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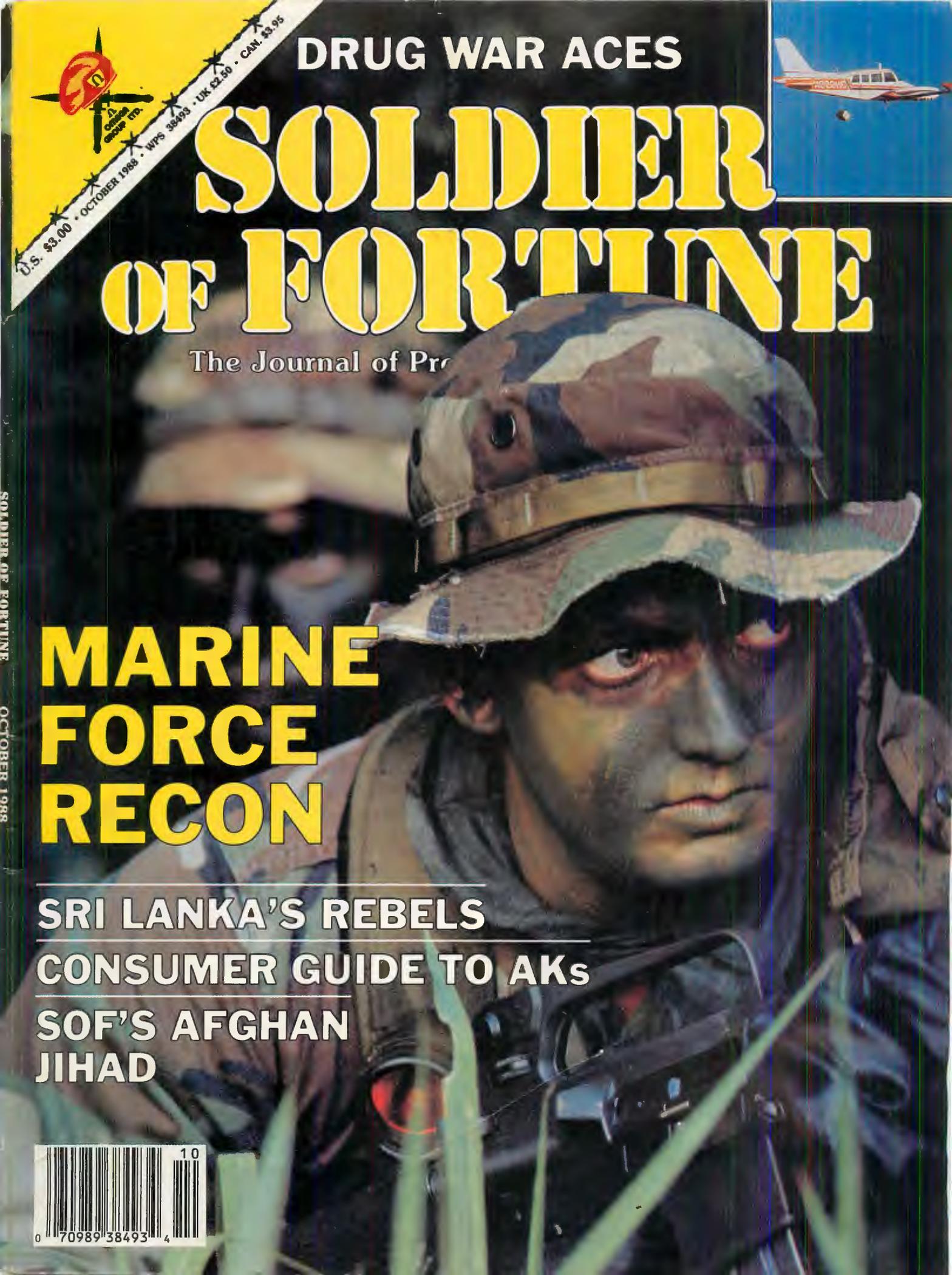
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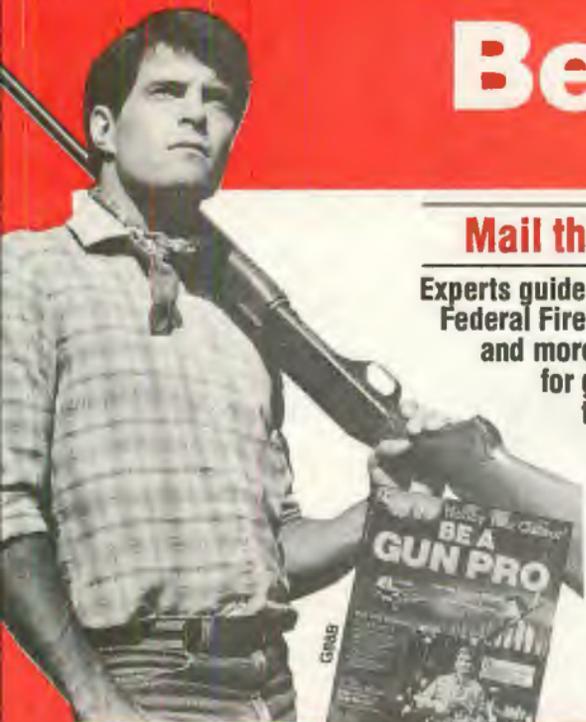
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COVER: Corporal Philip Waltman, USMCR, a team leader with the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company, on patrol near Mobile, Alabama. SOF Associate Editor G.B. Crouse spent 48 hours in the field with this unique reserve unit. Story starts on page 60. Photo: Dave Hamby
INSET: Under pursuit by U.S. Customs, suspected dope runner caught red-handed drops evidence into ocean off south Florida. See page 50 for story on U.S. Customs Air Branch. Photo: courtesy U.S. Customs

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown



Don't Play It Again

ABOUT the only good thing one can say about Jimmy Carter's presidency is that it lasted just four years. Americans were mercifully spared the economic disaster and foreign policy humiliations of a second term. But now, after an eight-year reprieve, it looks as if America could undergo four more years of the next worse thing — Governor Michael Dukakis.

Even though the Democrats have avoided using the "L" word (liberal) like the plague for fear their election chances would be seriously diminished, Dukakis' statements about defense and foreign affairs clearly come from the extreme liberal, left wing of the Democratic party. Three recurring themes of his give cause for concern: The influence of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who is less than conservative when it comes to foreign policy, an Eleanor Roosevelt-like belief in multilateralism, and — Jimmy Carter's old trick — the unilateral abandonment of strategic weapon systems without any quid pro quo from the Soviets.

It is appalling that a man like Jesse Jackson, who has no foreign policy experience and who has publicly embraced Fidel Castro and Yassir Arafat, should be in a position to profoundly influence the Democratic Party. Any role in a Dukakis administration for Jackson would be worrisome, but giving him a voice in foreign affairs would be *disastrous*.

Michael Dukakis favors multilateralism to the point of precluding the unilateral use of U.S. military power to protect American interests. You have to wonder whether Dukakis' multilateralism

isn't just a convenient excuse for never committing U.S. forces for any reason. Our Libyan policy, arguably successful, would never have been implemented by a president who insisted on participation by everyone in the Western alliance. If Dukakis does not want to behave as the leader of a super power, he should run for office in Sierra Leone or Bophuthatswana.

Dukakis acknowledges the Reagan administration successes in dealing with the Soviets, but misses the point as to why President Reagan has been so successful. Instead of standing firm on the production and even deployment of weapons systems feared by the Soviets, and agreeing to reductions only when the Soviets cut their arsenal as well, Dukakis would duplicate the failures of the Carter administration by *unilaterally* dismantling major weapons systems. Abandoning our strategic deterrent prior to negotiation gives the Soviets little incentive to bargain at all.

All in all, the foreign policy positions of Michael Dukakis, would-be leader of the free world, are remarkably similar to those of his fellow Massachusetts Democrats, Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill, and to those of the last Democrat in the White House, Jimmy Carter. Which is to say, to those of the far left of the Democratic party.

It is abundantly clear that Governor Dukakis would lead the country down the path charted by Carter, negating the successes of the Reagan years and subjecting America once again to the humiliation and defeat of Jimmy Carter's failed presidency. ✕

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preface by Shelby Stanton

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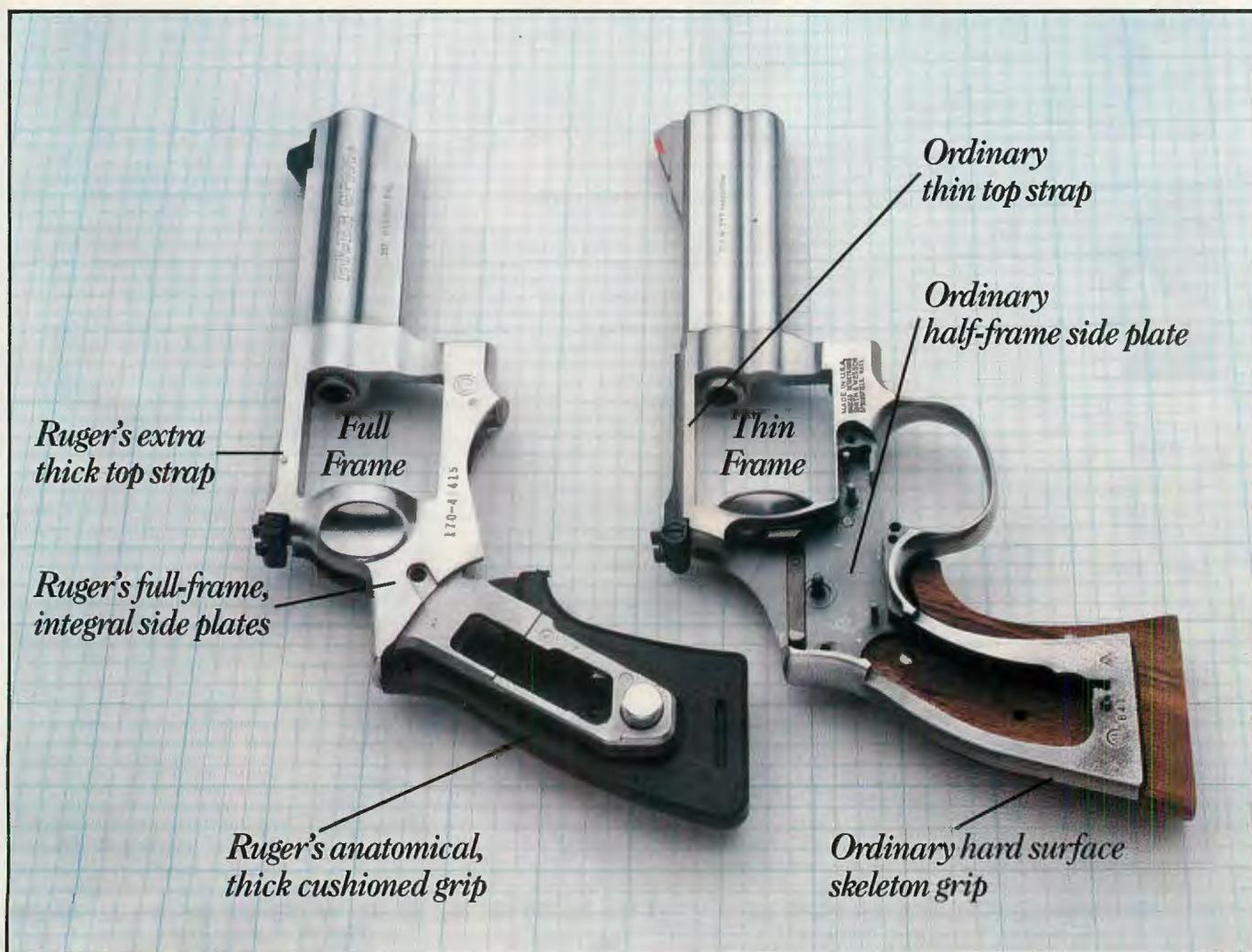
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FLAK

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?...

Sirs:
It is my understanding that the Russians removed trainloads of children from Afghanistan during their occupation. Where are these children today?

John A. Hickey
Burlington,
Wisconsin

Thousands are still inside the Soviet Union, undergoing "training," while others have been sent back to Afghanistan. One theory runs that the Soviets had written off the older generation of Afghans and were training a future generation of leaders. The short-term students were washouts, or children the Soviets determined not suitable for their strategic use. Some of them returned as "orphans" and were employed as spies in the bazaars. SOF's Managing Editor Jim Graves met and interviewed one of the first "orphan spies" captured by the resistance in 1984. Niem, age 11 at the time, was not kidnapped; he was the son of loyal party members. However, others were kidnapped. Whether the Soviets will return the remaining children is questionable. If they are returned, the Afghans will have to sort them out, the kidnapped from the children of the party, the zealots from mere survivors.



A TALE OF TWO WRITERS...

