed the lawless Bekaa Valley documenting the drug trade.

Knox watched militants from *Hezbollah* (Party of God), the pro-Iranian Shia group suspected of holding American, French and British hostages (including Terry Anderson and Terry Waite), parade the streets of Ba'albeck in June, while their newly planted opium crop bloomed in nearby fields.

He obtained supporting documentation for this article from Western law enforcement agents operating in the Middle East, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, British Customs Service and West Germany's federal criminal police, *Bundeskriminalamt*.

Knox is a seasoned writer and author with a number of national awards to his credit. He has been honored by the Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi and is the recipient of the National Headliner Award from the Atlantic City Press Club. He resides in Larnaca, Cyprus.

from Western law enforcement and intelligence agencies. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Lebanon's Latin American cousins are now attempting to grow coca plants in the mountains above the Bekaa, near the village of Tannorine.

"From the ruling elite down to the *fella-hin* [Arab peasants], it's drug money all the way," commented a Cyprus-based drug investigation official who wished to remain anonymous. "You can't have power in the anarchy of Lebanon if you're not involved in drugs. . . . After the French connection bust, French chemists set up heroin labs in the Bekaa and began showing native farmers the art of cultivating commercial-grade poppies. Currently there are over 290,000 acres of poppies growing on Shi'ite Moslem land there."

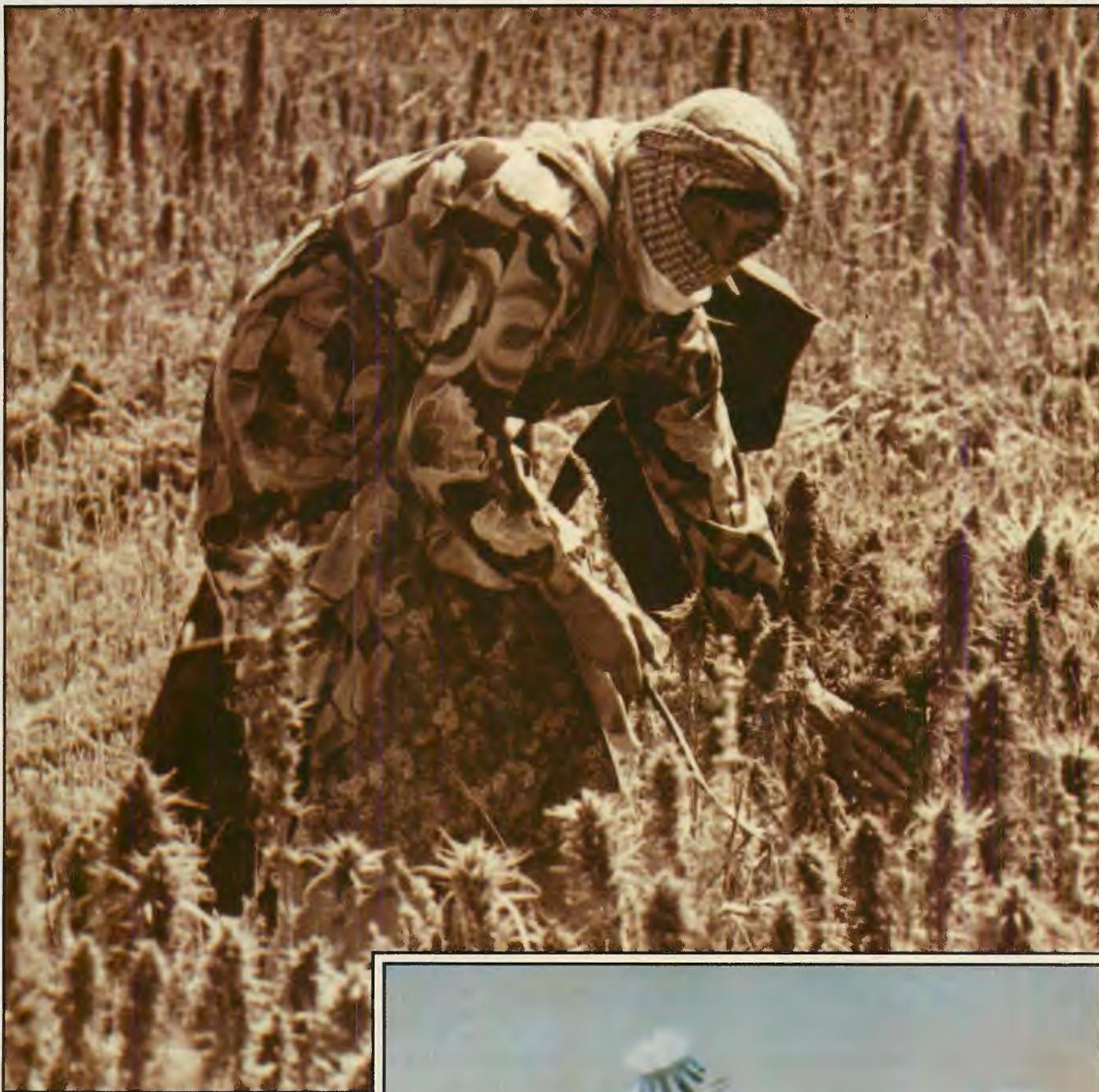
In the drugs-for-arms world no faction is innocent. It is no longer a secret that the bloody war which tore apart the Christian side in the late 1970s, killing hundreds within the Chamoun, Franjeh and Gemayel clans, was partly motivated, if not initiated, by a desperate move to control drug trafficking. Unlike the fundamentalist Moslem and Palestinian factions who have outside backing, the rival Christian camps lacked arms, and drugs were used for currency. Drug intelligence agents say the recent helicopter bomb that killed Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Karami was a result of Karami's support of the Syrian army in the Bekaa, a move that threatened to choke off the Christians' drug supply routes.

"In some East Bloc capitals, such as Sofia, you can barter heroin for military equipment," stated a former intelligence officer for the Christian Lebanese Forces. This officer left in 1986 after another bloody coup in the Christian camp. Before fleeing to Paris, he personally took part in similar deals with U.S. and Israeli arms dealers. By 1985, Lebanese traffickers had reached the point where they could re-export weapons themselves.

"We've been seeing people in Beirut from Nicaragua. They needed guns, had no money, but offered coke," the officer explained, adding that the deal had not been done directly by the Lebanese Forces. "Even desperate contras fighting the government in Managua came all the way to Lebanon to trade cocaine for arms. Leftist guerrillas from Colombia, El Salvador and the Philippines have been doing the same type of deal with the Druze for some time," the same source continued. "Deals have even taken place in Moscow."

Traveling in Lebanon's narcotics valley

CONNECTION



ABOVE: Bedouin woman harvesting marijuana plants at Ba'albeck in Lebanon's fertile Bekaa Valley. Plants will be bagged and later refined into hashish in small laboratories in valley. Photo: Wide World

RIGHT: Mature opium pods, carefully incised to cause the plant to produce raw opium. Sticky brown exudate is removed early in the morning before the sun dries it. Ba'albeck, Lebanon, June 1987. Photo: Collin Knox



is no picnic. Journalists must hide behind beard, *chador* or local warlord to avoid trouble from militant Moslem extremists and gangsters looking for foreigners to kidnap in hopes of trading them to such political groups for \$500,000. Despite the risks and the frequent Israeli air strikes, the Bekaa is the most peaceful area in Lebanon, where Druze, Sunni, Shia, Christian and Palestinian groups live together without bloodshed in their common agricultural endeavors. Business is business, and no war will change that.

Last fall the marijuana harvest was in full swing. Peasants in Mercedes waved to each other, driving through fields of tall marijuana plants gently swaying in the hot desert wind. In a carefree mood, harvesters sliced the plants with their sickles. Some had come from as far away as Pakistan or Afghanistan to work here for a couple of months. Lebanese landowners, such as the Habchi family near Deir Al Ahmar, paid a sufficient wage for them to live through the rest of the year. Others came from Palestinian camps in Beirut. Syrian soldiers, relaxing on top of their half-buried Soviet tanks, gazed sleepily at them, anticipating their nightly joint.

The 1987 crop was the best since World War II. It takes two months for the plants to dry before they are beaten in cloth-walled concrete huts by young girls stripped to the waist. The fine green powder clings to the coarse, dampened material and is then sifted 30 times before being pressed into bricks. Several tons are turned into hashish oil, which is 10 times more profitable than solid hashish. But it stinks terribly, and thus is difficult to conceal and transport.

Two months earlier the same fields had been full of gaily blooming white and crimson flowers. Farmers discovered five years ago that the fertile Bekaa was suitable for high-yield, opium-producing poppy plants. As soon as the petals start to fall in midsummer, the seed pods are incised one by one with triple-bladed knives. The following morning, at dawn so it doesn't dry, the raw opium is wiped off the bulbs. The resin is cooked in labs in Becharre, Zgharta, Zale and Beirut and turned into high-grade heroin soon to be consumed on the streets of Paris, Amsterdam and New York.

Opium and its derivatives, morphine and heroin, are not new to Lebanon. After World War II, Lucky Luciano secured a quasi-monopoly on Lebanon's heroin, then made from Turkish, Iranian and Afghan opium. In the early 1970s, after the American-orchestrated crackdown on the French connection in Marseilles, many chemists fled to the remote Bekaa, where they quickly made contact with local drug lords. When the civil war broke out in 1975, the union between warlord and drug runner became closer than ever.

Lebanon has a lot to offer such criminal enterprises. It is a physically divided, half-ruined country where everyone needs money and where the writ of the local police extends no more than a few miles from Beirut. No DEA agent has set foot in Leba-

non since 1984. "The only way we can cope is to use informants . . . to try to learn what is going on on the inside," one DEA agent based in Cyprus explained. "But there — it's wide open. They're home. Networks from Turkey and Sicily transferred their activities to Lebanon. Their efforts have been so successful that the U.S. State Department estimates drug revenues account for 50 percent of the Lebanese economy. Now we are seeing the Colombians doing the same thing."

This doesn't mean, of course, that the drug merchants actually have to be in Lebanon. They come to Cyprus, barely 100 miles off the Lebanese coast, and stay in fancy hotels with good communications. "All you have is two legitimate executives talking business in a hotel room and you can't do anything about it," the DEA agent said. After the deal is made, dealer family members rendezvous in a pair of opulent but unfurnished villas on the road from Ba'albeck to Zale. There two young men, Kalashnikov rifles bumping against their hips, pop down a flight of stairs and embrace their visitors warmly before showing them the warehouse. Behind bales of cannabis drying in the dust is a rusty gasoline can full of opium waiting to be refined. Around it are buckets, filters, pumps, tubes and bottles of German-made acetic acid. Everything is filthy. Near the lavatories, 20 sealed plastic bags are piled high, each containing one kilo of heroin. This will make more than 200 kilos on the street when it is cut with lactose, talc or even strychnine. The eventual street price of this little stash should run around \$20 million.

Cyprus is on the front line in the international war against narco-terror. United States Ambassador Richard Boehm told a group of law-enforcement officials in Nicosia last spring, "Cyprus is being used as a contact point by foreigners for brokering their illicit transactions, and the waters surrounding Cyprus are increasingly a scene of their smuggling activities from east to west." A large international intelligence and infiltration operation is being run from Cyprus. "Cyprus is the big ear," a European drug agent commented. "And it is tuned in to the narco-terrorist threat from the Middle East."

Manning the front line is the Cyprus police force narcotics squad, which is receiving assistance from Western agencies including the DEA, British Customs Police, West German federal criminal police (BKA, *Bundeskriminalamt*), and agents from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The U.S. government took relatively little interest in the Middle East until members of the Colombian cartel began appearing in Cyprus to meet with known Lebanese drug dealers.

One member of the cartel with direct Lebanese connections and who has made several trips to Cyprus is Pierre Abu Nader. Nader, according to Interpol (International Criminal Police Organization) records, was traveling under the name Muce Sagy on a





LEFT: Bedouins near Ba'albeck hauling fresh-cut marijuana plants to "stuffer" who loads an average of 1,000 bags per day. Photo: Wide World

ABOVE: Lebanon. Illegal dope ports are established at Halate, Tarbarja and Aquamarina.

BELOW LEFT: Ba'albeck. In background is Sheikh Abdullah barracks — a former Lebanese army facility — now a Hezbollah (Party of God) stronghold. Intelligence officials claim that six or seven hostages are imprisoned here. Photo: Barbara Newman

BELOW: Full bag of harvested marijuana plants being carried to pickup area for delivery to hashish refining labs elsewhere in the Bekaa Valley. Photo: Wide World





Brazilian passport. Another Colombian, a member of the Pablo Escobar family, was videotaped by Cypriot police last summer as he met with a member of the Keyrouz family, a Lebanese clan with a long history of international drug trafficking, according to DEA files.

A Bolivian, Carlos Isalas Orihuela, was arrested at the Larnaca, Cyprus, airport in August attempting to smuggle six pounds of coca base. Orihuela was scheduled to meet the contact who was to take the drug on the "Sunny Boat," a ferry bound for Lebanon.

The Colombians are also importing a favorite by-product — violence. In Limassol, a modern coastal town south of Nicosia, Cyprus, shortly after midnight one night last June, an explosion ripped through the home

Fields of mature cannabis ready for harvest, Taraya, Lebanon, August 1987. Photo: Collin Knox

OVERVIEW OF THE OVERLORDS: OPERATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, ACCOMPLICES

Excerpts from classified U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) debrief, Spring 1987.

There are many families involved in the narcotics trade of the Bekaa Valley region. At Ba'albeck: Hamye, Tlias, Dandache, Husseini, Sleiman, Yaghi, Masri, Moussaoui, Hamade. At Deir Al Ahmar: Rahme, Tok, Geagea, Keyrouz, Habchi. In the Akar region: Baarini, El Mraabi, Taghit, Fukari, El Houssan, Dein Dashli, El Keir, El Ali. In the Bekaa South (Hasbayia): Daood, El Meis, Zehr Adin, Aaoun; Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) grows cannabis for hashish and opium near Hasbayia.

Processing labs are located at Ba'albeck, Britel, Eiaat, Deir Al Ahmar, plus two labs in east Beirut.

Operatives trafficking drugs from the region are known to operate in the following markets: Europe (West Germany, Sweden, France, Britain, East Germany, Greece, Italy), North Africa and the Middle East (Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Turkey, Syria, Cyprus, Malta, Morocco), Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Honduras), North America (United States, Canada, Cuba).