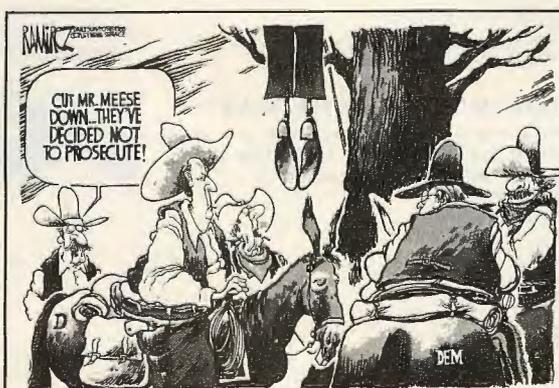
Sirs:
This letter is in response to the article "Battle of the Bores" (SOF June 1988).

Mr. Jack Lane was completely unprepared to argue his side of the issue and cites Marshall's remark that the facts are not all in yet. The facts on the 9mm Parabellum were in at the time the U.S. Army made the tests which ultimately brought about the adoption of the .45 ACP cartridge. Yes, the 9mm was tested and failed even back then.

Cops today are issued that which is bought by administrators who don't understand physics and really don't care. So the police go blithely on with their ineffective and substandard gear.

Andrew M. Wightman
Orcutt, California

Shots directed at "Battle of the Bores" should be aimed at us rather than Lane or Marshall. Neither author knew his article would be used in a point/counterpoint layout in SOF. They came in as separate pieces, and we made the editorial decision to run them together.



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT IS RIGHT ON...

Sirs:
I'm not usually one to write letters to the editor, but a serious Right On Target Award should go to Jack Thompson for his "Hidden Enemies" contribution to Combat Weaponcraft (SOF June '88).

The man's insight has always astounded me, but this piece was really out of the ordinary. The way he dealt with boredom was exact, and his explanation of fear and anxiety was far better and more to the point than that offered by any NCO school I attended.

What was really right on target was the combat addiction part. For quite a long time I thought I was insane off and on. Thanks, Jack, for a really great article and explanations.

Alan Peers
East Islip, New York

I've been enjoying Combat Weaponcraft very much. It has very practical advice, presented with modesty and skill. I appreciate the lack of bombast.

I have a question regarding the way the British have carried their rifles and SMGs since the Korean War. They carry their weapons muzzle-down, buttstock above the shooting arm. As seen in the PBS series "Soldiers," the muzzles are vulnerable to being rammed into the ground when a soldier stumbles. Stumbling on patrol in Belfast while carrying a rifle this way would allow a soldier to "kneecap" his mate just ahead from the rear, or to have a mean ricochet down the street. Carrying the buttstock above the shooting arm slows getting the weapon ready to fire. Could you explain this peculiar method of weapons carry in a column?

Gordon J. Douglas, Jr.
Fullerton, California

Although that carry does appear awkward, we believe its primary purpose is as a modified rest position from the standard combat weapon carry, which is muzzle down, butt locked firmly into the shoulder, ready to engage. Remember, the British military are working a literal combat zone in Northern Ireland, and obviously must have their weapons positioned to return fire immediately. However, try carrying an SLR around at the ready for a couple of days — then watch your firing arm fall off from muscle bunch. It may not be ideal, but the Brits have adapted to it.



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I just returned from the 10th Annual NRA National Action Pistol/Bianchi Cup Championship in Columbia, Missouri. Soldier of Fortune Magazine supported this championship by providing an ad for the match.

I just wanted to drop you a note and say thank you for your support of this important NRA-sponsored shooting event. We appreciate the willingness of SOF to give additional publicity to a championship and form of shooting that is rapidly gaining popularity in this country.

Thank you so much for helping make the 1988 NRA Action Pistol/Bianchi Cup Championship a success.

Gary L. Anderson
Executive Director
Washington D.C.

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL...

Sirs:

I have had the great pleasure of associating with Colonel Brown, sharing a drink with him, and most of all sharing views with him. His belief in America and steadfast commitment to freedom and democracy, to the honor and rehabilitation of thousands of men and women who served our great nation cannot be discredited by a liberal judge and some twisted lawyers that see justice through their assholes.

I take great pleasure in attending the SOF Convention each year. I have made many permanent and real friendships there. I have been updated on global affairs and been given the opportunity to meet leaders of nations fighting for the same freedoms that many Americans take for granted or are giving away each day. This year, however, I'm sending my fee for the convention to be used in the Omega First Amendment Legal Defense Fund. I only wish it could be more.

D. Thompson
Gallup, New Mexico

Continued on page 82

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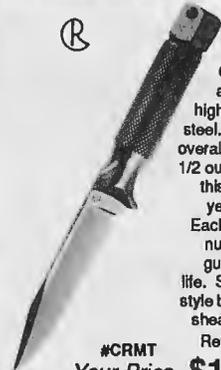
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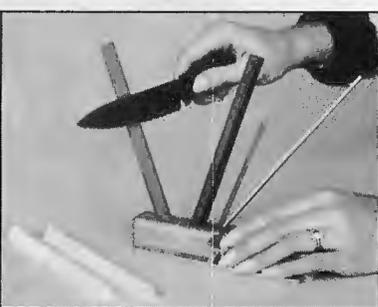
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SOLDIERS REMEMBERED...

We don't know who placed the following in the "In Memoriam" section of the London *Daily Telegraph* on 18 May of this year, but we'd like to send along a sincere "well done."

The announcement reads: "Their Name Liveth For Ever More. 4th (Paghman) Infantry. In proud and revered memory of the 721 officers, NCOs and Troopers of the 26th Parachute Regiment of the Afghan Army who laid down their lives for their country against Soviet troops, 24-27 December 1979. On this day, the 298th anniversary of its foundation as the 4th Paghman Infantry Regiment, we who survived remember them. 'True in Faith, True in Honor.'"

The 26th Parachute Regiment had refused to surrender to Soviet forces when the USSR invaded Afghanistan, and were wiped out.

HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

Raymond Fischer — in memory of 101st Airborne lost in Newfoundland, Conservative Caucus of Lower Delaware, Chuck Miller, Christopher Marquette, Kevin Hutchison, William Smallwood.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund contributors:

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

BULLETIN BOARD



These South West Africa Specialist Unit soldiers stationed near the Angolan border examine SWAPO terrorists' sabotage attempt on a border bridge crossing. Although talks between delegations from South Africa, Cuba, Angola and the United States have resulted in a tentative agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola, a clash between Cuban mercenaries and South and South West African forces in the Calueque area just north of the border earlier this year may be a harbinger of things to come. Photo: John Coleman

CLUB AK-47...

Two SOF associates recently returned from an innocent vacation trip to Zimbabwe, a country where both had spent time when it was Rhodesia — the Land the West Forgot. Expecting leisurely days sunning themselves up at Victoria Falls, they were somewhat taken aback by their first day's reception.

Heading to their hotel from the airport late at night, their taxi took them up the street where ZANU-PF (the ruling political party) had its headquarters. AK-47-toting military types stopped them at a roadblock, yanked the driver out of the cab and roughed him up, demanding information about the two passengers he was transporting. As one of our intrepid travelers started to get out of the vehicle, a "comrade" locked and loaded his AK and put the business end against our friend's head. As he told us, "I thought it was going to be a very short vacation."

They were eventually released, but their movements in the country were shadowed by Zimbabwean intelligence until they'd both had enough and departed for Botswana. Third World moral of this story? Body armor, steel pots, and a route map to the nearest U.S. Embassy — don't leave home without 'em.

MARIJUANA GO 'ROUND...

From the folks who brought you the Tet Offensive, punji stakes and battery acid in Coke bottles comes 72 tons of grass — at least. Earlier this year, the Coast Guard seized the 180-foot, Panamanian-registered *Encounter Bay* off the Washington coast. On board were 72 tons of high-grade Thai pot which reports say were loaded by Vietnamese army troops at the port of Danang — apparently not a first-time occurrence. United States Drug Enforcement Agency officials in Thailand say word has filtered in that a number of merchant steamers have loaded up in Danang and set sail for the international drug market. Other sources say the peace- and freedom-loving government of Vietnam has sanctioned opium growing to help pay off its huge foreign debts.

THE LONG, HARD WAY OUT...

Major General Kim M. Tsagolov warned in *Ogonyok*, a widely distributed Soviet weekly magazine, that the future for the Moscow-backed regime currently in place in Kabul is dim once the Soviets are out. Tsagolov, a Red Army analyst, said the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was split into warring factions, had lost the trust of the people, and had badly mishandled land redistribution.

Tsagolov's article may be an attempt to prepare the Soviets for a debacle — something like Soviet Mi-24s lifting out advisors from Kabul's rooftops. He also predicted that the Soviet withdrawal, followed by a quick collapse of the PDPA, would move Afghanistan into the fundamentalist Islamic orbit.

The swing to fundamentalism is possible, but Western Afghan watchers don't expect Afghanistan to become another Iran. It is unlikely that any Afghan leader would be able to control enough of Afghanistan, as Khomeini does Iran, to institute that kind of society. Afghans are just not that fundamentalist.

AIRBORNE SURVEYS...

In our March '88 issue we ran the

Continued on page 12


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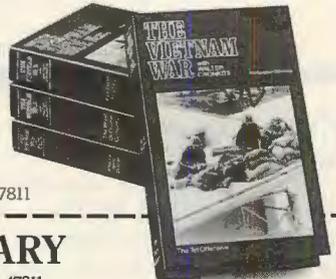
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article, "Does America Need Airborne Forces?" and asked for your response, pro or con. Our plan was to publish the best of each, but one slight hitch arose: No one sent in a letter opposing the concept of airborne forces. Even the letters we received from non-airborne types supported the idea of hitting the silk. Guess that settles the question our headline posed.

And speaking of reader response . . . No, we haven't used your reader surveys to wallpaper Bob Brown's office, or as SOF training team field-expedient fire starters. Some problems arose concerning data compilation, so we're bringing all the surveys back in-house to finish the job here. We'll give you the final results as soon as we've got them. Thanks for your patience.

OUR MAN IN KABUL . . .

Will the great Soviet adventure in Afghanistan end with Mi-24s snatching up the last advisers from the sharp knives of Afghan justice?

On a recent foray across the border, SOF correspondent John Jameson discovered the security situation has already dramatically deteriorated for the Soviets. Jameson's guerrilla contacts managed to get him inside Kabul where he had some intriguing conversations with officers from both the Afghan army and secret police (KHAD) who are preparing for the inevitable.

While visiting in Kabul, Jameson had the pleasure of coming under

107mm rocket fire from the same guerrillas who had arranged for his tour. The resistance was shooting at the ministry of defense and he happened to be in the impact area. "Most unpleasant" is how he described it.

Going in, Soviet troops manning a roadblock at the edge of the city sold the guerrillas tools from a BMP to replace lost repair tools for their vehicle and on the way out they purchased fuel at the same roadblock. Jameson's escorts paid 50 cents American for the tools.

Jameson's story is upcoming, as are two other pieces from Mike Winchester: one from Afghanistan's far north, the other from the eastern city of Jalabad.

DOZIER FOR CONGRESS . . .

It was nearly eight years ago that then-U.S. Army Brigadier General James Dozier was overpowered by Red Brigade terrorists in Italy, kidnapped, and held hostage for 42 days. Since that time he went up a star in the Army, then retired in 1985 after 30 years service to become a successful businessman.

The good general is now running for southwestern Florida's 13th Congressional District seat, and although most SOF readers can't vote in that election, you can still help put one of the good guys in Congress (and there's no doubt we need them!).

Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown asks that all SOF readers send \$1 (we know you can afford that,

although the more the better) to Citizens for Jim Dozier, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 07054, Fort Myers, FL 33919. Your \$1, times our 500,000 readers, can definitely make a difference. For more information on the Dozier campaign, write the above address or call (813) 489-1989.

Come on now, what's a buck?

OH LEE WE KNEW YE WHEN . . .

Most of us respected Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca for adding a spark of life to a rapidly rusting Detroit auto industry. Unfortunately, Chairman Lee has apparently slipped a gear or two in his new book when dealing with the NRA.

Some excerpts: "Is it really asking too much to ban the sale of handguns — or UZI machine guns for that matter? Why must we preserve a guy's right to buy a deadly weapon out of a catalogue? The National Rifle Association propaganda that 'guns don't kill people; people kill people' is a lot of hogwash . . . Now the NRA is even backing Teflon-coated bullets . . ."

This must all be an exercise in "spot the obvious errors," because Chairman Lee's thinking on the NRA is rife with them.

How 'bout this, instead: "Is it really asking too much to ban the sale of four-door coupes — or sports cars for that matter? Why must we preserve a guy's right to buy a deadly weapon off a showroom floor? Chrysler's propaganda that 'cars don't kill people; people kill people' is a lot of hogwash . . . Now Chrysler is even backing Teflon-coated bumpers . . ."

Think twice when you get around to buying that next car.

THE WORM NOW TURNS . . .

Twenty years ago Jane Fonda's husband Tom Hayden couldn't find it inside himself to pick up a rifle, but when 25 South Vietnamese demonstrators showed up at his door recently, "Tom the Tough" went after them with a baseball bat. A spokesman for Hayden says it was a misunderstanding — he was on his way to a baseball game — but the demonstrators say he was "swearing" at them, and they were concerned that he might have gone berserk. ☒

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The First Commemorative Longarm ever Issued to Honor America's Police Officers



The first Commemorative Thompson with the famous vertical forestock.