Shipments depart by sea from Sida, Beirut, Tripoli and the Juniyah area (Halate, Aquamarina). One port has been constructed expressly for narcotics exports at Abde, north of Tripoli, and is

controlled by Lebanese and Syrian factions. The Baarini family also operates a port at Munie, near Tripoli.

Airports are established at Yate (east of Balba); a popular smuggling craft is the French-made Mystere 20. Same airport is used by Syrian army for helicopters.

Trafficking from Bekaa to Tripoli is done with assistance of Syrian army. The producer-trafficker sends a number of trucks and makes connections with militia; payoffs are made at roadblocks and to key high personnel. Goods leave Tripoli on small boats (fishing or shipping) going to Egypt or Cyprus. When they reach Cyprus, they are transferred to large container-ships in transit. From there they go to Europe and America.

From the Bekaa Valley, traffickers also utilize convoys through Syria to Turkey when drugs are destined for Bulgaria. Morphine base is brought from Iran to Lebanon, where morphine is processed and exported to Sofia, Bulgaria. Turkish nationals are operating labs in the Bekaa Valley for processing heroin and morphine.

Ten percent of the total farming region is being planted with cannabis for hashish and opium. Farmers net 25 percent, Syrian officials net 25 percent, militias in control net 50 percent.

Quote from *Hezbollah*: "We are making these drugs for the Devil; the Devil is America, Jews, et al. We cannot kill them with guns so we will kill them with drugs. . . ."



Mount Lebanon road from Bekaa Valley to drug ports in Christian enclave. Photo: Collin Knox

AGRIBUSINESS, LEBANESE STYLE ... "HORSE" TRADING IN THE BEKAA VALLEY

The following are sanitized excerpts from a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) interview. The topic is opium and heroin production in the Bekaa region of Lebanon.

When are the grains sowed?

Between October and November.

How are the seeds sowed?

Opium seeds come in three colors: white, gray, cream. The white seeds give a white flower. The cream seeds give a red flower and the gray seeds give a purple flower. The seeds are mixed with sand or fine dirt, in the proportion of one kilo seeds to five kilos dirt. Each six-kilo mixture is sowed into an area of five *dounoums* [one *dounoum* equals 990 square meters]. The sowing operation takes place in normal weather conditions. No sowing is done in windy weather to avoid the seeds to gather in one spot. Each handful of mixture is sowed using 11 throws of the arm. The fine dirt or sand is used to allow a better spreading of the seeds.

What about irrigation? And use of chemicals?

When water for irrigation is available, farmers irrigate their fields. Highlands are not irrigated. The farmers call it *baal* land [non-irrigated]. The chemicals used are the following: a brand the farmers call "17." It is American made and looks like small black pepper grains. It is used in the proportion of 75 kilos [one and one-half sacks] for each *dounoum*. The cost of one sack in 1987 was 950 Lebanese pounds [U.S. \$9.50]. After each irrigation operation, the farmers use a chemical called "34.5." It is American made. It is used in the proportion of 50 kilos [one sack] per *dounoum*. The cost of one sack in 1987 was 700 Lebanese pounds.

What is the yield per *dounoum*?

Each irrigated *dounoum* with chemicals yields five kilos of opium. Each *dounoum* without irrigation [*baal*] and without chemicals yields one and one-half kilos of opium.

What is the price of the opium seeds?

Each kilo of opium seeds sold for 500 Lebanese pounds in 1986 and for 1,000 Lebanese pounds in 1987.

General information about planting methods?

To get the best crop from each *dounoum*, the farmer uses the following

methods: If irrigated and chemicals used only one time, there is no crop; if irrigated twice and chemicals used once, the yield will be two kilos of opium; if irrigated twice and chemicals used twice, the yield will be two and one-half kilos of opium; if irrigated twice and chemicals used three times, the yield will be three kilos of opium; if irrigated three times and chemicals used once, the yield will be three kilos of opium; if irrigated three times and chemicals used twice, the yield will be three and one-half kilos of opium; if irrigated three times and chemicals used three times the yield is five kilos of opium. The *baal dounoum* yields one and one-half kilos of opium. If chemicals are used, the plants burn.

What is the frequency of irrigation?

The fields should be irrigated every 12 days. Irrigation starts at the end of the rainy season, or whenever the soil is dry. After eight months of the sowing, whenever flowers and bulbs appear, the irrigation stops because it causes the milk of the bulb to become too liquid.

When and how is the harvesting done?

The harvesting takes place between the end of April and end of June. When the slicing operation starts, it is done in the evening and the resin is collected at dawn. It is done in three or four different times, according to the size of the bulb.

How is the harvest sold?

The green leaves and dried bulbs are not sold. They are burned in the fields. The resin is gathered and preserved from humidity. After it is collected, it is spread on a sheet of wood for 15 days to dry it out. The kilo of opium sold in 1986 for 13,000 Lebanese pounds. In 1987 it sold for 80,000 Lebanese pounds.

Who buys the opium?

The big buyers send their agents to the villages to get the opium crop at the lowest prices from the farmers. Then the wholesale buyers stock it and when the prices go up they sell at profit to bigger buyers. Some of the buyers have their own labs and transform opium into heroin. The known buyers are: Abdelmawla Amhaz (member of Parliament) from Nabha. In 1987, he planted 1,200 *dounoums* in the Saaide area. He sends the opium to Egypt. He was a partner of the late Tom Franjeh, son of the ex-President of the Republic, Suleiman Franjeh. He has other partners: Abderrassoul Amhaz, Abdelwahab Amhaz and Habib Taouk from Oyouin Orghouch. Jamil Hamyeh from Taraya buys big quantities that he transforms in his labs. Habib Hamyeh with his partner Moustapha Haidar (alias "Oke") also buys big quantities of opium that they transform into heroin or sell as opium de-

pending on the offers they get. There are many other big buyers.

What is the area planted in 1987?

Approximately 30,000 *dounoums*. This figure was given by an agronomist that works at the American University farm in the Bekaa Valley. He estimated the area planted in opium for 1987 to be between 29,000 and 30,000 *dounoums* [29,000,000 square meters].

What is the price of opium in the field?

The farmers sold the resin in 1986 for 13,000 Lebanese pounds per kilo. They sold it for 80,000 Lebanese pounds in 1987.

What is the price of opium in the warehouses or labs?

The kilo can reach up to 100,000 Lebanese pounds.

What is the price of heroin in the labs?

There are three kinds of heroin: cristal, cream, brown. The kilo of cristal [85 percent pure] sells for 2,000,000 Lebanese pounds. The kilo of cristal [75 percent pure] sells for 1,500,000 Lebanese pounds. The kilo of cream [70 percent pure] sells for 1,000,000 Lebanese pounds. The kilo of brown [50 percent pure or less] sells from 800,000 to 600,000 Lebanese pounds. The prices vary according to the availability of merchandise on the market.

What is the process used in heroin manufacturing?

There are no sophisticated labs for heroin manufacturing. All you need is a Pyrex pot, a burner and chemicals, along with a dryer. To reduce 20 kilos of opium to one kilo of heroin [cristal] one needs 52 liters anhydrous ammonia, 15 kilos sodium bicarbonate, one-half kilo sodium hydroxide, 20 liters white pharmaceutical alcohol 96 proof, two kilos charcoal. The manufacturing of one kilo of heroin requires 10 hours in winter and seven hours in summer.

What is the expected production for 1987?

The estimated quantity of heroin that will be produced in 1987 will be two tons of cristal, one ton cream, one-and-a-half tons brown, and 10 tons of opium that will be sold as it is. These figures are rough estimates.

Who are the most important persons dealing in this kind of business?

The biggest heroin lord in the Bekaa Valley is Rifaat Assad, brother of the Syrian President Hafez Assad. All the Lebanese dealers come after him.

Are there new routes for smuggling?

The routes used by smugglers out of the Bekaa Valley are the same as long as the Syrians are protecting them. Dealers do not need to find new routes.

of narcotics police Sergeant Dinos Sofroniou. Sergeant Sofroniou had received a number of warnings that his life would be in danger if he continued his anti-drug campaign. Luckily, he was not at home when the bomb went off, but his two young children were slightly injured by the blast. This incident shocked the tranquil, law-abiding Cypriot community. Cyprus police suspect that Colombian-backed Lebanese terrorists were behind the attack.

The ring of narcotics traffic has spread like a fungus from Colombia to Turkey and covers a good half of Europe, but the center is Lebanon. When the DEA, Interpol and Swiss police stormed a lab in Fribourg, Switzerland, in December 1985 they arrested a Marseilles chemist of international fame, François Scapula. He told authorities how he had set up an international network of drug distribution with Lebanese traffickers and how political movements have been involved in the business.

French police uncovered a network involving Marseilles gangsters, Moslem radicals and figures in international terrorism. They found that an Irish couple, whom they claim act for the Irish Republican Army (IRA), have connections with Lebanese traffickers. Also involved are Corsican terrorists from the Corsican National Liberation Front, leaders of the Italian Red Brigade, Palestinians and Islamic fundamentalists. The terrorists who carried out an unprecedented bombing campaign in Paris in 1986 could, the Ministry of the Interior believes, be financed by drug funds generated within France itself.

Intelligence agents recently learned that Islamic Jihad, the radical Iranian-backed terrorists who hijacked TWA flight 847 in June 1985, financed their operation with a \$6.5-million drug deal. One of the hijackers, Fwaz Younnes, a former bodyguard for Shi'ite leader Nabi Berri, stepped aboard a yacht anchored off the Lebanese coast last September. He was in the midst of a drug deal when U.S. agents appeared from below and wrestled Younnes to the deck, breaking both of his wrists in the process. He woke up hours later aboard a U.S. warship bound for the United States, where he will stand trial for air piracy and kidnapping.

But never tell a Shi'ite farmer from the Bekaa he is a criminal! "What do you expect us to do?" one farmer exclaimed. "Before, we were growing wheat and vegetables ... but they blockade the roads ... and the inflation. You can't make a living growing wheat and potatoes."

Opium and marijuana, on the other hand, grow well anywhere in the Bekaa and are easily converted into foreign currency. The war has turned the once solid Lebanese pound (LL) into worthless paper. Trading at five LLs to the dollar in 1984, it has fallen to almost 500 LLs to the dollar today.

International law enforcement files are full of known Lebanese drug families. Shi'ite Moslem clans dominate cultivation, including the Masri, Hamade, Husseini and Sleiman families. Christian families run the

processing labs and handle the trafficking end of the business. The most notorious are the Habchis, who operate their network from Deir Al Ahmar, a village on the western rim of the Bekaa. Another clan that pops up in police files is the Geagea family from Becharre. Shamir Geagea is the commander of the Lebanese Forces, which rule Christian east Beirut.

Even Lebanon's president, Amin Gemayel, is said to benefit. Gemayel's cousin was recently sentenced to 25 years in prison for attempting to smuggle hashish oil into Port Everglades, Florida. Other Lebanese government officials reported to benefit from drug trade include a deputy member of Parliament and the Minister of Information.

Every night, convoy lights zigzag across Mount Lebanon into the Christian enclave. Drug prices double before the products reach the coast. As the trucks wind along the mountain road, payoffs are made at every checkpoint. The first town is Becharre, then the road splits. To the right it goes toward Tripoli and Zgharta, where Western drug agents claim to have identified one of the biggest heroin labs in Lebanon. Zgharta is also the stronghold of former President Suleiman Franjeh, a flamboyant warlord friendly to the Syrians. Franjeh's son was aboard that ill-fated helicopter when a pressure bomb exploded, killing Prime Minister Karami. Franjeh escaped with minor injuries.

To the left, the road becomes the coastal

Continued on page 84

RIGHT: Bedouins harvesting marijuana in Ba'albeck. Photo: Wide World

BELOW: Heroin seizure, Larnaca port, Cyprus, March 1987. Hiding contraband in a shoe welt is technique developed during World War II by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which manufactured special shoes for this purpose. Photo: CPF





THE time was mid-December 1980. The place was Ondangwa air base, South-West Africa, one of the fire-force bases used by the South African Defence Force (SADF). Our unit, 44 Para Brigade, Pathfinder Company, had finally received orders for its first military operation in South-West Africa. Since our unit's arrival during the first week of December, our anti-terrorist operations had consisted of patrolling the main highway between the Ovamboland border and Ondangwa air base.

Our unit was made up of a group of para-qualified, selected soldiers. Almost everyone in our group had fought previously in Rhodesia and had been members of one or more of the following: Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI), Special Air Service (SAS) and Selous Scouts. These were the top units within the Rhodesian security forces, so most of us had worked together in one fire-fight or another.

After the end of hostilities in Rhodesia — the British “sellout” — the defense forces in South Africa recruited all the combat soldiers who wanted to serve in the SADF. For the foreign soldiers serving with the Rhodesians it was another war with the same enemy they had fought in Rhodesia — communist-backed terrorists, called “ters” for short.

After completing the South African parachute course and a grueling SAS-type selection course, the soldiers of 44 Para Pathfinder Company were ready to become part of the forces in the operational area on the South-West Africa/Angola border. A small group of soldiers from 44 Para volunteered for the task in South-West Africa Tribal Trust Land of Ovamboland.

The plan was actually a very simple one: drive up and down the only main road at the same time every day and establish a pattern to attract the attention of any local ters. Anybody who has studied military tactics knows that a pattern of movement greatly increases the probability of ambush. Our plan was to be so obvious that the terrorists couldn't help but attack our convoy.

Our convoy consisted of one jeep, which looked like any other ordinary jeep, being escorted by two Buffels (troop carriers). What the terrorists did not know was that the plain-looking, apparently defenseless vehicle was, in fact, a heavily armored gun jeep. It was completely enclosed in bulletproof armor and was armed with two FN MAG 58 machine guns, a device to fire eight shotgun barrels to our immediate front and a device that would propel up to six fragmentation grenades in a 360-degree arc of hot steel around the jeep.

The terrorists would sometimes just step out onto the main highway and stop and rob the occupants of any vehicle, either civilian or military. Just before our arrival, a group of South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) ters had ambushed an ambulance and shot up two doctors, then faded back into the scrub brush of the area after a brief firefight. Luckily, the doctors were only slightly wounded.

SOF SOUTH AFRICA

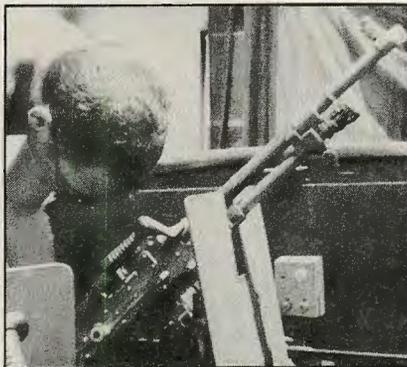
DEADLY DECEPTION

Q-Car Ambush in Ovamboland

Text & Photos by Ken Gaudet

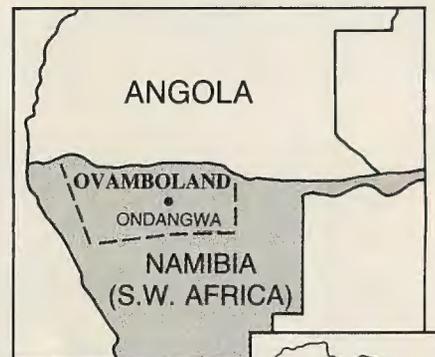
AMBUSH AUTHOR

American Ken Gaudet fought in Vietnam with the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade and then went to Rhodesia, where he joined the Rhodesian Light Infantry. After hostilities ended in Rhodesia, he was recruited by the South African Defence Force and became a Pathfinder with the South African 44 Para Brigade. Among his many articles for SOF are “SADF's Pathfinders,” May '86 and “Angolan Firefight,” September '87.

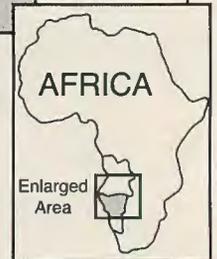


Author checking one of two 7.62x51mm FN MAG 58s on Q-Car. Also visible are bullet-resistant steel plates to help protect gunner. On front wall of vehicle are controls for grenade and shotgun barrels which provide 360-degree firepower.

The very first task for me and my fellow Paras was to become well-oriented with the armored jeep, called a Q-Car. From the outside, the jeep looked innocent enough and completely unarmed. Enclosed in bullet-resistant armor, the jeep's tires were filled with a special liquid that would keep them inflated in case of bullet puncture. Under the spare tire cover located on the front hood was an ingenious device (developed in Rhodesia) that, when activated, would completely surround the jeep with a ring of grenade shrapnel.



Enlarged area shows where Q-Car ambush occurred, on road between Ondangwa air base and border of Ovamboland/Angola.



Inside the wheel hub of the spare tire was an armor plate on which six steel tubes were welded at a slight angle to propel hand grenades away from the vehicle. A small pre-measured charge was placed under each steel tube in which standard-size hand grenades were set. The pins of the grenades were pulled and the steel tubes were just large enough for the grenades to be placed inside and still hold the lever down. After all six grenades were in place, a simple paper cover was taped over the tire and the whole affair looked like a normal spare tire. The driver and passenger were protected by steel plates that would move into place as soon as an ambush was detected or suspected. I had my doubts as to whether the driver would be able to react quickly enough to move the protective plates into place, but the command sergeant major of this whole project assured me the whole system had worked well in Rhodesia.

The crew inside the vehicle consisted of two machine gunners and two assistants. In front were a driver and escort, standard practice in all military vehicles in the SADF. The guns were on a spring pedestal that would immediately move to a position



ABOVE: Five members of 44 Parachute Brigade, Pathfinder Company, in South-West Africa. Trooper second from right is Canadian, the other four are American. All five fought in Rhodesia and four were members of Support Commando, Rhodesian Light Infantry.

above the protective enclosure on a prearranged signal or when an ambush occurred and could be fired by the gunners. The machine guns, Belgian 7.62x51mm FN MAG 58s, were linked up to boxes containing 3,000 rounds of ammunition. The initial firepower was awesome and devastating, to say the least.

The original plan was to take a small convoy over the Christmas holidays and travel the road between 1800 hours and dark (around 2000 hours). Hopefully after a week or so the terts would set up an ambush and our forces could draw them out into a good punch-up.

After two days of only the Q-Car traveling the road, we added two escort vehicles which contained 12 to 16 Paras armed with R4 Galil rifles and one FN MAG 58 and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG-7) launcher per vehicle. Also, word was passed around throughout the local villages that the vehicle contained Christmas packages for some of the local townspeople. We continued to patrol every night at the same time and route. Finally the inevitable happened.

I was driving the second escort Buffel approximately 25 meters behind the Q-Car. As we began to enter the kraal that was right along the road, I saw a single green tracer. I immediately began to slow the vehicle when all of a sudden I was temporarily blinded by



ABOVE: Q-Car with top cover open and one FN MAG 58 in firing position. Canvas covers bullet-resistant armor.



ABOVE: Some of original members of Q-Car unit. Three are armed with folding-stock R4s (South African copy of the Israeli Galil). Trooper on far right is armed with a 7.62x51mm R1 (FN FAL).

a bright ring of fire in front of me. There was a loud explosion and all around our vehicle could be heard the ping and whine of pass-

ing shrapnel. The Q-Car had set off the grenades and opened up on the enemy position. Even with the noise and confusion it was clearly determined where the terrorist fire was coming from, and the Q-Car was raking the enemy position with devastating machine-gun fire.

From my position in the escort vehicle I could see movement on the sides of the road. The terts were trying to move into position out of the line of fire from the Q-Car and toss grenades into the armored jeep. This is where the escort vehicle came into play.

From our position on the road, our load of Paras were firing at all the likely targets of

Continued on page 73

HAMMERED, SICKLED & HUNG OVER

Brake Fluid Daiquiris and Other Delights: an Insider's Guide to Good Times in the Soviet Army

by David C. Isby

Illustration by Ralph Butler

SOVIET BAR GUIDE

Soviet military analyst and Washington, DC-based lawyer David C. Isby is well-known to *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine readers for his articles on the war in Afghanistan (see SOF, April '81, August '83, March '84, February '85, October '87 and April '88). He is the author of the widely acclaimed *Russia's War in Afghanistan, Jane's Weapons and Tactics of the Soviet Army, Armies of NATO's Central Front* and over 100 articles in numerous military and foreign affairs journals.

feur and drive the commander of the unit to town. Naturally, soldiers asked him to bring them a couple of bottles of vodka, and he would do it. He would hide a couple of bottles and bring them to the unit. Before holidays it was an epidemic thing. The greatest holiday is New Year's, and nobody would be punished because everybody in the unit was drunk, beginning with the soldiers and ending with the officers."

This sergeant reported that drinking was heaviest on holidays, but it was by no means limited to them. He also claimed that "generally speaking, alcoholism-related cases happened every week.

"When they can't get vodka or wine, the alcohol used for deicing fluid in aircraft is a

ALCOHOLISM is a major problem throughout Soviet society, and the army is no exception. Each year, tens of thousands of Soviets die from alcohol poisoning, mainly from drinking home-brewed vodka. It is thus not surprising that the Soviet army suffers from a deep and extensive drinking problem.

Perhaps the high-water mark of Soviet military drunkenness took place in Czechoslovakia in 1986 when the crew of a T-72 main battle tank traded their vehicle to an innkeeper for a crate of vodka and a few bottles of pickles. As the tankers drank themselves into the realm of vegetable matter, the local Czech scrap merchants fell upon the tank with gusto. By the time Soviet military authorities tracked down the tank, all they found were tread marks leading to a pile of metal shavings, with the semi-comatose crew nearby. The Soviet army was, likely, not amused. While it was not reported what happened to the erstwhile tankers, they will probably have many years in a Siberian gulag to ponder the Russian version of "just say no."

A major reason for alcoholism in their military is that, while the Soviet army is a massive, powerful force, the life of its individual soldiers suffers because resources are devoted to maintaining this power at the expense of the men who make it up. Soviet conscripts, for instance, are paid only 3.80 rubles (about six dollars) monthly and are usually confined to base, leaving only in organized parties under proper supervision. Service in the army is so uncomfortable that re-enlistment rates are estimated at one to two percent. Few of those who cannot attain the more privileged status of commissioned or warrant officer stay in the army once their two years of conscript service expire.

Therefore alcohol, like anywhere else, serves as a means of making a miserable existence more livable. The Soviet army takes great pains to keep drink out of the hands of draftees. None is sold on post and the low pay of draftees prevents them from buying it freely off post. It is also the favorite target of surprise inspections. While Soviet officers have a reputation for hard drinking, more than occasional intoxication can imperil a career; many officers have ended up being discharged as a result of alcoholism. According to one Soviet officer who defected, the heaviest drinkers are "lifers, NCOs too dumb to become warrant officers," as they have money and access to the stuff.

Despite these stringent official measures to curb hard drinking, the Soviet soldier

makes great efforts to obtain alcohol either by trading equipment for it on the black market or by moonshining. A former Soviet reserve officer reports that "people drink anything they can lay their hands on. They drink methylated spirits and all kinds of other stuff — medical stuff. They loot and rob wine and liquor stores."

Interviews with former Soviet soldiers who served at various times from World War II to the 1970s reveal a wide range of alcohol-related problems. These interviews were conducted in the United States with Soviet nationals who had defected or otherwise emigrated from the Soviet Union. One former Soviet lieutenant reported, "Everybody drinks all the time. Absolutely everybody — all the officers and all the soldiers. All the time. Always someone is drunk. People get drunk and go on duty. In this respect you should take into consideration that the regiment I served in was relatively educated and intelligent. Other units have even worse problems, but we also had this problem."

Moonshining is a popular Soviet military pastime, with stills being made from truck radiators. In some remote units, rocket fuel is strained through black bread. Other, less toxic material is also used in home brewing. "Very often when they are in the armed forces they get parcels from home containing canned preserves. Instead of preserves, the cans are filled with vodka or moonshine," a former Soviet lieutenant said.

"We had soldiers who worked with cars," a sergeant who served in the Soviet Strategic Missile Forces told a U.S. interviewer. "A soldier would serve as a chauff-



particular favorite because it is especially pure. Soviet soldiers also drink eau de cologne," the sergeant continued. He was also sent several times to Kazakhstan in Central Asia for training launches. There he encountered the same problem. "In Kazakhstan, it is very difficult to buy alcohol because you can travel 50 or 100 kilometers and not find a single store. That is why soldiers used to buy cologne and drink it for two days after the supply arrived [at the base PX]. They mix it with water — it has a nice flavor and it's not dangerous."

"They made vodka out of brake fluid," a former private in an artillery regiment told a U.S. interviewer. "In hydraulic brakes

Truck radiators are used to distill everything from brake fluid to rocket fuel; that is, when straight stuff like antifreeze, deicing fluid and methyl alcohol isn't readily available.

there is a special alcohol-based liquid and they extracted vodka from it. There was a case, not in our regiment, but somewhere in Kharkov, and there was an army-wide order because of this case, when 26 people died drinking antifreeze."

A soldier who had served in a communications unit reported that during his two years of service, there were 20 to 30 servicemen hospitalized because of alcohol-

ism. He also said the problem of alcohol abuse was even more serious among officers than among the conscripts. "Officers drink more than conscripts," he stated. "They have the freedom, they have all the opportunities, and then they have the money."

In recent years drug use has apparently also been increasing. "Our soldiers ... managed to get didazol, which is a somnifacient [sleep-producing] drug, and took several of the pills in order to get high," a sergeant who served at the Semipalatinsk missile test center around 1970 said.

Continued on page 81

ALCOHOL AND THE U.S. ARMY

The U.S. Army went dry early, losing its whiskey ration in 1838. But drink has influenced much of American military history.

George Washington, like any other colonial gentleman, had his own still. The events in Boston leading up to the start of the American Revolution had new light cast on them when historians looked at the local consumption of rum (which was a more potent brew than that bottled today) and the fact that much Boston water was undrinkable due to sewage.

It turns out that much of the original spirit of American patriotism was indeed imported in barrels. But 1838 by no means meant the end of U.S. Army drinking. The Civil War brought early bottled soft drinks, sold by regimental sutlers who were required to stay "dry," and the Union Army's plentiful government-issue whole-bean coffee was one of the Confederates' favorite booty items. But Army service then, as in the 20th century, brought soldiers in contact with comrades whose families had paid no Whiskey Tax since 1792 and could pass on the dark secrets.

Drink, however, remained a problem

in the post-Civil War Army. Even though it was never issued, the off-post bars that remain a fixture of American garrison towns sprung up wherever the old Army went, and state and national Prohibition never proved an effective barrier to soldiers who, in those days, had to look to Soviet-style solutions to their perceived shortage.

The U.S. Army only really started to take alcohol abuse seriously in the 1970s and 1980s as the drug problem was brought under control. The casualties to drink in peacetime are difficult to ascertain, but are certainly extensive.

SOF VIETNAM

SPECTRES OVER LAOS

**Spike Team
SOS Sparks Hot Night
in Prairie Fire**

by Isaac Staats

CROSS-BORDER OPERATOR

Isaac Staats, a frequent contributor to *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, served two tours with U.S. Special Forces in

Vietnam. His previous articles in SOF include "Border Legend" (July '87), "Interview: Harold W. Ezell" (September '87), "Never on Sunday" (December '87) and "Shot Out of Laos" (February '88).

FLYING into southern Laos in the late afternoon of 8 February 1970, I was awakened by the frantic voice of my assistant team leader John Ingles saying, "We're going in. The SOBs didn't wake us up."

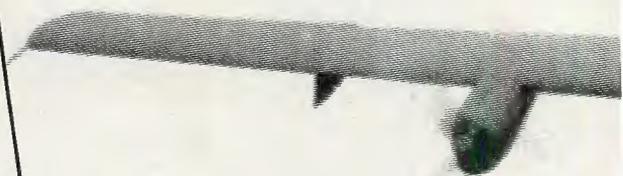
The SOBs were the crew of the Sikorsky CH-53 flying us into our LZ. At that moment, I looked out the starboard door of the helicopter as we flew over two startled Laotian farmers, a woman and two water buffaloes. The big bird hopped over a hedgerow and landed in an adjacent field while Ingles and I frantically woke up the team.