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"On the Side of Law and Order."

Gen. Thompson's motto in 1920 for his new firearm

Around the clock, seven days a week, Police Officers across our country put their lives on the line protecting our families and loved ones. Yet, each time they go on patrol, they never know if they'll ever see their families again. Often unheralded, they live by their motto: "To Protect and Serve."

And ever since the "Roaring '20s," Police and Sheriffs Departments have relied on Thompsons to help them in the battle against crime. Even today, many Thompsons are on active duty in law enforcement agencies, while others have been proudly retired to museums where you'll see a photograph of a famous lawman, his badge and his Thompson displayed alongside.

Now, to draw attention to the deeds of valor of America's Police Officers, The American Historical Foundation is proud to announce The Police Model Law Enforcement Commemorative Thompson.

A Collector First

This is the first commemorative Thompson issued in honor of America's Police Officers—and the first commemorative longarm of any type to honor Law Enforcement. As such, this is in the "first ever" class of distinction, which has seen many, well-documented price increases. From a collector viewpoint, this Thompson will be highly prized.

Famous Vertical Forestock

Also of great importance to collectors, this is the first commemorative Thompson ever issued with the classic pistol-grip vertical forestock, made famous in the '20s on both sides of the law.

Your finger curls around the 24-Karat Gold plated trigger as you grasp the deluxe-finished solid American Walnut stocks and shoulder this 12 pounds of Steel, Gold and Walnut.

You cradle under your right elbow the heavy, precision-milled steel receiver, which is highly polished, emphasizing the roll-engraved and gold-gilt inlaid commemorative inscriptions, the U.S. flag and the famous Thompson "bullet" trademark.

You sight across the 24-Karat Gold plated rear sight base and the 24-Karat Gold plated knurled actuator knob, across the 35 deep-cooling fins and along the highly polished blued barrel to the 24-

Karat Gold plated front sight and hefty Cutts compensator. Even the sling swivels and mounts are 24-Karat Gold plated. A deluxe, black leather, adjustable sling is provided.

The shoulder stock is fitted with fired-enamel cloisonne medallions bearing the Police Officer "shield" and the Scales of Justice. The rear grip is also inset with a cloisonne medallion bearing the Police motto with patriotic device.

Limited Edition of Only 1500

Only 1500 Police Commemoratives will be custom built in this strictly limited edition by the official maker, Thompson/Auto-Ordnance Corporation. Each is specially serially numbered between 0001 and 1500, with the prefix "P" for Police. To enhance the display of your Thompson, you will also receive, free, a companion deluxe-finished night stick, serially numbered to match. This number is also inscribed on the Certificate of Authenticity, which attests to the purity of the 24-Karat Gold plating and the strict edition limit.

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But this is not just a showpiece. It is a firing Thompson. Because it fires in the semi-automatic mode, you do not need a special license; anyone who can own a standard hunting rifle can own it. Hence, it could even be called upon to defend your home and family—with the same famous .45 ACP ammo well known to lawmen, GIs, and American shooters.

In addition to the Police Model, a Sheriff/Deputy Model Commemorative Thompson is also available to honor those who serve as Sheriffs and Deputies. Each Sheriff/Deputy Model Thompson is numbered 0001 to 1500 with the prefix "S" for Sheriff. Collectors who reserve a Police Model and a Sheriff/Deputy Model will receive matching serial numbers. If both Walnut Display Cases are reserved, you will also receive, free, a Master Mount into which the cases fit.

Satisfaction Guaranteed

This is available exclusively from The



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This Law Enforcement Commemorative Thompson will hold a place of honor in your collection as a visible symbol to you, your family and friends of your respect for those who have dedicated their lives to the preservation of our American society through Law Enforcement.

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- My payment in full is enclosed (\$1595 per Thompson; display case, add \$225 for each Thompson reserved).
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“SO we’ll meet at 14th and Washington, behind the old school. Any questions? Good. See you there. Hey Chuck. Make sure you call radio and get us a clear channel ’cause if . . .”

The narco officer’s voice trailed off as I loaded up and started to leave. “Here we go again,” I said to my partner as we headed down the stairs. “Bad intel, bad recon. All we know is that there’s a couple of hypes in there. Shit, ask the narcs about guns and they say, ‘we’re not sure;’ dogs, and they say ‘we didn’t see any.’ Fuck it. Get the car and meet me on the west side of the locker room. I’ll grab the guns. Then we’ll recon the place before everybody gets there.”

“You got it,” said Steve, my partner, in a disgusted tone. He was as pissed off about this as I was.

Unfortunately, this was typical of narco raid briefings. Their whole concern is to always hit the front door, then get the dope, no matter what. No wonder they always brought along the tactical unit. It seemed that we were the only ones who cared about safety.

I tried to picture the house we were going to hit, but it was hard to visualize it from the bad description that they gave us. From the briefing, it appeared that there were at least five adults — three men and two women — living in a two-story Victorian home. All were ex-cons and heroin addicts. One of them had evidently decided to apply himself and make some money by selling heroin as well as using it. We were to bring along this guy’s parole officer and do a parole search of the house. Steve and I were the entry team, as we had been on every other raid.

Only one light illuminated the street as we turned down it.

“Let’s see . . . 950 . . . 54 . . . 56, 956. That’s it! The big white two-story. See it?”

We drove past the house, turned right, then took another right into a dark alley across the street. We killed the lights and motor, then glided to a stop. Our unmarked gray Dodge couldn’t fool anyone; it still looked like a police car. My partner peered through his binoculars at the house.

“How’s it look?” I said, checking the rearview mirror for any unexpected guests.

“Well, the street light is giving me a little bit . . . uh . . . OK, I can see. We’ve got a good dark approach from the north, about two houses away. Screen door on the front, but it’s open. Front door is wooden bottom with glass top, no drapes. Looks like it has a dead bolt above the doorknob. We just got a light on behind the front door. Oh good, the front door opens up into a short hallway, goes straight, then hits an open doorway, probably the kitchen or a family room. Looks like we have a fair amount of concealment on either side of the door, but the porch is small and can only fit about three of us, max. Sorry, can’t see anything else. Too dark on the side. They just turned the light off.”

We drove to the back of the school, where we met the other SWAT team members, narcs and the parole officer. We finalized



I WAS THERE

by Jaime Saldivar

Drug Bust Nightmare



Forced building entry is one of the more dangerous jobs police officers perform every day. Dangers encountered range from well-armed thugs to attack dogs and kids with toy weapons. Photo: Tom Slizewski

our plan, then jumped into our respective cars. I loaded my Remington 870 pump assault shotgun, one in the chamber, four in the mag. This weapon looked hideous with its 13-inch barrel and pistol grip. I started the car as Steve slammed home a magazine in his UZI. Now my heart pounded.

With the headlights off, we stopped our cars short of the house. Hugging the fronts of the neighboring houses, we made our way through the darkness and positioned ourselves by the front door. We then got the high sign that everybody was in position at the front, back, and sides of the house.

The parole officer, who looked like a hype, knocked on the door.

“Yeah?” a male voice asked from inside.

“Beto, it’s me. C’mon man, open up.”

The door unlocked and opened. Instantly the parole officer grabbed the male by the throat and thrust his head against the door frame.

“Parole search, asshole,” he whispered into Beto’s ear.

Steve and I went into action. Visual scan, sweep, and . . . clear. Scan, sweep . . . Now I was entering the doorway at the end of the hallway that Steve had seen earlier. Steve was right. The doorway did open into a family room.

This is where everyone was. Steve slid in behind me. We were back to back as I turned left into the family room. I could hear him taking one guy down. “Police, get your hands up,” he yelled. I felt fast as lightning as my weapon came to target the three adults who were sitting on the couch to my left. Seeing the terror on their faces, I knew my aim was right on.

Then it happened. My feet became lead. My muscles ached. The crooks’ facial expressions became grisly distortions. Their voices faded to nothing but a distant, low murmur. Everything was moving in slow motion.

I watched as a dark, snub-nosed revolver in the grasp of a hand crept out from behind the last person on the couch. As I sidestepped in the direction of the hand, the body of this hidden fourth person gradually came into view. I tried to keep my composure, telling myself: “I see the wrist, forearm . . . OK. Sidestep, body-weight down, weapon at center of mass . . . now elbow, bicep, T-shirt coming into view . . . barrel level, point sight picture . . . trigger squeeze . . . T-shirt, chest, clear target picture . . . trigger slack out, 3 . . . 2 . . . now!”

“House is secure! . . . It’s clear! . . . House is clear! . . . Hey partner. Partner! . . . It’s OK, it’s clear. . . . The house is clear. Are you all right?” It was Steve’s voice waking me out of my trance. I had my weapon pointed at a three-year-old! The child’s smile turned to a grimace, tears flowed and his lips quivered as he dropped his toy revolver and ran to his handcuffed mother.

Still dazed, I clicked the safety on the shotgun, slung it over my shoulder and walked out of the house. As I opened the trunk of our car and began unloading the shotgun, a cold chill ran down my spine. The lining of my bullet-proof vest was soaked with sweat.

“You OK?” Steve asked.

“Yeah, fine,” I mumbled. “You drive, OK?”

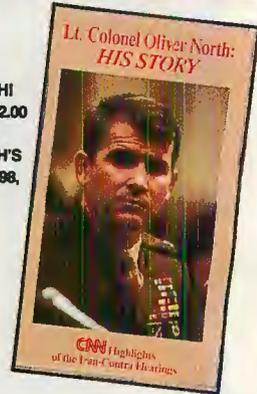
“Sure,” said Steve with a reassuring smile. “Hell of a way to make the news.”

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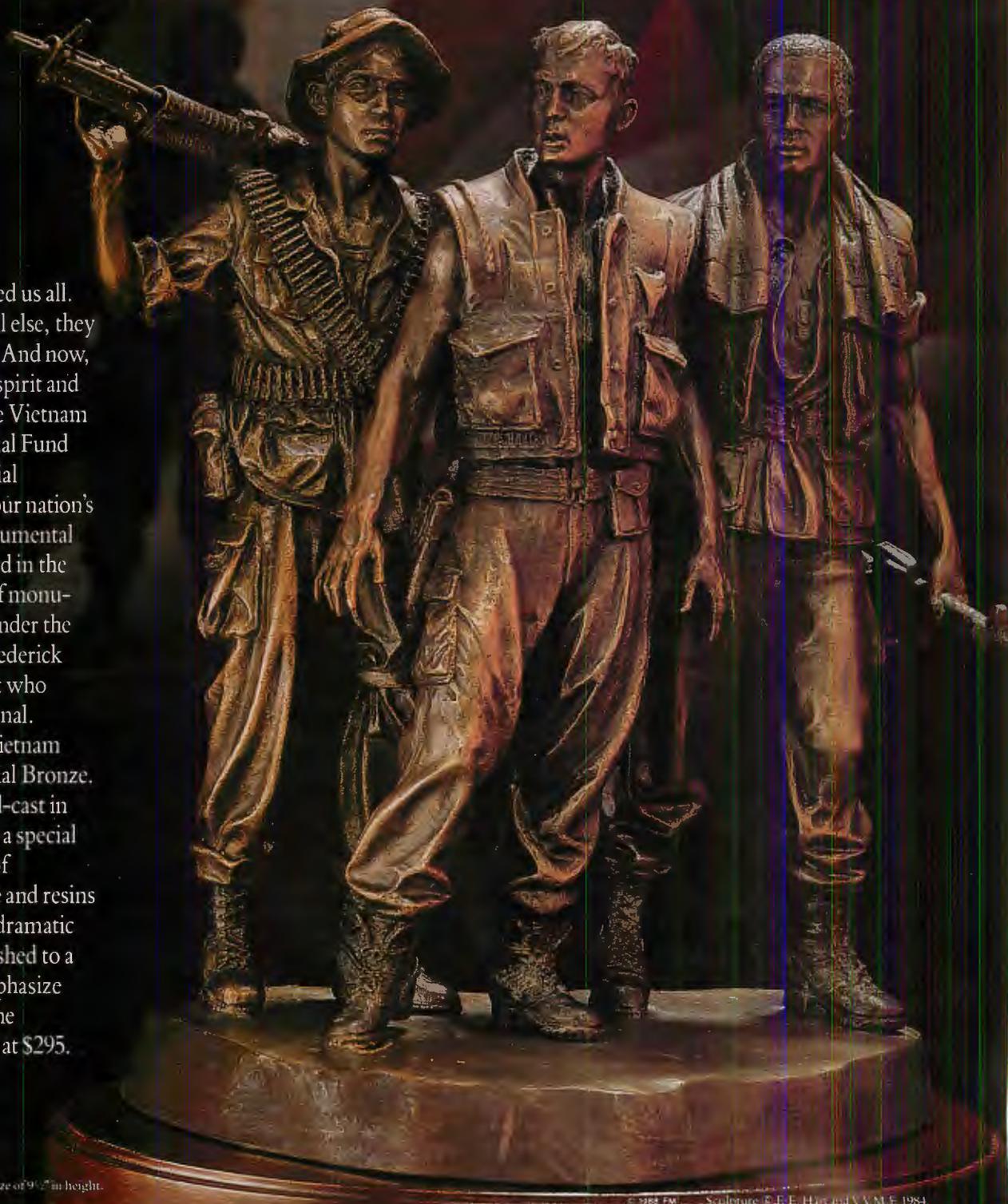
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REAL men don't eat quiche, and elite units don't use slings. In the British SAS, they not only remove the sling and its swivels but the carrying handle as well from their SLRs (Self Loading Rifle — FN FAL). They always carry their weapons in the "ready" position. Except for the FN MAG 58 gunners, the Rhodesian troopies didn't use them either. It sounds tough and professional. When you're inserted and extracted on an operation that lasts only a few hours or days this will do. But, what about grunts that hump the bush on 30- to-60-day ops?