I was madder than hell. It was bad enough that they didn't alert us about being near the target area. That faux pas was compounded by flying so close to indigenous farmers and then depositing us in the middle of a field that was far from our primary LZ and the bridge that was the objective of our mission.

Prowling Air Force pilots were always knocking out bridges in Laos. But by early 1970, the brass had become aware of new underwater bridges the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) were building along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. From the air it appeared as though the trails were interrupted by water, in some places several feet

deep, yet it was apparent that the trucks heading south were crossing the streams with ease. A closer review of aerial photographs revealed that the inventive NVA had devised an underwater bridge which could support heavy trucking and which was not readily observed from the air, enhancing the bridge's chances of survival.

One bridge in particular, about 35 kilometers southwest of the A Shau Valley in southern Laos, attracted the interest of the brass. Intelligence reports said the bridge was an engineering marvel, so the boys in Saigon wanted to know more about it, ASAP. Spike Team (ST) Idaho based in CCN (Command and Control North) was selected to run the mission.





There were problems from the start. Bad weather in Da Nang kept the team grounded at the launch site. There were also two major problems in the AO (area of operations): This north/south branch of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex was heavily traveled and, secondly, the vegetation on most of the surrounding hills and in the valley the trail ran through was generally sparse, with only scattered areas of thicker growth, which precluded jungle cover for recon teams.

The brass decided to get around the bad weather by flying ST Idaho to Thailand. We made the flight in a "blackbird," a camouflaged C-123 with no insignia or obvious markers on it. When we landed in Thailand a blue Air Force van, complete with curtains and blacked-out windows, backed up to the plane and drove us to the 46th Special Forces Group compound in Nakhon Phanom.

Lockheed AC-130H Spectre gunship is still considered to be one of the best guerrilla fighters in the sky. In Vietnam, its armory comprised a 105mm howitzer, a 40mm cannon, two 20mm cannons and two 7.62mm Miniguns, with optional grenade dispenser, bombs, rockets and missiles.
Photo: U.S. Air Force

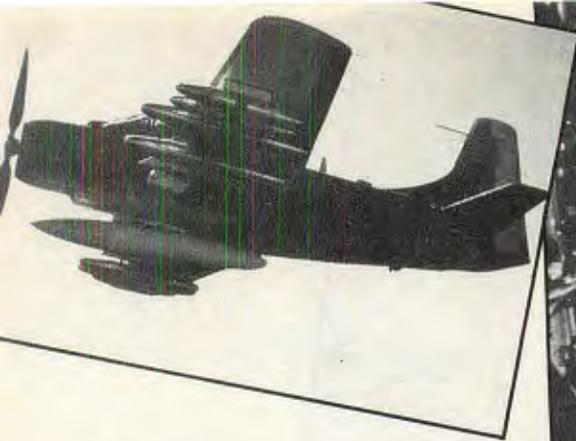
To get around the thin vegetation problem, we planned to move at night and during early morning hours. We requested an insertion at first light the next morning. After a quick briefing, the CO (commanding officer) confirmed there would be an early morning launch using CH-53s to fly east into Laos.

The next day, 8 February 1970, we were scheduled to launch at 0700 hours. It wasn't until 1350 hours that we finally got underway. After two hours of flight time we touched down at a CIA-operated camp atop a high mountain for refueling. By now we

were all groggy. The doorgunner didn't know how much longer the flight would be, so we lay down again.

We didn't wake up until we were almost on the ground. We jumped out of the chopper with our packs draped over one arm, our web gear on the other and our CAR-15s dangling from our necks. The entire team was in various states of disarray as the CH-53 showered us with dirt, dust and debris when it powered off the LZ. We ran north to the nearest hedgerow on a gently rolling slope. We were several clicks south of our target in the southern end of a valley that had enormous mountains on the east and west sides. Intelligence reports said that as many as 100 trucks moved through it nightly. We were east of the main trail. We knew it was only a matter of time before hundreds of NVA troops and trackers would be pouring down that road looking for us.

After crossing the hedgerow, I split the team in half. Ingles went east and I went west until we ran into another hedgerow where we moved north, continuing down the hill. I advised each tailgunner to cover



Venerable A1-E Skyraider. Capable of sustaining itself in flight at very slow speeds, the Skyraider was ideal for use as ground support aircraft in Vietnam. Photo: DoD



U.S. Air Force crewmen check one of 40mm cannons inside their AC-130H gunship. Photo: DoD

all tracks and occasionally blanket their steps with black pepper to thwart NVA tracking dogs.

We took no breaks. Darkness was closing in fast. With the team back together, we continued west into another small valley. We crossed a rocky stream and began climbing the first steep western ridge. Because the area was wide open and the vegetation was short, thin grass, the team went on line as everyone covered their tracks and laid down more pepper.

We moved straight up the hill, staying in the grass for more than 150 yards. We had to get as far away from the LZ as possible. As we headed up the hill, we moved between two large fingers of dense jungle growth which jutted down into the grassy area like the bottom tip of a large dark-green funnel. By now, we were all out of breath. The climb was tough and it was almost dark. We could hear noises in the large valley north of us and we had not yet set up our RON (Rest Over Night) location. The noises made us forget our dry throats, heaving lungs and aching knees and backs.

Sau, my Vietnamese team leader, moved south to the dark finger of jungle on our left and found a massive thicket of vines, thorns and undergrowth which had a double canopy of jungle growing on a steep hill. The hill had at least a 40-degree incline to it. "VC [Viet Cong] no find us here," he said.

One by one, we burrowed deeply into the massive thicket. We tied ourselves to trees and scrub to prevent rolling down the steep hill. At 2200 hours we heard trucks on the main road. When they got to the field area they stopped moving south. Soon we heard dogs heading for the east side of the main road. By 0100 hours we heard troops moving up the slope toward our position.

The NVA soldiers were walking through the grass we had traveled through hours earlier. They were on both sides of the massive thicket we had burrowed into. One soldier walked up to the thicket but returned to his comrades without realizing that six CAR-15s were pointed in his direction.

At first light, we moved straight up the mountain. Sau had climbed a tree and

observed NVA or Pathet Lao troops along the main trail. We couldn't break cover.

For the rest of the day, we climbed that side of the steep mountain. Because of the vegetation and the terrain, we had to go straight up, sometimes climbing solid rock. Several times the hills were so steep that we had to tie together the six-foot strands of rope we used for our Swiss seats to make a long rope to scale the sheer vertical rock surfaces. It meant we had to take off our web gear and rucksacks, hoisting each piece up one at a time.

By noon we were dead tired. Moving in the jungle, especially for large gangling Americans, was usually difficult. Climbing straight up mountains in full combat gear without ropes and climbing equipment was downright exhausting. We took a long break at noon before attacking the mountain again. By last light, we had reached the top. With the exception of Sau, each team member fell asleep.

When morning broke, we awoke to a beautiful sunrise and found that we were atop a gorgeous Laotian mountain range. Scenic and bucolic wonders abounded. Back in the "real world" people would have paid hundreds of dollars to enjoy the view that lay before us.

Only when we heard the radio call were we jarred back into reality. Yes, we were on a beautiful mountaintop, but HQ wanted to know why we had only moved about 400 yards on the map — which just proved that no one in Saigon or Da Nang could read a map.

I gave Covey, our airborne radio link flying overhead, a quick mirror fix on our location and told him that we were going to head north along the ridgeline, explaining that we had to abandon the original concept of staying in the valley due to intense enemy activity. The ridgeline had enough vegetation to cover our movement. The next few hours were the most spectacular ones I ever spent in the Prairie Fire AO.

While moving north along the ridgeline, we began gradually descending, often crossing beautiful new vistas that sparked fond memories of skiing in the Rockies and hiking — without a gun — along the Presidential Range in New Hampshire's White

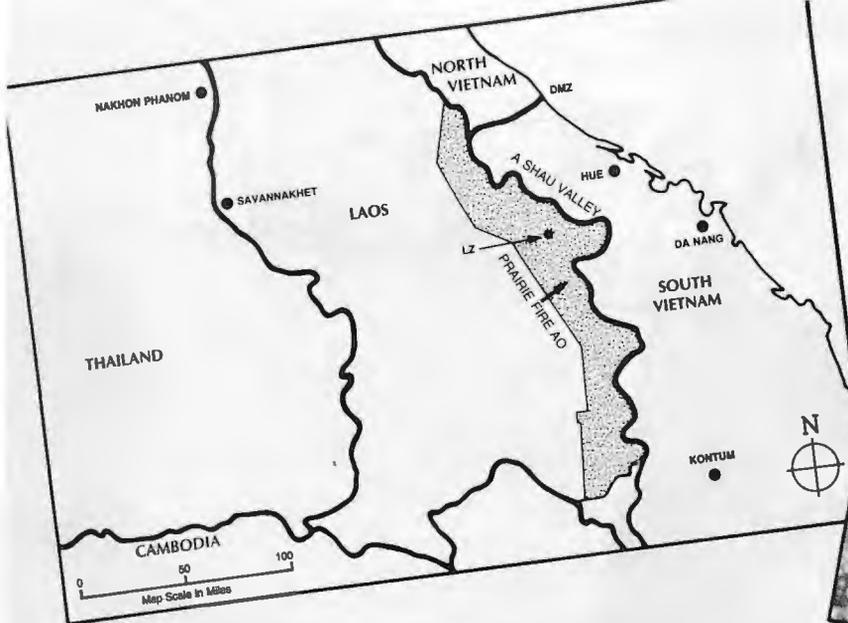
Mountains. At noontime, we found an area overrun with thousands of wild orchids in full, spectacular bloom. Back home, each plant was worth \$5 to \$50. The orchids gave us a false sense of euphoria. With the exception of Sau, everyone acted like a tourist, picking the orchids, sticking them in their hair, teeth, ears or jungle-fatigue bottom holes, or all of the above.

After a comms check with Covey, we moved out, continuing down the gentle slope and staying on or near the ridgeline. We were still sore from yesterday's brutal climb. Yet we were still over three clicks away from the bridge.

We then came to a large open area more than 400 yards long. The sides of the mountain were too steep to walk on. Sau didn't want to cross it until after dark. After that open expanse, the hill took a steep drop into heavy jungle, which would give us good cover for the remaining daylight hours and would provide a good RON site.

Against Sau's wishes, we crossed the open area. I told Ingles and Chau to move down the mountain and see how it looked. Chau was 16. He had been on the team nearly two years, ever since we rebuilt after the previous ST Idaho had disappeared at a Prairie Fire target in May 1968. Chau's sensitive ears heard the NVA moving up the mountain. He warned Ingles. They stopped moving because the enemy was within 20 feet of them. Ingles broke squelch on his URC-10 emergency radio several times, alerting me to his danger. I was back on top of the bare ridgeline, about 50 yards from him. I called a Prairie Fire Emergency, which alerted all aircraft in the area and would bring them to our location. Sau moved silently down the hill to assist Chau and Ingles.

In 10 minutes I made contact with an OV-10 Bronco which relayed my Prairie Fire Emergency report and turned toward our location. While I was talking to the pilot, Chau, Sau and Ingles sprang their impromptu ambush on the startled NVA-Pathet Lao troops. When the enemy pointman was less than three feet away, Chau



Map of author's mission with Spike Team Idaho on 8 February 1970.

blew him back to eternity with a full-automatic burst from his CAR-15. Chau, Sau and Ingles hit them so hard and fast that the NVA-Pathet Lao couldn't fire a return shot in initial contact. Ingles threw a hand grenade down the hill to make sure no one was close. Meanwhile, Son, Tuan and I received some inaccurate sniper fire from the south which Tuan quickly suppressed with the accurate delivery of three rounds from his 40mm M79 grenade launcher.

Within minutes the Bronco had arrived. The pilot said he observed more enemy activity north of us along the hill Ingles and Sau were on. He made a run firing his rockets into their position. Then he said, "I've got two bits of bad news for you: 'Nam is socked in. No helicopter assets can launch from there to extract your team, which means Thailand assets, which means at least three hours before the birds arrive here. And south of your location there are approximately a dozen troops about 800 yards from your location moving north toward you. I think you'd better sit tight until we get some assets here."

By 1430 hours, Covey was over us and affirmed the sit-tight suggestion. He agreed that the east and west sides of the mountain were too steep to climb straight down and confirmed that the NVA were coming at us from the south and north. For the next half hour, the NVA-Pathet Lao troops tried to find us. I directed several A-1E Skyraider gun runs south of our position. Our team fired their CAR-15s only when an NVA soldier was near them. Sau went back down the north side of the hill and rigged a booby-trapped claymore with a pressure-release firing device.

At 1600 hours a 12.7mm heavy machine-gun position in the valley east of our position opened up for the first time on the A-1Es. I was sitting on the east side of the mountain looking down into the valley floor. Sau, Chau and Ingles secured the northern slope while Son and Tuan were on

the western side of the mountain. The A-1E pilot was pissed. He wanted to nail that 12.7mm, ASAP. I told him to follow my tracers as I fired several 5.56mm rounds toward a clump of trees in the valley, which was several thousand feet away. He saw my tracers and said, "Thanks, partner."

I then watched the most beautiful napalm dive I'd ever seen. The pilot came out of the sky straight down, with his engine screaming at top RPM level. I thought I was watching a World War II movie. At the absolute last second he pulled out of the dive, releasing his napalm canister. It was a perfect strike. He generated one secondary explosion which was probably the gunner's ammo cache. The 12.7mm never whispered another sound.

From my position, looking south I could also see all the way back up the mountain slope we had walked down earlier, a gradual open area of approximately 400 yards. For the next three hours I directed air strikes around our position and in the valley.

At 1930 hours we heard the CH-53s coming our way. The NVA pushed up the hill from the north and hit Sau's claymore. Another 12.7mm opened up in the valley and I saw an NVA soldier climb into a tree about 300 yards away with an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) launcher. He was looking for ST Idaho. For more than a minute I held him in my CAR-15 gunsight. When someone handed him the rocket, I pulled the trigger once — he dropped out of the tree. Seconds later, one of the CH-53 pilots commented on the ground fire he was taking, then announced, "I think we have some mechanical problems — we're going home." They were less than two clicks out when they disappeared into the west with the fading sun. Our morale sank as they vanished into the sunset. These pilots were not the famed Jolly Green pilots from Da Nang who flew through hell fire and storms to pull out CCN teams and downed pilots. After cursing out the westward pilots, I told the team to take a nap. It was going to be a long night. Ingles and Sau maintained a watch while we slept.

Vietnamese grenadier from SOG spike team deep inside Laos. Photo: Ron Zeiss

Around 1930 hours Ingles awoke me saying, "Wake up. You're not going to believe this!" as he pointed south, up the mountainside we had walked down earlier. From about 75 yards south of our perimeter, up the mountain as far as we could see, there were dozens of lanterns with several soldiers marching between each light. Ditto north of us. The NVA were coming up that hill en masse. Ditto in the valley east of us, where more than a dozen trucks were unloading hundreds of troops. Ditto across the valley, up on the plateau, where there were several hundred lights. And in a smaller valley west of us, more lights. More NVA.

All of a sudden I felt real lonely. And I started praying.

My prayer was answered. A few minutes later, the first Spectre C-130 arrived on target. It had a computerized gun system comprised of a 105mm howitzer, a 40mm cannon, two 20mm cannons and four 7.62mm Miniguns, which could be linked with my strobe light. Once linked, the gunner could lock his four Miniguns, each capable of firing 6,000 rounds per minute, and two 20mm cannons on to targets five feet from the strobe light. On this night, however, we had a unique problem. The pilot circling over us complained that he couldn't pick out my strobe light because there were so many lights surrounding us.

"No problem," I said. "I'll just turn off my light. You get the rest. Hit the ridgeline west of the valley first. Give me one minute to put my team on the side of the mountain." I moved the team back to where the ridgeline dipped down the mountain, where Ingles, Sau and Chau had ambushed the NVA earlier.

The Spectre put on an amazing display of firepower. And once again we silently lifted praise for being on the side that had



Dead NVA soldier, victim of SOG (Studies and Observations Group) team's foray into Laos. Photo: Ron Zeiss

Uncle Sam's Air Force. After ripping up scores of bodies on the ridgeline, the Spectre moved his deadly fire into the valley and snuffed out more lights and lives. Miraculously, ST Idaho was unscathed.

Charlie got the message and doused his collective lights.

The Spectre crew had expended all ordnance and the pilot apologized for running out of ammo. Before he left, he asked me to turn on my strobe light to get a fix on our position. Tuan stuck his strobe light into the M79 grenade launcher barrel, pointed it upward to eliminate any lateral reflections, and marked our position.

"I've got no problem locking in on your position now," said the pilot. "You're on the ridge. We can see heavy enemy activity south of your location. More trucks in the valley and on the mountains east of the valley. Don't go anywhere," he quipped.

The next Spectre arrived seconds later. He quickly locked on to our strobe light and worked the southern slope real hard, marching his guns right up the southern trail to the top of the ridge and beyond our line of sight. Then he worked the valley and the eastern mountain ridge. A third Spectre arrived and again worked our southern perimeter. There was no light, no moon, no stars. The only sound was the roar of the C-130, which

could not be seen from earth except when it opened fire with its cannons.

Occasionally, when the Spectre moved to other targets, we'd hear the NVA dragging away their dead comrades. During one lull between the third and fourth Spectre, Sau and Chau crawled out and placed two claymores south of our position. They crawled through thin grass which was about five feet tall. At 0045 hours, Sau said some NVA were in the grass about 60 yards south of us. A few minutes later he blew the claymores. Claymores always sounded more thunderous and deadly at night. After the dust settled, we again heard NVA troops dragging away dead bodies. They never spoke. We heard no cries of anguish. Their silent suffering was eerie.

At 0130 hours Sau said he heard Charlies crawling toward us. I threw a grenade. The crawling stopped. We again heard dragging noises. Then Chau said he heard them. This time, Sau gave me a couple of rocks to throw. I heaved the first one and heard retreating footsteps. I threw the second one. Sau said he heard them retreating. How many? We couldn't tell.

Finally, the next Spectre arrived. He locked in on our strobe light and quickly dumped a series of flares. Sau's eyes were bigger than pizza tins. The NVA were within 15 yards of us! I asked the pilot how close he could bring the ordnance to my strobe light.



"As close as you want it," he replied.

"I want it five feet in front of my southern perimeter," I said.

"I can't bring it any closer than 25 yards to your perimeter unless you are willing to accept the responsibility for any casualties we may accidentally inflict on your team," the pilot said.

I told him I accepted full responsibility for any casualties. "Bring it in as tight as you can to the light. I'm holding it now. Move south from my light. I'll take my chances with you."

The gun crew opened fire. The fusillade cracked in over our heads. The earth in front of us erupted as the rounds ripped into the ground, kicking up stones and dirt and



knocking down NVA soldiers. The Spectre slowly marched his deadly 7.62mm and 20mm rounds southward from our strobe light, moving up the ridge. The precision and accuracy of those ships flying 1,500 feet above us was awesome, absolutely mind-boggling. He dropped more flares. This time there was no movement south of us. Chau said there were "beaucoup dead VC." We expended the rest of the gun crew's ordnance in the valley as we heard more trucks pulling in.

Another Spectre circled us and laid down its deadly ring of fire, again bringing it to within five feet of our strobe light. Around 0300 or 0400 hours, some early morning fog and haze moved in as Spectre moved out. And then the NVA moved at us again, from the south, with a vengeance. Spectre had killed a lot of their brave and dedicated comrades. But we held them back with the

Spike Team Idaho's team leader, Isaac Staats (left), armed with M60 machine gun at CCN (Command and Control North) compound in Da Nang. Other team members are armed with (center) AK-47 assault rifle and modified M79 grenade launcher hanging from web gear and (right) XM 177E2 assault rifle (forerunner of CAR-15) and XM 148 40mm grenade launcher (forerunner of M203). Photo: Ron Zeiss

"guess-whether-I'm-throwing-a-grenade-or-not" tactic. We abstained from firing our weapons because the flashes would have marked our position too clearly for the RPG-7 gunners, who had fired several rounds during the night but hadn't come close to our perimeter. We played that deadly game until sunrise. Once we broke a major thrust with a white phosphorus grenade. We couldn't see them, but we could smell burning flesh.

Around 0630 hours, we heard an NVA

troop calling roll in the distance. Few people answered him. We noticed for the first time that the five-foot-tall grass around us had been chopped down a couple of feet by the Spectre's barrages of deadly gunfire.

When the sun burned off the fog, we worked tactical air strikes with Phantom F-4 jets and the old reliable but deadly A-1E Skyraiders. A couple of 12.7mm positions opened fire and hit one of the A-1Es. A Phantom blew one gun crew to hell with a 500-pound bomb. The A-1E knocked out the second 12.7mm minutes after it opened fire. This time the CH-53s made it to our LZ without any "mechanical problems." The extraction was calm, relatively speaking, as we only took small-arms fire from a couple dozen AKs on the southern ridge.

Despite all the death and destruction from the night, no NVA bodies were in sight. The pilots later told us that several B-40 rockets missed our ship as we headed west to Thailand.

It felt peculiar heading west. It felt great being alive. And again we silently thanked the Lord for sparing ST Idaho and for blessing us with those awesome Spectres. ✖

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PHILIPPINE PATROL

Continued from page 51

ly engaged the trigger before deciding to run. If the mines had detonated, they would have blown away half of our platoon.

In a low-intensity conflict like this, most of the military's time is spent looking for an elusive enemy. Once contact is made, it should be exploited by destroying or at least bloodying the insurgents. My exhortations to quickly move forward fell on deaf ears. The platoon had decided to sit tight and cook their rice while the lieutenant tried to get permission to withdraw.

About this time two buses came down the road from the direction of the communist positions. Prudently, the soldiers forced the passengers to lie on the ground while being questioned. One woman with a small child stupidly tried to run. To their credit, the troops didn't overreact; they just stopped her and tried to calm her down. The civilians told us that there were about 80 NPA ahead but that they had fled when we surprised what turned out to be their three-man left security element. Because of our passivity we missed the opportunity to roll up their unprotected flank — something that our platoon could easily have done.

The news that 80 NPA were somewhere in front of us only spurred the platoon to double its efforts to obtain a withdrawal

order from headquarters. The fact that one of the platoon's two .30-caliber machine guns had malfunctioned was used as an excuse not to advance. When the order to leave eventually came over the radio, the entire platoon burst out in applause. Even my most disdainful expression couldn't shame them into at least trying to hide their burning desire to run away.

The Philippine army is plagued by many problems spawned during the 20 years of martial law: poor training of the individual soldier, lack of leadership at the junior level and a hierarchy that is more interested in political intrigue than successful operations against the communists. There are, however, a great many things to be optimistic about: Military abuses against civilians have largely ended; a multitude of anti-communist self-defense groups have spontaneously risen throughout the country; and civil-military relations are good, as evidenced by the information the locals volunteered about NPA activities. In one area that I visited, the local community had voluntarily built a company compound for an army unit that they had requested for protection against NPA extortions — hardly the action of people desiring a communist government.

Filipino commanders understand the weaknesses of their forces but, if this understanding is not put into action, it is very possible that the communists will impose their rule over yet another unwilling people. ✕

DEADLY DECEPTION

Continued from page 63

opportunity and enemy muzzle flashes. The Para officer in my vehicle was directing one of his troopers to put some illumination flares overhead and gave the RPG gunner his target — the building the terts were firing from.

After two to three minutes of small-arms firing and a few RPG rounds, the enemy building was in flames and our Paras were getting out of the vehicle to move into a position to sweep over the contact area and look for any sign of terrorist activity.

During the sweep of the contact area, four dead terts were found in the building and numerous blood spoor (tracks/trails) were detected. We had captured three AK assault rifles and one RPD machine gun. Our sweep group had also found where the enemy had dug shell scrapes (prone firing positions), which convinced us that this was a planned ambush to take our convoy. The only casualties in our group were two slightly wounded Paras.

So, with the captured weapons and body count our unit, 44 Para Brigade, Pathfinder Company, had been blooded in combat and had not only drawn first blood but had come out victorious.

When the remainder of the Pathfinder Company arrived in the operational area

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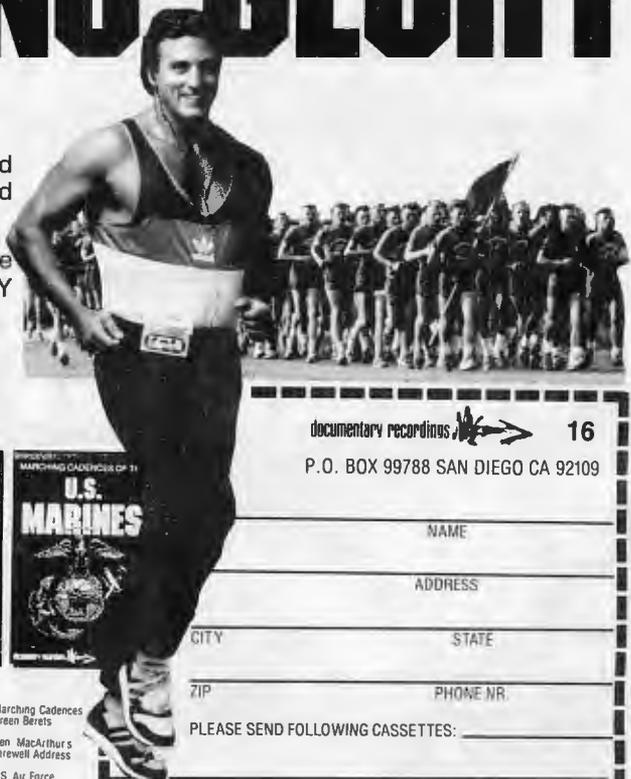
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two weeks later, our advance party had long war stories to tell the new guys. The Q-Car idea lasted for about a month after our initial contact, with only one other ambush attempt. The road in Ovamboland was secured and the Pathfinders had more important tasks ahead of them in Angola.

For the combat vets of 44 Para, we were back to the job we knew best — killing terrorists. ✕

SOVIET DRUG TRADE

Continued from page 53

tame official Dutch action in the wake of the huge heroin intercept, it seems clear that the significance of the transport was downplayed a little by the Dutch government so as not to lose too much Soviet business, especially maritime. Undoubtedly, however, the fact remains that the *Captain Tomson* and other vessels like it roam Western European shores and are particularly interested in cargoes to and from naval harbors.

Cases in point are Den Helder, the Dutch navy's main berth, and the Wilton-Feyenoord shipyard in Rotterdam, where a new class of submarines is currently being built for the Netherlands Royal Navy. Shore intelligence, signal intelligence (SIGINT) and human intelligence (HUMINT) activities also come together here. Keeping in mind that cargoes such as the "Afghan

raisins" are quite often shipped at prohibitively high costs by Soviet vessels, indications are that such ships are indeed no more than a thinly veiled extension of Soviet intelligence collection efforts. Doctor Joseph Luns, ex-secretary general of NATO, underlined the Soviet efforts recently by stating that, "Without a doubt, Russian intel efforts have increased sharply near Western ports in the last four years."

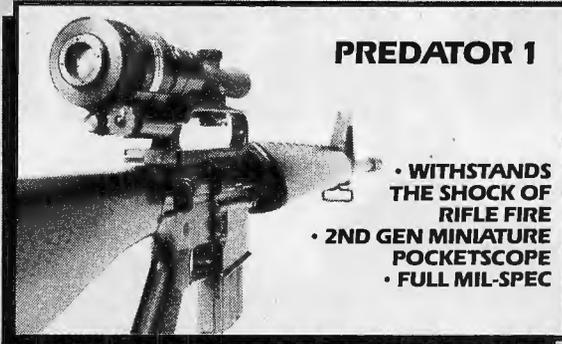
In a long interview with the Italian daily newspaper *Il Giornale Commandante*, Ricardo Boccia, Italian head of the anti-Mafia unit of the Italian Carabinieri, stressed that Soviet and East Bloc involvement in drug smuggling to the mob had increased significantly in the last few years as a lucrative source of hard Western currency for the Soviet Union. Reportedly, William Webster, then head of the FBI, met on 24 June 1986 with Mr. Boccia in Rome to discuss such problems, including the shipment of narcotics captured on board the *Captain Tomson* in Rotterdam.