Slings can be an important accouterment, if used correctly. The reason for widespread disuse lies not so much with the slings themselves as with the location of the sling swivels on most rifles. Designers continually seem to pick up where the 19th century left off and attach the swivels to the underside of the weapon. That's fine for strutting about on the parade ground, but it's not acceptable in a combat environment.

Let's examine three methods of employing slings in potentially high stress scenarios. First, we'll see what can be done if you have nothing but an issue sling and a rifle or shotgun with swivels under the buttstock and barrel — and no time or materials to modify your equipment.

With the sling partially extended, sling the weapon over your left shoulder (assuming you are right-handed) buttstock up, muzzle down. The lower handguard and trigger guard will be facing to the front. With your left hand grasp the lower handguard firmly and simultaneously start to pull the muzzle up and push the weapon forward. If you've extended the sling to the right length, it will fall away from your shoulder. Grasp the buttstock or pistol grip with your right hand. As you bring the weapon out and up to slam the butt into your right shoulder, twist it 180 degrees until it's oriented correctly. With practice you'll find that in one smooth, rapid motion you'll very quickly be in the proper shooting position, flashing the front sight onto the target.

This method has one serious flaw. With the weapon slung over your left shoulder only, and not over the shoulder and around your back, it can all too easily be jarred loose. In this case the weapon may fall to the ground muzzle-first, most likely plugging the barrel. There are better ways.

Surrounded by enemies since the birth of their nation, when push comes to shove the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have done their share, and more, of shoving back. They've spent enough time in the trenches to develop all the proper tools and techniques. IDF troops, whether they be MAGists



FULL AUTO

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

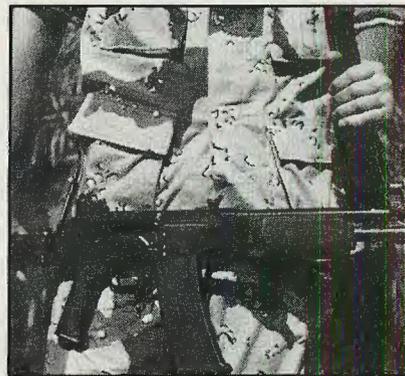
Gunslingers



Heckler & Koch's multipurpose carrying sling deserves high ratings by any standards. Shown here with an MP5, it nevertheless illustrates employment in the configuration used with weapons other than the HK series. Note horizontal position of the weapon at waist level and location of the steel double-loop directly above the left shirt pocket.

or riflemen, use slings.

To employ the IDF system, you'll need nylon parachute cord, electrical tape and, in the case of the M16, two issue web slings. Discard one of the four buckles. Use another to connect the two slings. With one of the remaining buckles, make a 12-to-14-inch loop at what will become the front end of your double-sling system. You'll make all of your personal adjustments with this buckle. Run an 8-inch length of parachute cord through the end of this loop and around the rifle in front of the handguards. Tie the cord onto the front sling swivel using half-hitch knots. Burn the ends of the cord and fuse them together. Wrap the other end of the double sling completely around the buttstock twice, passing it once through the rear sling swivel. Use the final buckle to secure the double wrap on top of the buttstock. Take electrical tape and wrap it around the rear end of the front sling and the two ends of the rear sling where they all meet above the buckle on top of the buttstock. None of this would have been necessary if the designers had placed the sling swivels where they belong in the first place — on top of the buttstock and barrel.



All IDF riflemen and MAGists carry their weapons slung at groin level. SOF's Technical Editor describes this combat-proven technique and how it can be adapted to the M16. Weapon shown is the Galil SAR with South African nylon R4 magazine.

Put the sling over your left shoulder and around your back. Use the front buckle to adjust the sling until the weapon lies at groin level. This is the most important aspect of the IDF carrying technique, as the sling must be long enough so that it does not impede the shooter during presentation of the weapon to the shoulder. While both hands remain free to perform other tasks, from this carry position you will be able instantly to move the weapon up to your right shoulder and into the correct firing position. How you arrange the sling at the muzzle and butt ends is more a matter of personal preference, just as long as the sling ends up on top of the weapon and is of sufficient length. If the parachute cord touches the gas block during full-auto sequences, it may melt. Check the cord periodically and replace it whenever necessary.

As the Galil's sling swivels are on the left side of the rifle, you have to attach its sling in a somewhat different manner. You'll need only one sling. Discard the Galil sling's spring-loaded hooks which, in any event, tend to clatter about on the barrel and stock latch. Use a 12-inch length of cord for the front and a 20-inch length for the rear. Pass them through the looped sling at each end and tie them off on

SHADOW



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the swivels. Again, burn the ends and fuse them together. Wrap approximately three inches of electrical tape around the cords at the swivel end and you're in business. Adjust the sling as described above.

Best of all, in my opinion, is the web multipurpose carrying sling designed by Heckler & Koch (Dept. SOF, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 22021). It sells for \$34. For years this sling was an enigma to me, as the H&K manuals do not accurately describe its installation and use. But, once you solve the mystery of its employment, few other slings will satisfy you.

To install the H&K sling correctly onto an MP5, G3 or HK33, first attach the sling's spring-loaded hook into the eyelet on the front sight base. Then install the rear swivel by means of its spring-clip onto the buttstock. Pass the sling through the rear swivel, and with its end buckle connect it to the plain end of the second segment of webbing, which has a steel double-loop (with a diagonal bar) at the other end. Hang the double-loop on the spring-loaded hook attached to the front sight base. In this configuration you have a normal carrying sling.

To convert the sling to a "ready" position carrying mode, pull the double-loop down and over the spring-loaded hook and attach it to the spring-clip riveted to the left side of the magazine-well (MP5) or forearm (G3 or HK33). Put the rear portion of the sling over your left shoulder and around your back. The front half will rest across your chest. With the buckle, adjust the sling until the weapon rests across your chest in a "port arms" position with the muzzle tilted upward. Grab the pistol grip and forearm and push the weapon smartly forward. The double-loop will snap out of the spring-clip on the magazine-well. Simultaneously bring the weapon up into the firing position on your right shoulder.

You can use the Heckler & Koch multipurpose carrying sling with other weapons. In that case, with the double-loop not attached to a spring-clip on the magazine-well or forearm, the weapon can be adjusted to hang in a horizontal position at waist level. To employ, just grab the pistol grip and forearm and lift the weapon up into the firing position.

It goes without saying that when contact appears to be imminent, you should move off of any form of sling carry into a normal "ready" position.

Proficiency in any, or all, of the above techniques requires continual practice. If you're not willing to do so, sew an SAS emblem on your shoulder and trudge around in a constant "ready" position without the benefit of a sling. After a few days, when your arms start to sag downward, you may change your mind. ☒

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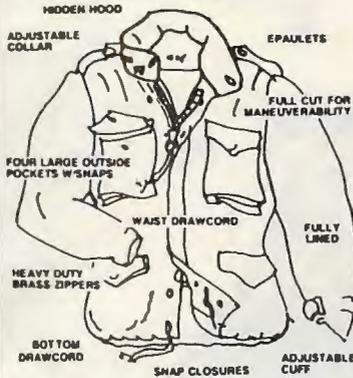
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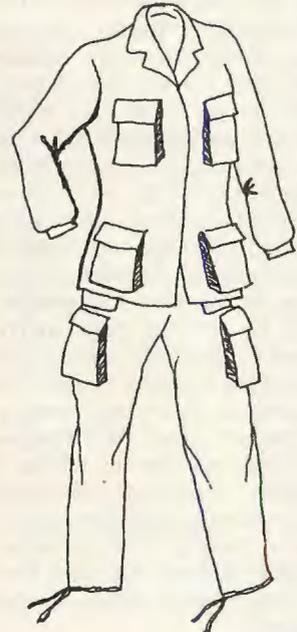
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SECRET WARRIORS. Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era. By Steve Emerson. G.P. Putnam's Sons, Dept. SOF, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1988. Hardcover. 256 pages. \$17.95. Review by G.B. Crouse.

AMERICA'S failed attempt to rescue our hostages in Iran in 1979 was an unqualified disaster. No hostages were recovered; eight servicemen were killed, and the U.S. military once again looked weak and ineffective. The only positive result of the mission was a new resolve to create an effective military capability for special operations, so the debacle would not be repeated.

When planning was begun for a second attempt, the military decided to avoid the mistakes of Operation Rice Bowl by creating units specifically tasked to deal with unique situations such as the Iranian hostages. A failure to positively locate the hostages kept Operation Snow Bird from being launched, but after the release of the hostages, many of the units assembled for the mission were deemed too valuable to disband. The formation and activities of these units were kept secret, even from the military and political leadership.

Although these units have occasionally been the subject of speculation in the press, no one has broken the code on all their activities and operations, until now.

Secret Warriors reveals for the first time the nature of the units and the scope of their activities. It explores the formation of Seaspray and Task Force 160, covert aviation units, the Special Operations Division, a Pentagon command so secret few senior officers even know of its existence, as well as the

IN REVIEW



Ranger from 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger) waiting to board aircraft for a jump in Georgia. United States special operations forces continue to attract tremendous attention and generate controversy. Secret Warriors and Secret Armies are but two recent books focusing on the missions, capabilities and recent performance of unconventional units in the United States and elsewhere.
Photo: DoD

Intelligence Support Activity and counterintelligence units Yellow Fruit and the Quick Reaction Team.

Their missions, including secret overflights of Central America, the capture of the Achille Lauro hijackers, the recovery of kidnapped Army general James Dozier, plans to take down hijacked TWA Flight 847, a proposed mission to rescue hostages in Lebanon, and many other operations, whether only planned or eventually executed, are all dealt with in great

detail.

Sadly, some familiar themes emerge even in this highly important arena. Rivalries between the units and the Army hierarchy quickly developed, as did rivalries between the units themselves. The need for secrecy resulted in great latitude in the expending of funds and acquisition of equipment, which led to abuses and once again called into question the propriety of having such units.

Secret Warriors is detailed, thorough and accurate. Given the extreme secrecy that has cloaked its subject matter, it is an amazing achievement on the part of *U.S. News and World Report* Senior Editor Steve Emerson. To his credit, Emerson did not disclose all he knew about the Pentagon's classified activities, but what he does reveal is the most complete look yet at the military's secret wars and the men who are fighting them.

SECRET ARMIES. Inside the American, Soviet and European Special Forces. By James Adams. Atlantic Monthly Press, Dept. SOF, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY 02116. 1988. 440 pages. Hardcover. \$19.95. Review by Neil C. Livingstone.

THE first thing you need to know about **Secret Armies** is that the author, James Adams, is a Brit. Like many of his countrymen, he seems at times to delight in U.S. special operations failures. One gets the feeling deep down he believes that military power and prominence are wasted on the United States.

Many things irritate me about this book, but the section on the invasion of Grenada irritates me most. Adams

deplores the U.S. performance during Grenada and even goes so far as to suggest that "some SEAL officers should be court-martialed" as a result of actions at the Governor-General's mansion. However, he neglects to mention his own government's sorry role in the whole affair. Although Grenada is a Commonwealth country, London completely ignored the rise of the Marxist government on the island. When the Governor-General tried to alert London, it turned out that the British Foreign Ministry, in a cost-cutting move, had given up the telex number he was supposed to contact. As a result, the Governor-General's urgent messages allegedly ended up at a Swedish box manufacturing factory. Thus, Margaret Thatcher initially condemned the U.S. liberation of Grenada, despite the fact that Washington

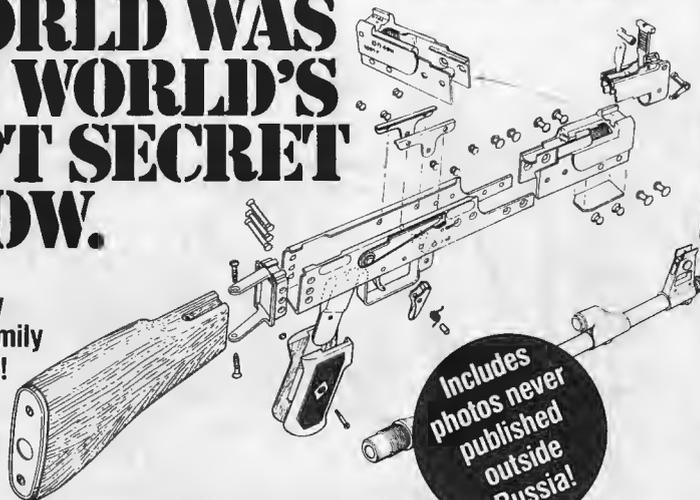
had provided critical assistance to the British government during the Falklands war.

While Adams provides the reader with a useful and timely analysis of special operations forces both in the Soviet Union and the West, his message is diminished by the high-handed tone of the book and a variety of shrill and unsupported conclusions. **Secret Armies** also suffers from a certain breathless quality as it tries too hard to be sensational.

On the other hand, many of Adams' criticisms regarding the special operations community are justified and should be taken to heart. I have no argument, moreover, with his concluding words. "In the endless struggle between communism and democracy," he writes, "it is unconventional warfare that is key. Who fights best will win." ❧

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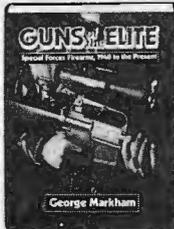


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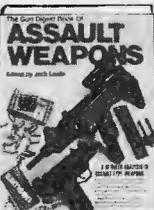
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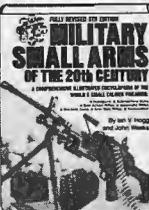
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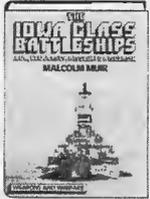
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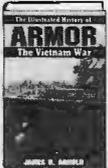
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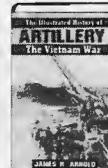
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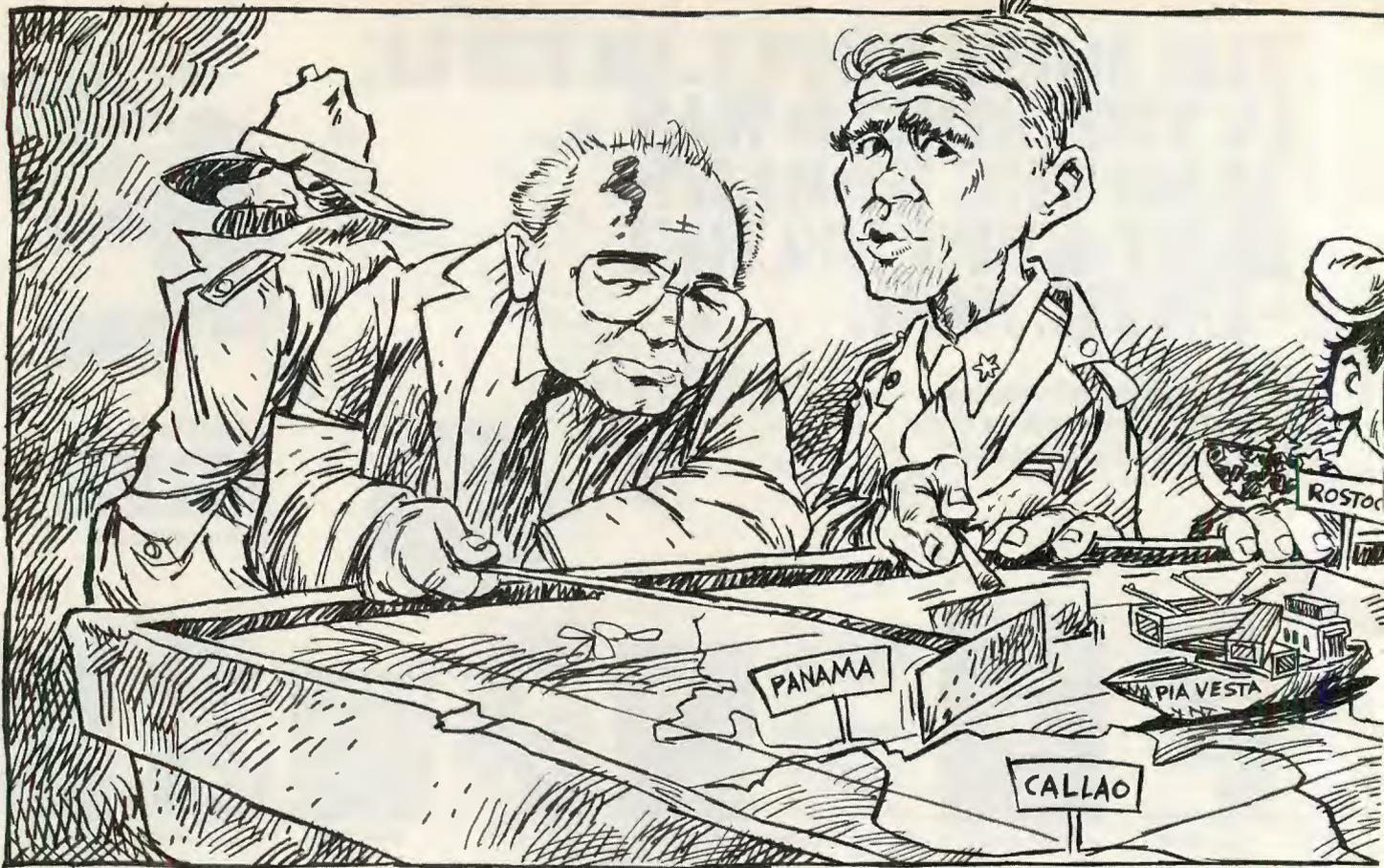
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SOF INTELLIGENCE

MYSTERY OF THE PIA VESTA

Gunrunning Freighter Adrift in Murky Waters of Covert Ops

by Mike Acoca

Illustration by Ralph Butler

THE *Pia Vesta*, one of those small Danish freighters that have become notorious in the 1980s for clandestine weapons shipments to Iran, southern Africa and other war zones, now rides at anchor in Panama, far from its home port, a captive pawn in the covert games that nations play in the transfer of stuff that goes bang and boom!

The ship's last arms passage came to an abrupt end on 15 June 1986 at Balboa, the port on the Pacific entrance to the canal, with the seizure of its modest cargo of East German military hardware on orders from Panamanian strongman, General Manuel Antonio Noriega. The weapons that were unloaded and commandeered by Panamanian officials were an unusual lot: 32 East German military trucks carried on deck, 1,500 Kalashnikov assault rifles, and 1,440 RPG-18 rocket launchers packed in 99 wooden crates addressed to the "Nawy [sic] of Peru, Callao, Peru." They had been

loaded on *Pia Vesta* at the East German Baltic port of Rostock. The ship sailed 5 May 1986, after a delay of nearly a month, ostensibly caused by dense Nordic fogs.

Asking price for the shipment? Only \$1.5 million, hardly worth the trouble in a murky, high-profit business.

Then, oddly enough for a shipment of this

kind, there was no ammunition.

A Washington D.C. female weapons dealer who investigated the shipment after it was seized in Panama and traveled to Switzerland to talk to one of the "owners," wrote a report on it for Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, the National Security Council's point man on covert operations to funnel weapons to the Nicaraguan rebels and to Iran's mullahs.

The dealer had an associate, then-recently-retired Lieutenant General Robert Schweitzer, deliver her report to North at the White House. Schweitzer was no ordinary messenger. He had served as military adviser to President Reagan in the early '80s but had been eased out over a belligerent speech on the Soviet Union. He had then become the U.S. representative on the Inter-American Defense Board, and, in some circles, he was considered the author of the Administration's plans to employ contras to

BACK IN TOUCH

Mike Acoca was a *Life* magazine staff writer for nine years, going on to work for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, and for the *San Francisco Examiner* as its Washington correspondent.

We welcome Mike back to the pages of SOF after a 13-year hiatus. His first article appeared in our second issue, published in 1975.



oust the Sandinistas from power in Nicaragua. But Schweitzer's new boss had not informed him of the contents of the envelope that he had delivered.

Recently the arms dealer said, "It was a bizarre shipment with a big bill for freight. It made no sense." The dealer, who wished to remain anonymous, also pointed out the rocket launchers "were not the most desirable type, and what about those trucks?"

It was, other dealers and arms experts agreed, an eccentric shipment, not quite what guerrillas on the left or the right usually purchase.

Thus the mystery about the *Pia Vesta* began to unfold that humid June in Balboa when many of the players in Washington, Miami and Geneva apparently believed that Noriega would release the weapons if they could strike the right kind of deal. Just what could be offered the Panamanian in exchange for the weapons has never been clearly spelled out, but there was interest in the East German weapons at the Pentagon and at the NSC, a factor that enhances the conundrum.

Ever since the *Pia Vesta* was seized, it has been quietly gathering barnacles in the Bay of Panama, but it and its load have been shrouded by such an enigmatic concatenation of bizarre legends that the ship's odyssey gives off the intoxicating perfume of an intelligence operation gone astray. The tales that have mushroomed around the *Pia Vesta* and its relatively insignificant load are so many, so varied, and so exotic that they appear designed to blind and mislead anyone trying to get at the truth.

They seem exercises in disinformation that raise the question of who gains by all the obfuscation around a shipment that was chicken feed in the arms bazaar.

One story, for instance, which has been published and given wide credence, maintains that the *Pia Vesta's* weapons were part of a multi-million dollar sting pulled on South Africa by a group of arms merchants — and Soviet Union agents in Vienna who liked the idea of diddling the South Africans — who had contracted to deliver \$26.5 million in East German mobile anti-aircraft missiles to the UNITA guerrillas fighting Angola's Marxist government.

The Soviets, according to this version, told the dealers, "We'd love to screw the South Africans, but not directly. Go to the East Germans, they'll help you pull the sting." The East Germans agreed, sold the weapons that were loaded on the *Pia Vesta*, and the dealers used the bill of lading to steal \$16.5 million from South Africa that they sprung from a Belgian bank holding the money.

The only evidence supporting this theory is that the *Pia Vesta* was active in the Africa weapons trade, and that its original destination was neither Peru nor Panama, but Africa, according to some sources. If that is so, why are the dealers who pulled the stunt still alive and dealing with South Africa?

Still, there's no question that the *Pia Vesta* attracted all sorts of attention from U.S. officials, who flocked to it like moths to a candle.

Intelligence sources, documents and some participants have named a large and

intriguing cast of characters involved in the interrupted voyage of the *Pia Vesta*. The following are given top billing:

Nestor Sanchez, then a Pentagon official and former CIA officer with old and strong Central American contacts, was informed in February 1986, three months before the *Pia Vesta* sailed, that the weapons had been ordered and were scheduled to be shipped. He was the man in the Pentagon involved with the contras and the Central American military assisting the U.S.-backed rebels. He also had an old relationship with Noriega.

Retired Major General Richard V. Secord, a principal associate of Oliver North in brokering weapons to the contras and Iran, tried to bid for the *Pia Vesta's* weapons after Noriega seized them, a source said.

The same source said another bidder was a tall and elegant woman arms merchant based in Washington who was wired to North, the Pentagon, CIA, Nicaraguan rebels, retired Lt. Gen. John Singlaub, North Carolina's Senator Jesse Helms, and, it's said, the Israeli special services. She denies she ever tried to buy the weapons.

Retired Army Colonel Eldon Cummings, who had served in El Salvador and had been a Sanchez aide at the Pentagon, played a role in trying to free the weapons from Noriega's grasp.

David Duncan, a loquacious Miami arms dealer, had contacts with Sanchez, Cummings and the National Security Council in Washington; and with Noriega, Peruvian navy officers, and key military officials in El Salvador and Honduras either directly or through intermediaries concerning the weapons, which he claimed as his property.

In addition, when Noriega refused to let the weapons go, Duncan traveled to Washington, stayed at the Hay Adams Hotel, and went across Lafayette Park to the White House several times to meet NSC officials and discuss the *Pia Vesta's* weapons. He says he was questioned by a government investigator at the hotel, and by Treasury agents in Miami.

Then there are Duncan's foreign associates: George Starckmann, described as a former high official in a French intelligence service; Patrice Genty de la Sagne, also French, an old friend of Duncan's and the "official" owner of the seized weapons, according to an intelligence document prepared after Duncan visited the NSC in August 1986; and Alberto Coppo Gayoso, a retired Peruvian army major who is Duncan's contact with potential South and Central American military establishments. The woman arms merchant, who reported to North, met with de la Sagne while Duncan was wheeling and dealing in Washington.

Duncan and his associates operate through Star Productions, a Geneva, Switzerland, company which produces films, television programs and videos when it's not flogging weapons to Iran, Latin America or southern Africa. Star's best-

Continued on page 83

SAYONARA CHERRY- SAN

Green Grunt Finds Innocence Lost

by Steve Banko

Illustration by Ralph Butler

THE Brooklyn Botanical Gardens it sure as hell wasn't.

In fact, as my arrival pre-dated Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon by about 18 months, Phu Loi was definitely in the running for the bleakest spot in the universe.

I took one look around the baked landscape and immediately knew why the desk jockeys at Long Binh snickered like school girls when my orders for Phu Loi were cut.

The ¾-ton magic carpet that whisked me to my new "home" stopped at the main gate of the base and was immediately swallowed up by a billowing cloud of khaki dust. Phu Loi was scratched off the rock-like laterite that centuries of soaking monsoons and searing sun had turned to the consistency of concrete.