Ricardo Boccia further stated that Stephan Derdlev (possibly a pseudonym), a defector from the Bulgarian secret service, had seen copies of KGB memorandum M 120/00-050 of 10 February 1971, which gives the guidelines of how to destabilize the West through massive infusions of hard drugs. He also noted that he had indications that there were plantations of opium and heroin for export in the Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Where then did the *Captain Tomson's* heroin originate? According to Dutch police spokesman Mr. Hougee, as well as reporters from UPI and the Dutch daily *De Telegraaf*, most, if not all, of it came from Soviet-occupied Afghanistan.

Many hippies of the late 1960s knew where to get some of the best hash, opium and heroin: Afghanistan. This source soon dried up in the aftermath of the 1979 Soviet invasion. Now, however, besides war-torn villages and a countryside littered with the remnant tools of war, opium poppies can be seen growing throughout the Afghan countryside. As Niaz Machmad, an Afghan farmer in Nangarhar Province, put it: "The Russians bomb our fields when we grow [food] crops, but fields in which poppy is growing they leave alone." This Soviet tactic means that the farmers have to go to town to get food, making them dependent on the communist Afghan regime and also preventing them from giving the mujahideen food. According to Mr. Machmad, "We sow in the fall. After six months, in spring, we pluck the poppies and make them into heroin. Then we are forced to sell our heroin to the Afghan government or the Russians and they transport it farther.

"If we grow wheat, hops or corn, the Soviets bomb our fields. Now we have to buy our food in Jalalabad, the provincial capital. In our village we grow 14,000 kilograms of raw poppy, and from that we can make 2,000 kilograms of pure heroin."



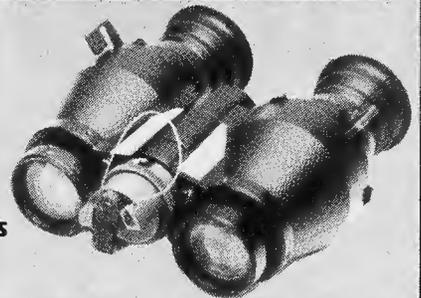
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DEALERS WANTED

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In 1985, in the area near Soviet headquarters in east Afghanistan, there were, according to reliable Afghan sources, at least 35 laboratories where heroin was being produced from raw opium. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reports that some 40 percent of world heroin production is from Afghanistan. According to officials in Pakistan, Afghan opium production is around 850 tons a year and used to be transported as heroin destined for Western European and American markets through Iran and Turkey. These heavily armed convoys leaving Herat for Iran were, however, repeatedly ambushed by Iranian troops, so the present route, supposedly in use since 1985, goes directly from Herat (by camel) to the Soviet Union, from where it is driven by truck or brought by train and ship to Turkey for further distribution. Pakistan, too, received a fair amount of heroin directly from the Afghan border areas.

A member of the Dutch central police information service, the CRI, informed me that Termez, a Soviet city on the Soviet Union/Afghanistan border, is believed to be the collection point for heroin produced in the occupied areas. According to Afghan sources, the areas where most of the poppies are grown are near Jalalabad, Koendoez and Feyzabad, the greatest production areas being in the northeastern part of Afghanistan.

The 220 kilos of heroin found on board the *Captain Tomson* in Rotterdam were

secretly destroyed sometime in July 1986 at the garbage disposal facility at Rijnmond, Netherlands, where it was brought in a large armored car transport by the Dutch national police.

The conclusions drawn from Dutch investigations were that Soviet government involvement was obvious but could only be proven by indirect means. As a result of this and other illegitimate activity by "commercial" Soviet shipping, a secret NATO maritime convention was held at Schiphol airport, Amsterdam, on 28 November 1987, where plans were made to trail and keep better track of such vessels. It must be stressed that official Soviet cooperation throughout the investigation of the record-breaking quantity of narcotics discovered on their ship was minimal — at most times unwilling or even impedimentary, especially where it concerned the comings and goings of Soviet vessels.

One last detail of interest remains: Three suspects in this case were arrested and interrogated for two days in Rotterdam at the end of May 1986. Upon orders of the municipal court of Rotterdam, all three were released on 2 June 1986 for supposed lack of evidence. Dutch police declined to say in which way these three men were connected to the case and whether those arrested were Soviet or of another nationality. Had they not been Soviet, that fact could have easily been acknowledged.

Subsequent investigation into the execu-

tion-style murder of Rob Koning also netted no result — but then, those who shot him and threw him in the Amstel River undoubtedly did so to preclude ongoing investigations from being fruitful. ✕

AIRBORNE RECON

Continued from page 35

zas and a breakdown of the insurgents supported by the neighboring communist country of "Nicanor"), as well as various maps, target lists and specifics dealing with the Army air assets the scouts would be using during the FTX.

In essence, just about everything a platoon leader would need to know to run his missions was made available. Part of Maj. Rivera's evaluation of the platoon would be based on what the platoon leader did with all the information he'd been given, as it affected his platoon.

I sat through 1st Lt. Bulatao's warning order to his platoon administration and squad leaders. This information would get the platoon gearing up for the mission while the platoon leader worked out his full OPORD. As Maj. Rivera had told me earlier, this was one of SRSC's pluses: The platoon and its leaders could practice troop-leading procedures — getting ready for a wartime mission — as they'd most likely do it if the balloon really went up. Solid, neces-

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sary training, a good foundation for SRSC.

It was "oh-dark-thirty" and finger-numbing cold the next morning when I linked up with the scouts. First mission? Rough Terrain Jump, for real, out of a UH-60 Blackhawk, would begin the FTX. I didn't envy those scouts one bit: RTJ gear and helmet, full field ruck, gear and weapon, reserve chute — it was a back-breaking load, and the scouts tended to waddle around only long enough to get into their lift orders before collapsing on the ground.

They were quiet, sitting there in the cold pre-dawn, waiting for the Blackhawk to arrive. Staff Sergeant Frazier had run them through jump drills the day before, but most still had the pre-jump nerves (something all paras experience before every jump). I'd found out the day before that a couple of the scouts were absolutely terrified of jumping, but everyone knew they'd go anyway. That's just the way things work.

WHUMP, WHUMP, WHUMP. The Blackhawk screamed overhead, pulled a tight circle, then set down. "First lift, get moving!" The first six scouts hauled themselves over, then plunked down on the floor, three on each side of the bird. Frazier, the jumpmaster, made sure all was in order and we lifted off, ice-cold air blasting in through the open doors. I had butterflies, and I wasn't even jumping.

We wound up to jump height, no strain at

all on the Blackhawk's powerful twin turbos. Static lines hooked, equipment checked, all eyes on the jumpmaster. "Go! Go! Go!" Frazier supplementing voice with arm commands. All six free and clear, a good jump.

I watched one more lift head out the door, then buzzed out to the DZ to check the results. They were fairly scattered, but I did catch two scouts coming into the trees. One jumper came through, finally hanging up about six or seven feet above the ground. The second was a tree-topper. Both went through their drills like they'd been doing it every day and within minutes had easily rappelled down to the ground.

Once gear had been checked and accounted for, the scouts took off to secure areas for their STABO ops. A pair of Hueys this time, and I rode with SSgt. Ferrell on the first bird. We'd be kicking meal, ready-to-eat (MRE) rations out onto a rally point (RP) first, then out to pick up the scouts and STABO them back to the RP.

It went off without a hitch, except at one point the second slick got a bit too close for comfort while we were hauling a pair of scouts below us, dangling off the 120-foot nylon rope. But the pilots were good and so was Ferrell. "Fifty feet, 40, 30, 20, 10 — nine feet, eight, seven..." he told the pilots over his headset while hanging out the Huey's open door, counting the feet until

the troops hanging below touched down to the ground. It looked like fun — but not when the temperature's hovering around 30 and you're hanging in the breeze sucking up wind chill.

I linked up with Spec.4 Stoic's 3rd Squad the next morning when SRSC lane-walkers switched over. Attaching themselves to the various squads, SRSC staff evaluated their progress. These reports went to Captain Wayne Swan, SRSC's training officer, and then to Maj. Rivera for review.

There were some problems that morning. It was supposed to be a tactical exercise for the entire three days, yet a "get warm" admin base of sorts involving two of the squads had been authorized by the SRSC cadre from the night before. An inspection of weapons showed that a few were still literally frozen shut — and therefore inoperable — from the small boat operation of last night. But these areas were quickly sorted out and, in fact, used as teaching points by the incoming SRSC cadre. The program carried on. Third Squad did its thing, got caught at it, but learned a lot. That's why they were there.

Because of other commitments, I wasn't able to stick around for the conclusion of the FTX or the debriefing/after-action review, where the platoon had its opportunity to assess SRSC. But I was pretty clear in my own mind about the value of SRSC. Did it

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make for better scouts? Undoubtedly. Without the distraction of garrison routine and duties, they were able to concentrate solely on training critical to their jobs and self-preservation in combat.

Was SRSC training valid? Course material was solid and scout-oriented; my only critical observation concerned the time allotted to certain subject areas: SRSC and its attendant scouts would be better off with at least five more training days tacked on to the schedule for such subjects as tracking/anti-tracking and concealed-movement exercises, areas in which combat scouts must excel if they're going to live and carry out a mission.

Finally, I asked myself the million-dollar question regarding SRSC: After finishing the course, could these scouts deploy overseas and do their job? Probably — SRSC was there to provide a fine-tuning of skills that scouts must already have before attending, to further instill that training so that it becomes instinctive, a second nature that will automatically take over when the bullets fly and there's no time to do anything but react.

And that takes time, effort and receptivity on everyone's part. Scout Reconnaissance and Surveillance Course is there to teach, and they do a good job of that. The 1-505 Scouts were there to learn, and I think they did. With that combination, you just can't go wrong. ✕

NIGHT FIGHT

Continued from page 29

slowing him down. I promised to try.

At 1500 hours Ed and I, the two horse-men and a couple of teenaged guerrillas were moving again, hiking back into Afghanistan, down one of the valleys paralleling the Nazian directly toward the Soviet advance. The Morro mujahideen had radioed to another *markaz* down there and they had agreed to provide us with an escort to Landi Kotal. Nine of their men were headed that way, going home to the refugee camps in Pakistan to take care of their families, so they would travel with us. It didn't sound like a very good plan to me, but it was the only plan we had.

By dusk we were at the base of the valley where it met the plains. We met three ancient men herding sheep into the mountains. They warned us not to go farther, that the Soviets were just below, but we pushed on, trying to find our nine guerrilla escorts.

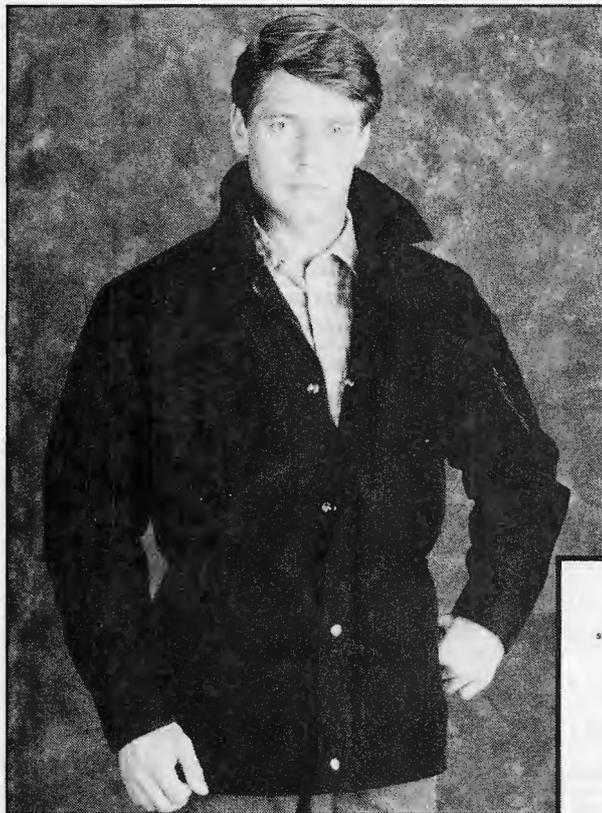
Evening found us in a bombed-out village eating a dinner of roast goat and chicken with a village elder and two local mujahideen, even younger than our bodyguards from Morro — raw-boned peasant kids armed with World War I-vintage Lee Enfields. Meanwhile the two guerrillas from Morro chattered away on a walkie-talkie

trying to find the nine guerrillas bound for Landi Kotal. The news over the walkie-talkie was grim: Russians everywhere, fire-fights, confusion.

I was halfway through my second plate of goat and chicken when the mountaintops to the northwest began to disappear in great plumes of smoke: a Soviet artillery barrage. A few minutes later a group of villagers carried a dying mujahid past us. He had been shot minutes before, just down the valley in a skirmish.

It was definitely time to saddle up, and we did. As darkness fell, Ed, the two loyal horsemen and I fled back up the valley and up a side gully that led, we were told, to the border and another *markaz* where we would find shelter. As we climbed we found ourselves surrounded by hundreds of Afghan civilians fleeing their homes before the advancing Soviets. Another nasty night in a nasty war, a war in which the Soviets have made civilians fair game, burned babies, thrown women out of helicopters, crushed old men under tanks. No wonder these poor people were afraid.

We were just across the border, a few hundred feet below the *markaz* when suddenly the refugees ahead of us turned and fled back down past us, back the way we had come. Panicked whispers: "*Shuravi! Shuravi!*" Somehow, the Soviets had got a Spetsnaz commando force up onto the



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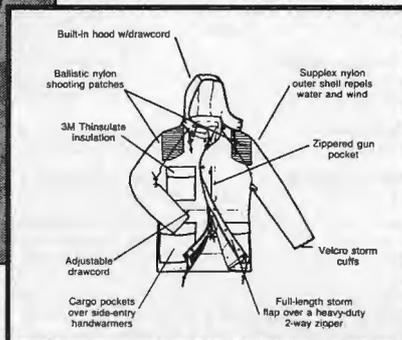
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ridgeline and they had the *markaz* surrounded; the way down into the Tirah was cut off.

We fled down the mountain and took another side trail around the curve of the mountain down into the Tirah. One of the horsemen grabbed my arm and drew me aside. "Don't let anyone know you are a foreigner," he said. "If the Tirah people find out who you are, they will kill you." Marvelous. I felt like I was starring in a feature-length production of "Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Fire." On we went, stumbling in the darkness, not daring to shine a light.