I'd been in Vietnam less than a week. I was as shiny green as the new jungle fatigues that branded me an FNG (fucking new guy). And I was as lonely as the single, starving tree that grew so mournfully next to the MP gate. I knew "barren" when I saw it, and this place was as barren as Jane Fonda's mind.

I didn't know anything about Phu Loi except that it was ugly, and that was enough to convince me that I didn't want to be there.

Nor did I belong there. I was an 11 Bravo — infantry — so when my advanced training was completed I had no illusions about where I'd be sent. Vietnam was no surprise. But my assignment sure as hell was. The orders read: assigned 758th Supply and Service Company, 1st Log Command.

I didn't even know what a "Log Command" was, never mind why they needed one in Vietnam. I figured I'd have to chop wood, if I could find any wood.

Who did they think I was, Abraham Lincoln? I mean damn, I was Bear Banko, soon-to-be killer of Cong.

But there was no arguing with the written word of the United States Army. Once the

DECORATED BEAR-SAN

Author Steve Banko adapted readily to combat after the events described in this story. He did two tours in Vietnam, winning the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars (two with "V" device), the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and an Air Medal. After his fourth Purple Heart, Banko retired from the bush in November 1969.

For more on his adventures, see "Point Man in Hell," SOF, February 1983.

orders were cut they might as well have been forged in iron. So the robots at Long Binh ignored the obvious error and sent my ass packing to Phu Loi instead of the base-camps of the 1st Infantry Division.

But SNAFU or no, I was glad to be headed for a unit. There can be no worse fate in the military than being a "transient." All I wanted was to get to a unit, meet some guys, find out where they sold the beer and start counting off the days.

My surprise at being ordered to a "Log Command" was exceeded only by that of the company clerk who took my orders. The 758th was a graves registration and laundry unit. There wasn't much need for a grunt. But after an indecent interval, he came up with a job for me.

Phu Loi had no infantry unit to speak of. It was the base of operations for the 1st of the 4th Cavalry, but the tanks and tracks of the "Quarter Cav" were usually rumbling convoy escort up Highway 13 or supporting

the Big Red One at places like Bo Loi, An Loc and Loc Ninh. It was also the headquarters of 1st Division Artillery, a major heliport and home to an assortment of support units. So the base commander, the CO of DivArty, had organized a provisional rifle platoon to fill the security gap. The men ran sweeps around the wire and through the surrounding villages, checked for booby traps and gaps in the wire and set out nightly ambushes.

In short, it was the perfect spot for a homeless grunt.

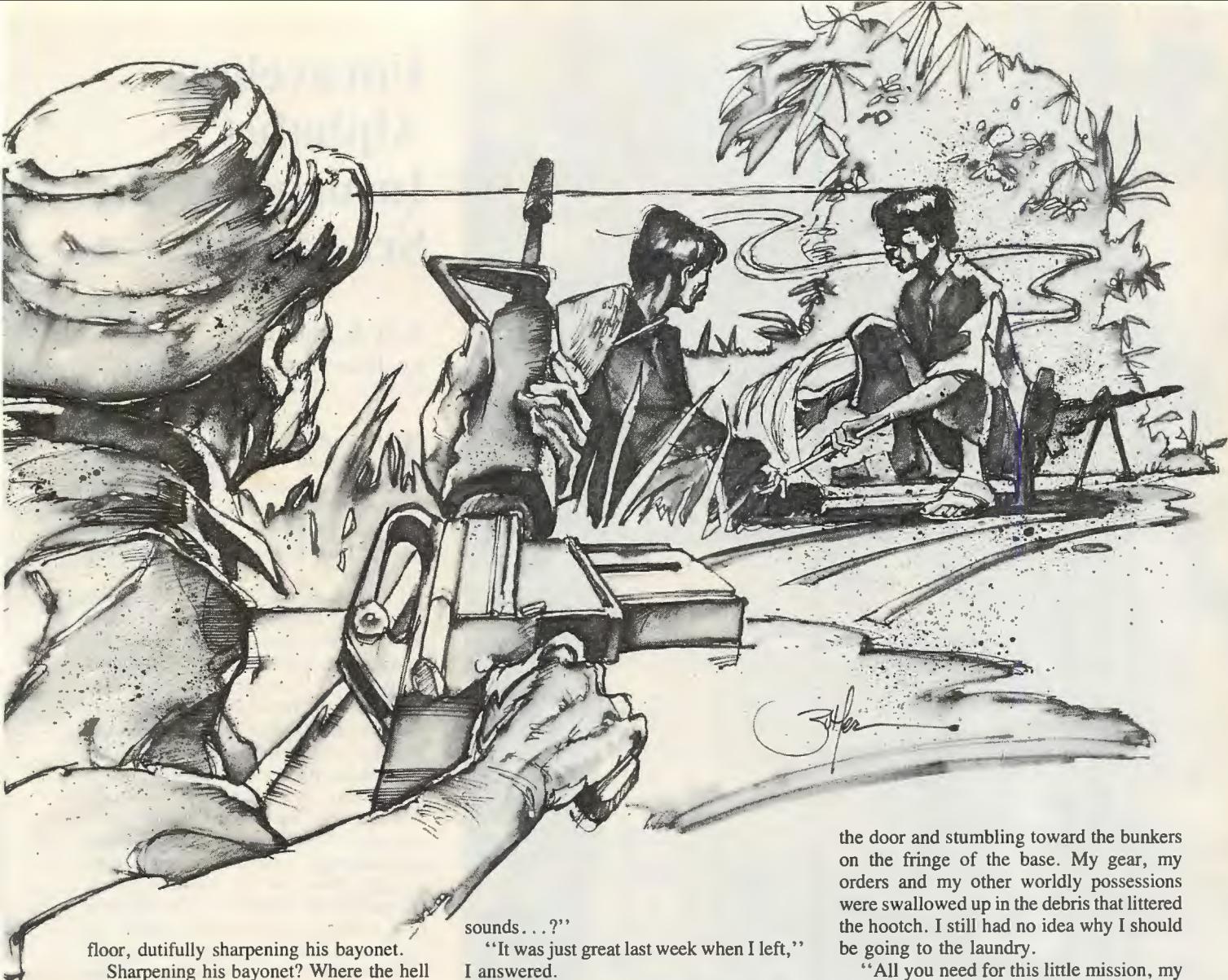
I didn't really give a shit. I was ready for the bush, so anything was OK with me ... or so I thought.

The captain at the 758th assured me that the Phu Loi patrol was the place I'd feel most comfortable.

One look around the patrol's company area convinced me that Jack the Ripper wouldn't be comfortable with these pirates. I walked into the hootch and gasped. The floor was littered with belts of M60 ammo and frags. The walls were papered with pictures that made mere pornography look dignified. I mean these guys had pictures of women with things in places I couldn't name yet. Some of "boys" had just come in from a night ambush. They were sprawled across their bunks in wildly varying stages of undress. The one common denominator was they all still wore their boots, which were filthy.

The only sounds coming from the hootch were the snores and grunts of the sleepers and the grating of steel on flint. Next to the far door one scraggly trooper sat on the





floor, dutifully sharpening his bayonet.

Sharpening his bayonet? Where the hell am I, I wondered.

I've long despaired of recalling the guy's name, but I'll never forget his face. He was struggling mightily to grow a mustache, but his hair was blonde, and you really couldn't tell if he had a 'stache or if he just drank something that had stayed on his upper lip. There were two or three hairs on his chin. They were nestled in among the acne that made his face look like a relief map of Colorado. I still wonder if he had a skin condition because he didn't wash, or if he didn't wash because he had a skin condition.

My presence caused him to look up abruptly.

"Suffering Jesus, new fatigues!" he shouted. "Hot damn, we got us an FNG!"

The noise caused the sleeping men to stir. That didn't make me happy.

"Hey troop! You know what day it is?" Rocky Mountain face asked.

"Yeah," I answered haltingly. "It's Sunday."

"Aw man, come one off that shit right away quick. It's six days and a wake up before my pretty ass goes back to The World.

"Say man, everything still groovy back home? The broads and the cars and the

sounds...?"

"It was just great last week when I left," I answered.

He made a terrible, twisted face and rolled over on the floor, moaning and bellowing in a loud voice.

"Oh man! You got beaucoup time left, amigo. Boo-fuckin'-coo."

I didn't really know what this grotesque man was talking about, but I didn't like the sound of it.

"Yeah, right. Can you tell me where the CO is? I gotta report," I told him impatiently.

"Shitcan that stateside shit, my good man," he replied. "The guys jest came off a 'bush, and everybody's catching Zs. I wouldn't recommend waking the Old Man up. He won't dig that much.

"Sides, you ain't seen none of the high spots in this here garden spot of the Orient. I think you and me should take a little stroll over to the Number One Laundry and pull the pins on our flesh grenades. Whaddya say, partner?"

I had absolutely no idea what this asshole was talking about. Laundry... I'd bet a lot of money these guys hadn't seen a laundry in a long time. Flesh grenade... what the hell was a flesh grenade? And who was this guy? Was he on our side or what?

It didn't matter. In a matter of seconds, my Lon Chaney-looking friend had me out

the door and stumbling toward the bunkers on the fringe of the base. My gear, my orders and my other worldly possessions were swallowed up in the debris that littered the hootch. I still had no idea why I should be going to the laundry.

"All you need for this little mission, my man, is your M16 and all the money in the world." This guy hadn't stopped talking since I arrived. But the thought of money brought him up short. He halted and his expression got very serious.

"You do have money, don't you?" he asked solemnly.

I assured him that I did. The spell was broken, and the incessant chatter started up again. We were on the perimeter road between two massive bunkers. Before us lay the tangles, strands and curls of barbed wire framing the patchwork hootches of the village.

"Now we could go out the front gate," my escort explained, "but then we'd have to convince the Mike-Papas we're on a mission. But that's kid stuff... no excitement, you know. 'Sides, I don't think I'd be able to be as persuasive as necessary dressed as I am."

It was only then that I realized this asshole was wearing shower shoes.

What the fuck am I getting into, I wondered as we got up to the wire.

My guide was still talking. "Just remember now, you walk where I walk and don't bullshit about it, OK? Here we go."

Continued on page 78



Unraveling Alphabet Insurgency in Sri Lanka

Text & Photos
by Jake Border

THE local bus grumbled its way northward from Anuradhapura, ancient capital of Sri Lanka, and it wasn't until Rambewa, the next town up the line, that I was able to get a seat. And then only because the locals got down for the army checkpoint.

I stayed on the bus with a pregnant woman and a couple of old-timers, watching the others amble through a no man's land under the baleful eyes of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA). A soldier packing a Kalashnikov got on the bus to check under the seats and in the baggage for hidden weapons, or whatever. He scrutinized my camera bag with evident interest (I held my breath but said nothing) and then passed on and out.

Still the bus didn't move. A discussion was going on outside the back door between the soldier and a cop with a pump-action shotgun. Now the cop came on board, approaching me from behind. The old fart in front relished every moment, jabbing his finger at me like I was carrying the plague.

The cop and I eyed each other without saying a word. Then he waved the driver on. Hell's teeth! We were barely 15 clicks outside one of Sri Lanka's premier tourist attractions, and here we were being given the once-over by the local heat. I was surprised and not too pleasantly so. How could I make it to Jaffna at this rate?

SOF SITREP

IPKF officer with Sterling 9mm SMG and soldier with SLR in Vavuniya.

TAMIL TIGERS OF EELAM

ASIA WATCHER

Jake Border is very experienced with the Byzantine world of Asian politics. Although this is his first story on Sri Lanka in these pages, this internationally known combat reporter has filed stories for SOF from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Afghanistan.

For other Border stories, see "Cambodian Recon," October '86, "Battle at Three Pagodas Pass," August '87, "Burma's Unlikely Alliance," December '87, "Battleground Burma," January '88, and "Border Incident" (an account of getting thrown in jail in Thailand), January '88.

RIGHT: Sri Lankan Police (left) and Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) soldier (in cammies) at Vavuniya checkpoint. Both are armed with British FN FALs, also known as Self Loading Rifles or SLRs, in 7.62x51mm NATO.

I was on a hunt for Tigers. Not the striped jungle cat variety but a species equally, if not more, dangerous: the guerrillas of the rebel group known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Four years of civil war between the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka and the Buddhist Sinhalese had festered before a settlement was reached on 29 July 1987 in which India acted as guarantor of the peace. Tamils (mostly Hindu), seeking to redress what they felt to be injustices in the mixed society where they were outnumbered, had crystallized their campaign into a demand for a separate independent homeland called Eelam, composed of the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka where they are in the majority.

Within two months the peace accord fell apart, and the so-called Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) found itself in the front line battling the hard core of militant Tamil separatists, the LTTE or Tigers. Action centered in Jaffna, the de facto headquarters of the Tigers, which was finally taken by the Indians in extremely bloody fighting in late October 1987. But the war dragged on; the Tigers went underground.