Gradually the crowds of refugees thinned out as families left the trail, moving off into the rocks and fields to camp. We kept on going, exhausted, moving like zombies.

Forty-five minutes after we left the ridgeline, the skyline behind us erupted in lurid fire as the Soviets attacked the *markaz* with rockets and heavy artillery. Parachute flares drifted down, adding to the ugly glow, the light the Afghans call, with a mixture of irony and poetry, "the Russian moon." After 10 minutes or so the explosions and flashes petered out. It was dark again.

We stopped at 0100 hours and rested by the trail, hidden under our blankets. Two hours later we heard the sound of footsteps and voices — it was the nine mujahideen who were supposed to meet us back in the bombed-out village. They had missed us in the confusion of the Soviet assault and had

no idea whether we were alive or dead. They were very glad to see us. The feeling was definitely mutual.

It took us until midday the next day to reach Landi Kotal, traveling without a break. By the time we got there, my blisters were so bad I could barely walk. Riding, alas, was out of the question. Our nine mujahideen escorts had roped dozens of RPG-7 rounds on top of the already top-heavy loads, and it would have taken a circus stunt-rider to stay mounted.

Just short of Landi Kotal, when I thought it was all over, fate played a last exceedingly dirty trick. The Pakistani police had set up a checkpoint ahead, blocking the way into town. We had to finish our journey with a two-hour slog, in blinding heat, up an eroded butte and down a secret back-wadi into town. I was so thirsty when we reached the guerrilla safe house in Landi that I put down half a gallon of water, six tangerines and three Coca-Colas in less than 20 minutes. When I peeled off my boots and socks, the mujahideen gathered around and gasped: They said that they had seen fine sets of blisters before, but that mine rivaled the best seen on the Khyber Pass in recent history.

Three days later in Peshawar, we found out how the battle for the Morro area had gone. The Soviet commandos were driven off the ridgeline after heavy fighting. The main convoy lost several tanks to mines and RPG-7 fire. The mujahideen lost several

men, including the jolly old one-legged commander at Morro; I never did get the chance to find him that new leg he wanted so much. ✕

MAIMING FOR MARX

Continued from page 25

helicopters approaching an LZ and is placed in trees or on walls. *Mina Saltarina Atonal* (Atonal Jumping Mine) is a surprisingly sophisticated adaptation of the World War II German "Bouncing Betty" or S-mine. When tripped, the mine's explosive body pops up out of the ground and explodes at approximately knee level.

Although guerrilla sappers occasionally mark mine locations with small rock cairns or broken twigs, detection by the Salvadoran army remains difficult, and the casualty count continues to rise. Commercial-type metal detectors provided by the U.S. government have been only moderately successful.

While the U.S. left-wing press never ceases its cacophonous chant about the so-called human-rights abuses of the Nicaraguan contras, they have to date remained silent about the thousands of innocent *campesinos* maimed and murdered by Marxist mines in El Salvador. Strange? Not really. Terrorism has always been acceptable to Lenin's useful idiots when performed in the name of "people's liberation" movements. ✕

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SIEGE IN ANGOLA

Continued from page 42

categorize this booty.

Several groups of Western military specialists have already been able to view much of this confiscated equipment. Parties have been ferried from Pretoria to the southern border between Angola and South-West Africa for this purpose. Naturally, these acquisitions are of considerable propaganda value to South Africa, especially because the largest force yet gathered together in Angola under Soviet and Cuban auspices has been totally routed, with resultant loss of face in Luanda, the Angolan capital. The effect of this disaster on Angolan morale is underscored by Cuba airlifting 9,400 more troops to Luanda in December 1987 in an attempt to thwart any precipitate action on the part of FAPLA against the extremely unpopular Cuban presence.

Several foreign observers have also noted that Angola's radar and missile-defense grid (which runs the entire length of Angola, from the Atlantic Ocean to Zambia, and has been regarded as impenetrable) has been, of late, routinely and regularly breached by the South African air force. The South Africans lost only one Impala jet fighter and one single-engine observation Kudu aircraft; a French Mirage jet fighter was also hit by a missile but despite serious damage was able to limp back to base. Its pilot was seriously injured after ejecting on landing, but the crew members of the other two downed aircraft were killed.

The recent campaign in southeast Angola took place on two separate and identifiable fronts. The first of these was centered around Lucusse in the east-central region of the country and involved about five FAPLA brigades of approximately 2,000 men each. Much of this activity went on along the Luangungo River and it is here that UNITA suffered its worst losses. There was also much UNITA activity in the area around Cassamba. Between these two points, UNITA shot down two MiG-21s, including one from which two Cuban pilots were taken prisoner and subsequently displayed, along with three helicopters, to the foreign press at Jamba. Photographs of all these aircraft have been made available to the international press by Dr. Savimbi.

Although Savimbi is not effusive about the use of Stinger missiles, it is known that this American weapon system was responsible for most enemy aircraft losses, including at least one Angolan Soviet-made Antonov transport aircraft that was shot down on takeoff on the outskirts of Huambo, about 500 kilometers west of Cassamba. All Soviet crewmen were killed.

The second offensive involved the South Africans, who reacted positively when a force of 16,000 FAPLA troops deployed in eight brigades swept down the dry Lomba riverbed north of Jamba. The Cuban-backed Angolans initially used Cuito Cuanavale as their strong point, and it is in this direction

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that the South Africans retaliated, bringing the strategic airport there under heavy artillery fire early on. It is known that several Angolan jets and helicopters were destroyed on the ground at Cuito.

The offensive around Cuito was basically identical to the offensive launched by Cuban- and Soviet-backed FAPLA forces two years ago, except that in 1987 it was on a much larger scale and the buildup of hardware was more substantial. What set this onslaught apart from previous ones was the fact that on this occasion very few Soviet Hind Mi-25/35 helicopter gunships were deployed against the South Africans, largely because more than a dozen of these aircraft were lost in 1985, eight of them in a single swoop by three South African air force Impala jet fighters.

South African intelligence sources indicated that, in their sector as of early December 1987, FAPLA had lost the following aircraft: seven helicopters, almost all of them carrying troops, and two MiG-21s. There were also three MiG-23s lost accidentally. Pretoria is not prepared to elaborate on the circumstances, but it is possible that they were taken out by FAPLA ground fire. Altogether, FAPLA deployed 13 MiG-23s, six MiG-21s, five SU-25s, one PC-7, three Mi-17 and five Mi-25/35 helicopter gunships in the southern sector. The South Africans retaliated on a limited scale with Impala and Cheetah fighter jets.

South African sources also indicated that, for the first time on any substantial scale, FAPLA jets were used in ground attack operations. Their fire was apparently erratic and uncoordinated, hence the low number of South African casualties compared to those of FAPLA. Angolan jets were also incapable of destroying much of the FAPLA hardware left lying on the various battlefields after their crews had fled in disarray, though they tried. The ratio of FAPLA losses to South African losses is given by South African sources as 26 to one.

UNITA forces are known to have inflicted many fewer losses of aircraft toward the end of the campaign than at the beginning with the Stinger missiles. No doubt the low-level flight tactic of aerial defense employed by AAF pilots will be applied in Afghanistan, where a similar variant of the Stinger is used by the mujahideen freedom fighters.

Two weaknesses of the AAF became apparent fairly early. FAPLA ground forces rarely received any air support, especially in the crucial series of battles along the Lomba River in the later stages of the operation. Nor were any aircraft used for casualty evacuation purposes. These shortcomings resulted in a sharp decline in morale among FAPLA contingents and contributed to desertions in the face of heavy enemy fire. In some cases, squads of troops disappeared into the bush.

Artillery, not aircraft, played a major role in pushing back Angolan and Cuban forces. The most decisive losses were inflicted by variants of South African armor. Two sys-

tems excelled. The first was South Africa's 155mm G5 artillery, although the self-propelled G6 was also deployed. Working independently, small groups of G6 howitzers backed by infantry were able to creep up to within 40 kilometers of Angolan positions and cause serious losses. Each one of these South African-built G6s is equipped with satellite navigational systems, which enable them to drop in a pattern of accurate air-bursts. And while FAPLA did deploy electronic guidance systems that were able to pinpoint the source of fire, the G6s invariably moved on after initial salvos, relocating several kilometers away each time.

FAPLA prisoners reported that South Africa's 127mm Valkiri multiple rocket launcher system was also effective. This system has a longer range, carries a larger warhead (each rocket carries about 2,000 steel balls) and is more accurate than the Soviet BM-21 rocket system. Air burst was responsible for most of the FAPLA casualties during the later stages of the onslaught.

If Cuito Cuanavale falls, only time will tell whether it will prove as decisive a political defeat to the Angolan communist forces as the fall of Dien Bien Phu was to the French in Indochina. But in military terms, the current siege of Cuito Cuanavale approaches that battle in significance. ✕

HAMMERED & SICKLED

Continued from page 65

"Many people drank *chefir*. . . There were many people who used to smoke *anasha* and *plan*."

Chefir is a caffeine-laden drink made by brewing a thick tea the consistency of honey. *Anasha* is hashish and *plan* is an opium derivative. All of these are common in Afghanistan and in the Moslem republics in Soviet Central Asia. Because of the Moslem sensibilities of these areas, vodka is scarce, so Soviet soldiers — many of whom have taken an alcohol dependency into the army with them — look to drugs as a substitute.

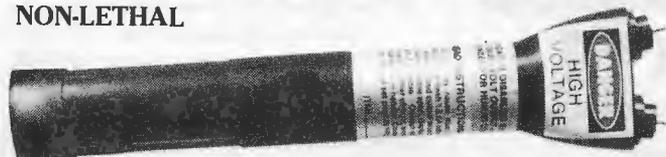
Afghanistan has increased the Soviet army's drug problem. After the invasion, to try to respect the quisling government's shaky Islamic credentials, the Soviets agreed to keep alcohol from their troops in Afghanistan. Looking for an alternative, the troops found the cheap and plentiful substances that grow in Afghanistan. It seems that rear-echelon troops are the biggest abusers, having more contact with the locals and lacking the self-discipline of the combat troops.

These drugs have spread from the army into Soviet society as a whole. Since czarist times, it has been the policy for conscripts from one section of the country to serve their tours of military duty in other parts. Drugs may follow this movement. "There was a case where a soldier from Central Asia was getting narcotics in parcels," a

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former Soviet lieutenant said in an interview. "It is relatively easy to get narcotics in Central Asia. He was caught and sent to the disciplinary battalion for this."

A former communications specialist said, "*Anasha plus chefir* or wine or vodka made [the soldiers] feel very high. They got real crazy. They even began shooting sometimes. I remember, one of the minorities [a soldier from Central Asia or a non-Slavic ethnic background] started shooting out the windows of headquarters. He didn't wound anybody, but everybody remembered that case."

Despite often draconian penalties and constant preaching against alcohol and drug abuse, the problems remain hard to solve.

A former Soviet officer told a U.S. interviewer, "Usually, there would be an oral reprimand. And then sometimes, not always, they would send the person to the guardhouse. But this guardhouse is nothing bad. The food is the same. The only thing is that it's not as comfortable to sleep. Sometimes they ask you to work, but sometimes you sit all day and do nothing." A very different matter, however, is a disciplinary battalion, a military unit of such savage treatment that recidivism is almost unknown.

One reason that unit guardhouse confinement is less onerous is because it is relatively common. One former Soviet army communications specialist said he had spent 150 days in the guardhouse — five months out of his two-year term, "For fights, for disobeying orders, for drinking, for fooling around with women. This is a normal case."

"Alcoholism is an epidemic, and nobody could do anything about it," said a former lieutenant in a radio intercept battalion. "As far as the other people were concerned, not one day passed when they wouldn't take a drink. And how many talks were there about it, and meetings, and soul-saving conversations? And I want to tell you that the cream of the officer corps served in the company where I was trained."

While these anecdotes show the extent of the problem, it is uncertain what effect it has on Soviet combat effectiveness. In the words of well-known Washington defense analyst Dr. Edward Luttwak, "The Russians beat Napoleon while drunk. They beat Hitler while drunk. They can beat NATO while drunk." There is a great deal of truth to this statement, and the Soviets, like their czarist forebears, have found that it is possible to have both a tradition of victory and a tradition of hard drinking.

Some of the soldiers interviewed for this survey said they did not think alcohol and drug abuse hurt Soviet combat readiness. Indeed, in World War II the Soviets issued soldiers four ounces of vodka before major battles. This certainly has parallels in other armies. As a former officer in the British Army of World War I said, "We would have lost the war if not for the rum ration."

Yet the nature of war has changed since the day when a soldier needed liquid courage. Today's soldier is more likely to be a

technician or behind the lines in a support role than in the front lines. It is in these types of jobs that alcohol and drug abuse can hurt the most. The lesson of the U.S. Army in the last stages of the Vietnam War, ravaged by drug abuse, must be very real to the Soviet command. Yet the problem continues. One former conscript in the Soviet Strategic Missile Forces told an interviewer that his comrades drank the alcohol supplied for equipment, "the technical kind, methyl alcohol. You can't drink this kind of alcohol because it affects your vision. But they drank it anyway."

Getting off post on exercises or an errand provides a chance to meet people and barter for things unobtainable in the army. Such transactions are prominent in Soviet life, although considered illegal black marketeering by the government — especially since what the Soviet soldier barter is usually government issue. The bottom halves of rubberized waterproof NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) protective suits are often traded to fishermen in return for fresh fish. Issue blankets, gasoline and other items are often exchanged for food or the ultimate item — a bottle of vodka. The Soviet soldier will usually not, however, barter weapons or ammunition. That is a political crime, not a "criminal" one, and carries the potential of the death penalty. In Afghanistan, though, Moslem soldiers sympathizing with the mujahideen and drug addicts in need will frequently take risks and give out weapons and ammunition.

The punishment for any of these escapes from military discipline can be swift and certain. A dishonorable discharge stamped on his internal passport will blight the life of any Soviet citizen to a degree that Westerners can hardly imagine. The labor camps of the gulag await black marketeers and bribe takers. The Soviets still shoot soldiers, even in peacetime — a number of executions were reported by reliable sources in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Lieutenant Belenko (the defecting Foxbat pilot) knew an air force NCO shot for desertion. One reason the Soviets can get away with their terrible conditions of service is that the iron hand of repression prevents anyone doing anything about it. But because transgressions are so frequent, the full rigor of Soviet law is only enforced in combat conditions (Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia) or when it is desired to make an example. Too high a punishment rate on the reports looks bad all around, so many AWOL soldiers and black marketeers get two weeks in the unit guardhouse rather than the potential 10 years in the gulag.