My idea was to get to Jaffna, meet the Tigers and find out what they had to say. It was slow going. At Medawachchiya I had to change buses, finally securing a seat in a van so overloaded with passengers that the doors were strapped to the bodywork by the seat belts. The men got out to walk through the police checkpoint, but the police paid scant attention to the van. Next stop, Vavuniya. This is the beginning of the war-zone proper in the north of Sri Lanka, and the beginning of the IPKF-occupied zone.

The van stopped on the outskirts of town where a sign said in the Tamil, Sinhala and English languages "Please get down from the vehicle and advance to be checked." I advanced toward a burly Sikh armed with an SLR (Self Loading Rifle) and presented my passport. We exchanged smiles. "Are you coming for a pilgrimage?" he asked politely, waving me through regardless.

On our right was an army camp and out of sight somewhere an airstrip and chopper pad. The barbed wire and sandbagged machine gun emplacements began at once. Something else too, quite unexpected. Armored personnel carriers — Soviet-made BMP-1s — parked under canvas not far from the road. "That's the Indian Army," said a passenger.

"Trespassers will be shot," said a sign on the fence.

At the bus stop, the first thing I noticed were the sandbagged machine gun emplacements of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force on the upper floor of the bazaar. They were Bren guns no less, of early vintage but fine pedigree. Then a jeep



ABOVE: Indian army hand grenade (left) and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)-made copy.

with helmeted IPKF soldiers passed by. I set out for the government rest house, the only official accommodation in town, but was intercepted by an excited young Tamil.

"Hello, hello. Where are you going?" he cried, adding as if to reassure me, "I'm not a guide [hustler]. We are resistance fighters. We were fighting the Sinhalese, but now we're fighting each other. Everything has changed around." This was Gerard, who belonged to TELO or the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization, one of the handful of Tamil groups who had trained as guerrilla fighters for the attainment of Eelam.

Unlike the LTTE, with whom they were now in conflict, TELO had given up the armed struggle against the Sri Lankan government and had a legitimate presence in town — in the form of a sign-posted office. Gerard introduced the clutch of teenaged boys gathered around me. "They are liberation fighters. They were all trained in India."

On the wall of one room was a photo of their deceased former leader, Sri Sabaratna (said to have been killed by the LTTE), illuminated with electric candles. On the wall of the main room, flanked by the TELO logo, was a picture of Sly Stallone in his "Cobra" persona.

The current TELO leaders were out of town, but Gerard was doing fine. However, he didn't seem quite sure about official policy regarding the LTTE, except that it was fatal to be caught. "We arrest them, beat them, some we kill," he said. (Pause.) "We are not killing so much." As an afterthought, he concluded, "If we arrest the LTTE leaders, surely we kill them, but the small soldiers we release. We only want their weapons."

TELO members didn't carry weapons in town, and they claimed that the Indians are not supplying them with weapons to fight the LTTE. But they say they have weapons in their jungle camps: G-3s, AKs, 9mm SMGs, .30 and .50 cal machine guns but no M16s or M79 grenade launchers, which they envied the LTTE for allegedly posses-



Young Tamil Tigers, one armed with a G-3 assault rifle, pose near destroyed IPKF AFV (right background).

sing. At 1800 hours it was pumpkin time, and I had to zap back to the rest house, because there was a 12-hour dusk-to-dawn curfew in town.

Next morning the TELO boys obligingly took me to meet Felix, political officer for the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), who occupied a small house near the IPKF camp. Unlike the jaunty young Gerard, Felix had a healthy respect for the LTTE, whom he claimed were trying to liquidate all opposition leaders and destroy all other movements. But then Felix was in the unenviable position of having no weapons, claiming, ironically, to have handed them over to the Indians at the time of the peace talks. "We'll be arrested by the Indians if we take arms," he lamented, "but without them we'll be killed by the LTTE." Another EPRLF member said he didn't think the IPKF would give them arms to fight the LTTE, who they wished would give up the internecine fight against the other movements and the Indian Army in a "meaningless war."

Felix, a Christian, was the only Tamil party member to proclaim Marxist doctrine to me. "We believe in Marxist-Leninist theories," he said. "We want to establish a socialist state — only this can solve our problems." Felix included in this state not

only the claim of the northern and eastern provinces of Tamil Eelam but the district of Badulla from a neighboring province as well. He was an erudite theorist and soon had me lost in a maze of political and economic jargon, but he had a long row to hoe before he would ever have a chance to put these ideas into practice. Curiously, Felix was critical of the LTTE for "being weak in the political side."

Taking the opportunity to wander around the town, I discovered opposite the heavily defended Vavuniya police station the IPKF Civil Help Cell, whose sign read, "We are here for you only. Peace is our aim," and "Please contact us: we will attend to all your problems." The officer was a little vague as to what exactly the people's problems might be, but he was more forthcoming about the reasons for the curfew. "The town is quiet, but we suspect some of the locals."

"You mean the LTTE has supporters here?"

"They have their sympathizers," he conceded.

That night the Vavuniya TELO leader,

now back in town, left a note cancelling our evening meeting. It wasn't that he was afraid of the curfew; five TELO boys were then outside my room at the rest house happily drinking beers. Rather it seemed there was a plot afoot by PLOT, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam, who had "arrested" 10 TELO members, and he had to go settle these "internal differences."

I decided to split for Jaffna the next day, and the EPRLF arranged a front seat in a minibus leaving in the early morning. It was about 0700, and we were idling at the station waiting for last-minute passengers when the entire bazaar ceased activity, and all attention riveted on the throaty rumble of approaching APCs. Low and sleek, six Soviet-made BMP-1s were returning from patrol, the crews looking like robots in their distinctive tanker's helmets. Undeniably intimidating machinery, but not, as I was to later observe, invulnerable.

Now began our long slog north with stops at army posts outside every town for checks of bags and ID. Reviewing my map, I found these stops were invariably every 10 clicks, although they varied in their thoroughness. If asked, I always stated truthfully that I was a reporter on my way to Jaffna and presented my passport for inspection. Many



ABOVE: IPKF machine-gun nest for Bren gun under construction in Kilinochchi.

and here were both Sri Lankan police and a unit of IPKF Sikhs with camouflage nets wrapped around their turbans. This was a big camp — soldiers and trucks everywhere — defended by that old diehard, the Bren. “You should be back home in the Punjab,” I joked with one Sikh. “It’s hotter there than in Eelam.” He flashed a grim smile. “The whole world’s hot,” he rejoined.

About 20 klicks north of Mankulam was a rest stop where tea was served to the first, and fastest, wave of passengers; the rest of us settled for fresh coconut milk. The grumblings of discontent that I’d encountered from Tamils in Vavuniya continued to be aired here, too. In the main the complaints were directed against the IPKF and not the LTTE.

One particularly vociferous Jaffna Tamil ended an angry tirade about the fate of the Tamils in the war with “I think in your country animals are treated better than us!”

“But what about the IPKF? Aren’t they



ABOVE: IPKF soldier on guard duty at bridge in Batticaloa, eastern Sri Lanka, armed with bazooka.

times there was more interest in me as a foreign curiosity than there was in my papers and documentation. Exiting Vavuniya there were both Sri Lankan police and Indian Army checkpoints, and at Omantai we encountered the Sri Lankan Army. Both were cursory checks.

At Puliyanukulam there was a perceptible stiffening of search procedures, carried out properly and with military precision. This was an IPKF unit of Nepalese Gurkhas bunkered into the road with a bazooka and a tripod-mounted 7.62mm LMG. While I was called over to speak with an officer, with whom I chatted about Tenzing’s role in the conquering climb of Mount Everest, the others had their bags thoroughly searched, which resulted in the confiscation of a number of loose flashlight batteries from one nonplused passenger.

While the Gurkhas remained alert for Tigers, there was an abundance of other wildlife about — peacocks and monkeys in particular — and once we observed a fox loafing at the roadside, unperturbed by our passing. At Kanakarayanukulam, where there was no checkpoint, a huge crater pockmarked the road where the Tigers had detonated a mine, though the wreckage had since been hauled away.

Mankulam was a major road junction,

looking after your interests?”

“They are the worst!”

Added another, “Most of the people do not support the IPKF. You read this in the papers only.”

Reports of rape and looting were a common grievance among Jaffna Tamils — apparently an Indian *backlash* directed at the civilians as a result of IPKF combat losses against the guerrillas. I decided to wait and see, and then judge for myself.

Kilinochchi is a major town spread out along the main trunk road where the IPKF seemed to be only just settling in. On the southern outskirts of town the checkpoint was merely a barrier of tree trunks across the road; an IPKF communications team was in the process of laying cables for field telephones connecting this post (where we were not stopped) in a commo net with their center.

Here again was an office of TELO, and

ACRONYM GUIDEPOST

- SLA — Sri Lankan Army
- IPKF — Indian Peace Keeping Force
- LTTE — Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
- EROS — Eelam Revolutionary Organization (pro-LTTE group)
- TELO — Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization
- EPRLF — Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front
- PLOT — People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam
- ENDLF — Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (Breakaway group from PLOT)
- JVP — Sinhalese People’s Liberation Front (outlawed group)



bat role to the Indians. The Sinhalese officer of a small squad in a nearby hooch admitted that their presence there was purely cosmetic. "We are just showing our face here — since it is our land," he said.

This officer had no sympathy for Tamil civilians who complained of bad treatment by the IPKF. He had felt bitter enough when the Tamils received aid from India when he was doing all the fighting. Now that, in an ironic twist of fate, the Tamils' former benefactors had turned on them, he was gleeful.

"We are happy. Let them suffer," he said. "Let them compare the Sri Lankan barbarians with the Indian barbarians."

But I was going to miss this party. I had to fall back to Kilinochchi and Plan B. This setback, as it turned out, was to be a blessing in disguise.

Newspaper reports had stated that even though the Indians had taken Jaffna, significant numbers of Tigers had slipped away to regroup in the northeast. Studying my map, I figured Tiger migration southward from the peninsula to the mainland would have had to take them into Mullaitivu District, and Mullaitivu town was connected to Paranthan by a road. It was an inviting challenge.

I found myself jammed into another minivan/bus heading east from Paranthan to Mullaitivu. Fortunately, I was ushered into the front where the squeeze was no less, but the comfort of a cushioned seat made the ride tolerable.

The bus sported two white flags, though there was no sign of conflict here and a marked absence of Indian troops. "They haven't come this way yet," offered the driver. Neither had the public works department. The road was paved in parts but mostly resembled a gravel pit, necessitating an excruciatingly slow pace, further exacerbated by the relentless sun.

The appearance of refugee camps (usually schools vacated by students for the holidays) evidenced the civilian upheaval that is usually associated with war. A state transport bus perilously overloaded with civilians and their household goods passed us going the other way, bound for Vavuniya in the south. As we neared Mullaitivu with no signs of Tiger activity, my frustration turned to despair. What kind of fool was I anyway? Did I think the Tigers were going to have a sign up advertising their presence?

It seemed I was on a dead-end mission — until we stopped in the small town of Puthukkudiyiruppu. We let down some passengers. I gazed idly around; just another nondescript Tamil town. Wait! Something up ahead caught my attention: A flash of red, a flag flying from a post. I leapt from the bus and sprinted forward for a closer look. A murmur of breeze revealed a face of yellow. No mistake. There it was. Staring down at me was the face of a tiger — the LTTE Tiger.

"You want to meet the LTTE?" a passenger asked. I nodded, dumfounded. "No problem," he grinned. "The local commander is traveling in the back of the bus."

also that of yet another Tamil party, a break-away group from PLOT called the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF). At an intersection, where IPKF troops were digging a foxhole for their Bren beside a post office letter box, we were flagged down for a check by the Sri Lankan police. The post office and town council buildings were guarded by armored cars of the SLA, whose presence was otherwise very discreet.

Paranthan, just a few clicks up the road, was the last stop before the Jaffna peninsula, and we passed through an unmanned roadblock set up outside the circuit house, where the ubiquitous Bren was again on duty. We stopped in a queue of traffic on the causeway across the Jaffna lagoon, inching our way toward the checkpoint at Elephant Pass, the checkpoint Charlie to Jaffna City. Here I met my Waterloo — 90 clicks and five checks from Vavuniya, I was nailed by

Rocket damage by IPKF at Nedunkerny. Twelve rockets were fired, shops were burned, electricity cut and the town hospital, with a large red cross painted on the roof, took a direct hit on the dispensary.

the Sri Lankan police for not having a pass.

"Pass, what pass?"

"A defence ministry pass." The bus was held up while we wrangled over the necessity of official approval for my visit. The junior cop passed me over to his superior officers, who in turn passed me on to the IPKF. An Indian major eventually appeared, apologized — and refused me permission to proceed. My appeals fell on deaf ears, and Tamil friends in the bus apologized for what they felt was a usurping of their proper role in their own affairs.

"We take our instructions from them (the IPKF). We have lost our self-respect."

Even the SLA had relinquished its com-

RIGHT: Tigers at site of IPKF armored personnel carrier that they've blown up with homemade mines, much feared by the Indian troops. Weapon held is Heckler & Koch G3A3 in 7.62x51mm NATO.

It was that simple.