For the Soviet soldier, discipline alternating between the lax and the savage, hard work and terrible food are all part of daily life. He serves in conditions much harsher than anything U.S. or British soldiers must face. He suffers from a wide range of disadvantages that far exceed anything seen in the West — up to 25 percent of the soldiers may not speak Russian (requiring the re-introduction of a formal language training program in units in the early 1980s) and

little or no leave.

The Soviet soldier is also paid little and, although the average soldier is not ill-educated, he is treated as an idiot or a potential deserter. It is a hard and often self-defeating system, critically cutting into the supply of long-service men, who are the backbone of any army. The result of all this is strangely not large-scale discontent but a sense of pride.

Despite being treated this way, Soviet soldiers, even those who have left the army and the Soviet Union and have no love at all for communism, retain a deep pride in having been a Soviet soldier. Since childhood, Soviet citizens are taught that service to the state is something to be proud of, not a source of shame for those who serve. The low pay — few men are able to save while doing their time — does not burn too greatly, for the product-poor Soviet citizen does not view money as the report card of life. The Soviet soldier knows he is a valued member of society, not an embarrassment to the "best people." He probably knows the system is dumb. He probably would never re-enlist, regardless of incentives. He does as little work as possible in peacetime but, in the final analysis, he is a soldier. There should be no doubt that he is prepared to fight for his homeland.

The Soviet soldier receives, first, foremost and always, an intense but soldierly military discipline in which he and his society see no shame. The negative sanctions for those who run afoul of this discipline loom large in their harshness, but the rewards of the system, even if minor — a technician's qualification, "soldier of the month," even a stripe — are appreciated nonetheless. This is largely because of Soviet societal attitudes, attitudes that lead the soldier to circumvent the system as well as serve it. While much may be wrong with the Soviet army, this is what gives the Soviets the assurance that, should the Soviet soldier be called to action — in Afghanistan, in Europe, anywhere — he will be there and will fight as hard as his father did in 1941-45. ✕

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 18

While it is important to inspect troops thoroughly before a mission, it is vitally important to know how *not* to inspect. For instance, if a commander is thorough to the point of being nit-picking, troop morale suffers as his authority is seen as a tool to browbeat rather than to build discipline, confidence and trust. And when troops lose respect for their commander, his power to coordinate is lost. However, if an inspection is too light or not carried out at all, a commander's lack of concern is a signal to his men that he doesn't care, and unit cohesiveness becomes a ma-

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Exercising authority in the proper balance between inspecting too much and not at all enhances a leader's command and control over his men. Essentially, rank, time in service and grade influence how detailed an inspection should be. New troops need a thorough checkout — anything less is not good enough. A platoon sergeant requires a less detailed inspection for only mission-essential items. However, he should still know that the lieutenant can exercise his right to carry out a complete inspection on him at any time. This unspoken right of a superior officer to carry out a full inspection is granted him by virtue of his rank. It is up to the superior officer not to abuse this right while still making it clear that he is the boss.

Incorporating an inspection team is one sure way to achieve a balanced approach to inspections. In this procedure, the platoon sergeant inspects the squad leaders and the squad leaders inspect the troops, with each successive rank being responsible for carrying out a more detailed checkout. The entire procedure is conducted with the lieutenant looking on as each man carries out his particular responsibility. A complete visual inspection is thus guaranteed, accountability clearly defined and each man assured that he is a trusted participant in good standing in his unit. Nothing is left to chance or false assumptions. And the overall effect is a positive, unmistakable one — the lieutenant shows himself to be a true leader who cares about his men and stands behind them 100 percent.

Mission accomplishment rests on the shoulders of the leader. In order to accomplish that mission, the unit leader must insure the coordination of men and equipment. If the men don't have the proper equipment in the correct quantities, or have a bond of trust and respect between themselves and their commanders, this coordination breaks down. Therefore, the final inspection is one of the means of insuring troop safety and mission accomplishment because it establishes a regular mechanism that reaffirms unit discipline and respect. It also helps give the lieutenant the confidence he needs to command effectively in battle.

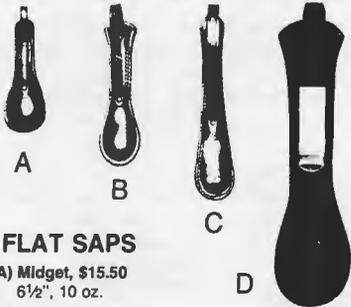
I'm sure that had the lieutenant in the opening situation done his final inspection properly, the outcome of the battle would have been different. ✕

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Continued from page 60

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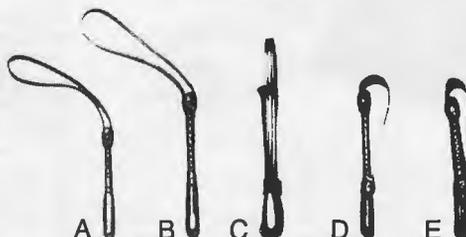
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"They ship the stuff by the ton, sometimes in full containers," said a former DEA head in Paris who monitored the Lebanese connection. It comes through Cyprus. "There the container's documents are exchanged for forged ones. Then customs officers in Britain, Marseilles or Rotterdam find themselves dealing with a sealed container which they have every reason to believe is full of olives or Cypriot cheese. They stamp the papers and let it go — tons of hashish will end up in some remote warehouse leased by a fictional company."

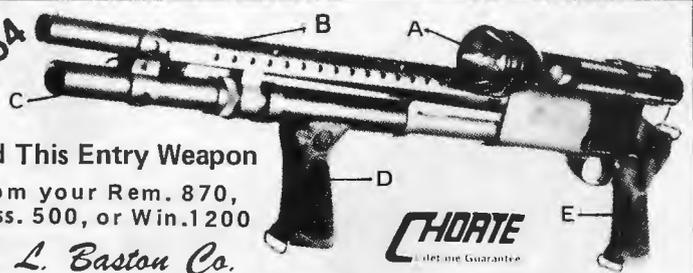
"We've discovered heroin in olive jars and paint cans, and cannabis in freight containers filled with pottery," explained Cypriot Narcotics Police Superintendent Penikos Hadjiloizou. "Some containers are specially built with false floors and double skins to accommodate drugs." Over 800,000 containers move through Cyprus each year. "The Lebanese are clever — we've found it in leg wraps, chest pouches and rectal suppositories; even in specially constructed shaving-cream cans," Penikos said. One example of Lebanese genius that Penikos doesn't like to talk about happened last August.

A Greek Orthodox "priest" arrived on the early morning ferry from Lebanon. Cypriot customs failed to open his luggage and even gave him a ride to the airport so he could make his flight to Athens and Rome. Three days later the priest was arrested by Italian police in his hotel room along with an Italian and two Spanish nationals. The phony priest was carrying five kilos of cocaine under his vestments. Another two kilos were discovered in the lining of his briefcase.

With Lebanon, Western drug agencies are in a quagmire. Narcotics repression is very sensitive, even strategic. If by some miracle trafficking could be stopped, the pro-Western Christian camp wouldn't last two weeks. A total drug crackdown could upset the balance of power, resulting in an Iranian-backed Islamic republic.

Nothing definitive can be done until the war is over. That could be a long time away. There are too many forces in and outside of Lebanon who prefer to keep things just as they are. ☒

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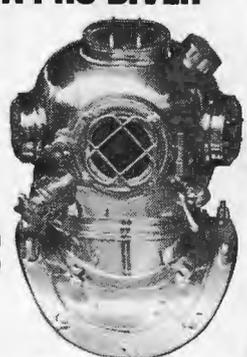
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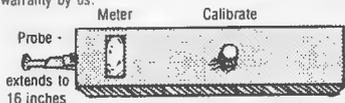
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ADVERTISERS INDEX

Advertiser	Page
Action Arms.....	13
Almar Knives.....	16
Amazing Concepts.....	81
Assault Systems.....	71
Atlanta Cutlery.....	76
BS Productions, Inc.....	79
Brigade Quartermaster.....	81
CCS Communications.....	74
Collector's Armoury.....	83
Divers Academy.....	85
Documentary Recordings.....	73
Doubleday Military Book Club.....	7
Dutchman, The.....	11
Glock.....	Cover 2
Greene Military Distributors.....	78
Guardian Products.....	9
Inco.....	84
International Assoc. of Airborne Vets.....	19
Kaufman West.....	Cover 3
L.L. Baston Company.....	85
Midwest Sport Distributors, Inc.....	83
National Rifle Association.....	80
Orpheus.....	85
Paladin Press.....	3
Pioneer & Company.....	84
SOF Subscription.....	17
SOF Exchange.....	4, 23
SOF Convention.....	90
SOF 3 Gun Match.....	72
Tall Paul, Inc.....	20, 21
Thompson Cigar Company.....	16
Tor Books.....	Cover 4
U.S. Calvary Store.....	79
U.S. Tech.....	75
Ultimate Game.....	80
Valor Sports.....	84
Your Supply Depot Ltd.....	15

SUPPLY LOCKER

API Marketing, Inc.....	89
Arclight.....	87
Blowgun World.....	88
Cloak & Dagger.....	89
Collectors Armoury.....	86
Consolidated Marketing.....	88
Eden Press.....	88
Excalibur Enterprises.....	88
Feather Enterprises.....	88
Global School of Investigations.....	88
Gun Parts Corporation.....	89
Ho-Chi-Minh Sandals.....	88
Jimmy Lile Knives.....	87
LRRP Security Services, Inc.....	87
Matthews Police Supply.....	87
Modern Gun Repair.....	86
North American School of Firearms.....	86
Quartermaster Military.....	87
SOF Adventure Books.....	86
Surplus.....	89
Survival Books.....	86
USI Corporation.....	87
United Shirts of America.....	86
Westbury Sales Company.....	86
Whiteside Safe Sales.....	87

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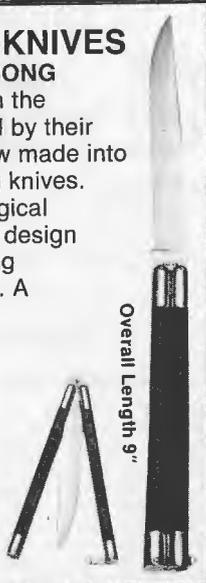
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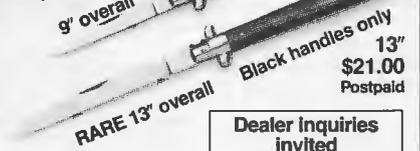
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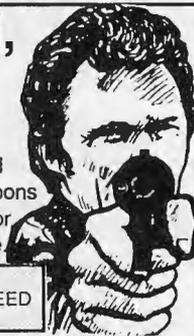
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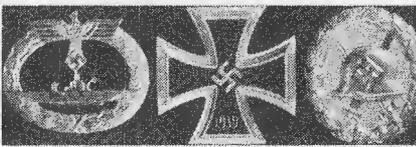
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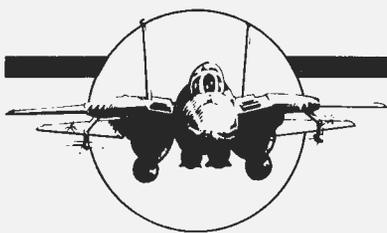
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PARTING SHOT

Suing 'Soldier'

First there's the slick magazine with its military mercenaries selling combat, weapons and survival.

Then there's the philandering husband, tired of his wife, actually talking to friends and relatives about whether they would be interested in murdering her — for a fee, of course.

The husband, Robert Black, picks up the magazine, *Soldier of Fortune*. Murder already on his mind, he reads this ad: "Ex-marines. 67-69 Nam Vets. Ex-DI, weapons specialist /jungle warfare. Pilot. ME. High risk assignment. US or overseas." Black answers the ad, and meets John Wayne (we kid you not) Hearn. Five months later, for \$10,000, Hearn

murders Black's wife, Sandra.

The criminal cases are closed. Both Black and Hearn were tried and convicted for the murder of Sandra Black. Robert Black is on death row in Texas awaiting execution, and Hearn, who killed two other people (for a total of three murder victims in 19 days), is serving two consecutive life terms in Florida.

Now comes the civil case. Sandra Black's parents and teen-age son are suing *Soldier of Fortune* and Omega Group Ltd., the magazine's parent company, for more than \$21 million in damages, claiming that the magazine and its publisher are responsible for the murder.

In constitutional terms, of course, this is a black-and-white case. The First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of the press unquestionably protects magazines that publish advertisements.

But there is no need to reach for the Constitution. The simple fact is that the magazine is not liable for

any offense against Sandra Black's relatives. After all, *Soldier of Fortune* did not murder Sandra Black; John Wayne Hearn did. Omega Group Ltd. did not procure the services of a killer; Robert Black did. The notion that a magazine should be liable for damages because two of its readers joined in a criminal conspiracy is — legally and ethically — senseless. When all is said and done, is it actually *Soldier of Fortune's* deep pockets that the plaintiffs find so appealing?

We know Sandra Black's survivors are wrestling with a terrible grief, and we can imagine the depths of their anger. But neither their grief and anger nor our sympathy justifies turning against innocent third parties.

Editorial reprinted with permission of the Boston Herald, 22 February 1988.

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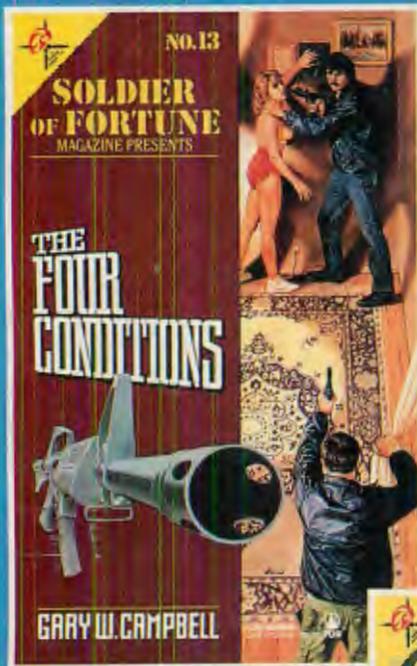
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