It was also the day before Christmas, but I felt little cheer — I had made it to the Tiger's den, but it was like a ghost town. A local tea shop was used to introduce me to Malli, the local commander, who explained why 90 percent of Puthukkudiyiruppu's population had fled elsewhere. Because the "crocodile" had attacked, twice, on 10 and 13 November 1987. That's how they described the high-tech killing machine that was doubtless the Mi-24 helicopter gunship, the beast that the Soviets have used so effectively in Afghanistan and have supplied to the Indian military. They were used in the battle for Jaffna.

In a rocket bombardment here at least four civilians were killed and another 10 wounded. Among the buildings hit were the town market, school, library, government agent's office, public works office, and bakery. Sugar palms had their heads lopped off, something I hadn't seen since Cambodia, and many houses were scarred with shrapnel. "The people are fully terrified sir," said my interpreter. "When they see a crocodile, even the child in the womb will be silent."

But there was more. Rumors of two villages further south from which all inhabitants had been ordered to leave and which had then been shelled into oblivion — this in what the IPKF had declared to be a "preserved area." Armed with a letter of introduction to the next Tiger commander, I was put on a bus heading south to the vicinity of Odduchuddan to investigate.

Large troops of langurs romped in the jungle trees while peacocks strutted through the paddy fields in the late afternoon sun. It was a deceptively tranquil setting.

Confirmation of the attack on the two villages came from my front-seat companion, who was suffering from malaria and the effects of a "20-mile journey to get medicine," but he wasn't bitching; he still had a home even though "it was full of refugees." Refugees? From where? "From Mulliyavalai and Tanniyattu," he replied. "They were attacked by the IPKF, because the LTTE blew up two tanks near there with mines."

The trail was getting warmer. But even though I was in Tiger territory, it seemed most of the heat was being applied by the Indians. I asked my Tamil friend for his opinion of the LTTE. "They are fighting for their sovereignty, but they are fighting a losing battle. Still, it will take many years to destroy them," he answered.

And what do you think of the IPKF? "They are killing the masses and destroying their property. They hope by destroying their houses the people will tell them where the LTTE is, but they won't."

"Because the people support the



ABOVE: Young Tamil Tigers in northern Sri Lanka. White capsules hanging from their necks contain cyanide for suicide. Weapon on bench is Heckler & Koch G3A3 in 7.62x51mm NATO.

LTTE?"

"Whether they support or not, they won't talk."

"Why not?"

"They don't like the Indian Army."

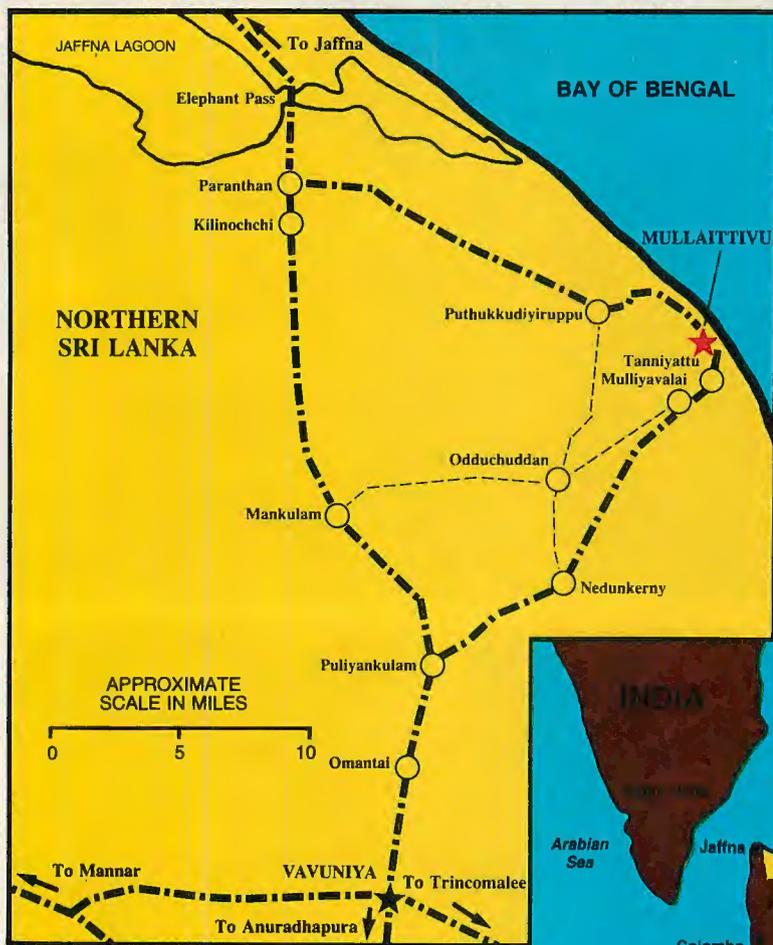
On Christmas morning I awoke as a guest in a Tamil household sharing an outer room with a handful of Tigers. While I tuned into Radio Australia with its chatter about roast turkey dinners, I tucked into a breakfast of bread, jam, bananas and tea. Much to my chagrin, my duty-free whiskey had to remain unopened because of near-puritanical restrictions imposed on the Tigers: no alcohol, no betel-nut, no smoking (in Batticaloa this rule is relaxed. Three cigarettes a day are allowed — in private), no marriage before five years of military service, and, incidentally, no pay.

My companions observed me with as keen an interest as I them. All were teen-

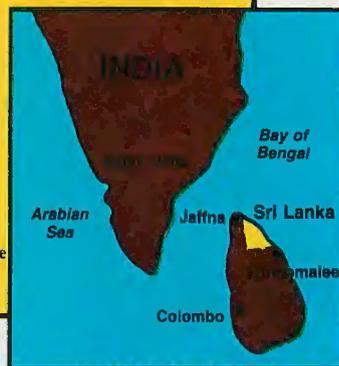
agers, the youngest at 14 already a two-year veteran. All were dressed in *longyi* as is Tamil custom, but recognizable as Tigers by the front-loaded canvas LBE (Load Bearing Equipment) they wore for their spare magazines. Their most distinguished accoutrement, however, worn almost as a badge of honor, is a macabre reminder of the finality of their calling — a tube of cyanide carried on a string around the neck. With a hint of a caress, one Tiger touched his suicide poison and declared, "This is my wife." Another stated, "Death is better than surrender."

All the Tigers were individually well-armed, although they variously asserted that 50 to 80 percent of their weapons had been handed over to the IPKF in accordance with the July peace plan. LTTE critics argue, however, that the Tigers either handed over redundant arms, or "old arms," or practically none at all.

Various sources were responsible for the arms I saw: Kalashnikov assault rifles (captured from the SLA); FN FAL-type Self Loading Rifles (captured from the IPKF); brand new Heckler and Koch G-3s (claimed



ABOVE: LTTE flag flies at Puthukkudiyiruppu. Town was attacked by IPKF helicopters in retribution for Tiger mine attack on IPKF armored vehicle.



ABOVE: Sri Lanka and area map of northern area showing towns visited by Jake Border.

to be a donation from the Indians in early '87); and American M16s (purchased from the "overseas arms market"). Hand grenades included standard Indian Army-issue as well as LTTE-made copies of the same. Thines, the Tiger leader, packed a Czech-made 9mm pistol and walkie-talkie radio.

Homemade mines, much feared by the Indian troops, are a deadly addition to the Tiger arsenal. Common 20-liter plastic containers are filled with "gelatine" and electrically detonated. One is sufficient for a jeep; two will demolish an armored vehicle. Literally gut it. Like the one the Tigers showed me on the road to Mulliyavalai/Tanniyattu.

This action, on 2 November 1987, brought instant retribution from the IPKF. Unfortunately, it was the locals who caught the flak. Literally. A crocodile helicopter, in concert with artillery fire, attacked Mulliyavalai the same day as the armor was hit, reportedly "killing six on the spot and destroying more than 100 houses." Next day 164 families evacuated on foot for the town of Nedunkerny 48 clicks away.

Even here there was no reprieve. The crocodile attacked again "killing 10 and injuring 20 to 25." Ten days later the first air attack began on Puthukkudiyiruppu. The Tigers had definitely touched a raw nerve in the IPKF, and this was payback. And it was just beginning. Next to receive a hammering were the people of Odduchuddan. Locals told of numerous ugly incidents like rape, a general store burnt down, houses

looted, the co-op store robbed, severe beatings meted out, and the killing of a 24-year old man.

It was too much. I wondered whether the Tigers could be setting me up in order to gain sympathy. They wanted sympathy for sure, but this was no setup. There were just

Sri Lankan Security Forces in main street of Colombo. Troops in cammies carry L1A1s, troop on far right has 12-gauge shotgun.



too many cases of abuse. Besides, there is something very humbling about a grown man breaking down and weeping over a photo of his murdered son.

One week later, 26 November, 40-odd Tamil males were rounded up and taken to Mullaitivu IPKF camp for interrogation — and alleged torture. A 36-year-old Tamil farmer was one of the victims. Now bedridden from "current" (electric shock) treatment and beatings with "fan-belt, wire, sticks and boots," he said he was accused of being a rebel supporter, "No questions, just 'LTTE' — and smash!"

Others, he claimed, were burned with hot poker. This was later corroborated by a victim, a 24-year-old farmer arrested near Tanniyattu and held for 23 days in detention. He was asked "Do you know/support/feed the LTTE?" and burned on the hands and feet to encourage an answer.

Now I understood the significance of the Vavuniya-bound bus I'd seen earlier. At that time I hadn't been aware of any irregularity, which in fact this was. Why didn't the bus take the shortest and direct route, which is Mullaitivu-Mankulam-Vavuniya? Answer: Because that would have taken it through Mulliyavalai/Tanniyattu, which was off-limits even to its own residents. In short, the direct road linking Mullaitivu with the Vavuniya-Jaffna highway had been closed by the IPKF and was devoid of all traffic.

Except for Tigers. After examining the wrecked armor, we had bicycled to a ceramic-tile factory to examine gun emplacements which had used on two occasions in December to shell the "preserved area." To me it was shaping up more like a free-fire zone. The guns — 105mm howitzers — were gone, but ammunition crates and shell packing cases littered the ground, though attempts had been made to burn them.

RIGHT: Sri Lankan police and security forces in cammies patrol Vavuniya streets armed with AK-47s.

This was some turkey shoot. Scores of rounds had been fired from at least five guns; terrific punishment for two villages. The factory was closed; its 85 employees too afraid to show up for work.

Late one afternoon, after consultations on his walkie-talkie, Thines escorted me on a 10-klick bicycle ride through rice paddies and along village tracks, passing 14 refugee families from Mulliyavalai on the way, to arrive at a LTTE "well-wisher" house in the night. In the morning I discovered I was in Nedunkerny, where I viewed the effects of the 3 November crocodile attack. An estimated 12 rockets were fired. Three shops had entirely burnt out; the transformer outside the general post office had been hit and electricity cut, and the town hospital with a large red cross painted on the roof had taken a direct hit on the dispensary, with shrapnel penetrating an adjacent ward and injuring two patients. The official explanation received by shocked residents protesting to Sri Lankan security officials in Vavuniya was that "the attack was against terrorists."

Even this absurd response raises a valid question about the legitimacy of the LTTE. Do they have the support of the people? The answer depends on who you ask and where they come from. In the extreme northeast there is grassroots support for the LTTE, if for no other reason than the IPKF has blown its case by savage repression there. In Batticaloa on the eastern seaboard, the Tamil majority is smaller, and support is less pronounced.

"In the early stages — the last two to three years — Sri Lankan authorities created the 'boys' (as they call the Tigers here) by their own draconian methods," said a non-Tamil resident. "In order to catch a few Tigers, they arrested hundreds of youths and beat and tortured them. This was an incentive for recruitment to the Tigers, even in the schools."

"Nowadays," he continued, "village people support the boys, but most of the thinking people, lawyers, tradesmen, teachers — those with a larger stake in peace and order — want them to give up."

However Chittu, a Tiger spokesman in Batticaloa, insists that the movement and the people are one. Sitting in a suburban house where his bodyguard's 9mm Beretta SMG never wavered from my guts for one moment in our two-hour interview, he said "if you separate the public from the Tigers, you separate the parents from the sons."

On the other hand, claims of heavy-handed Tiger "taxation" of shopkeepers in the Muslim-dominated market area has alienated that religious community from the LTTE, resulting in bloody communal clashes between Muslims and Tamils.

Chittu denied accusations of kidnapping and extortion. "People who have money and are living a luxury life are taken to the



ABOVE: IPKF-driven, Soviet-made BMP-1 APC rolls down the main street of Vavuniya, northern Sri Lanka.

camp to show them the conditions we suffer under," he said. They are then invited to make a "donation."

If they say no . . . ?

"No one gives this reply."

But if the rich absolutely won't give support, what then?

"Then they must leave [Batticaloa] or we will kill them."

His argument was logical by LTTE standards. "We collect the money, because they took it from the land, and we are fighting for that land." The procedure is legitimized by presentation of the official LTTE identification card (a professionally printed document with photo and personal data, including blood type) and a receipt. The penalty for unauthorized fund raising is death.

A Christian Tamil businessman from Jaffna whom I met in Vavuniya had this to say: "The LTTE is the only group fighting for Tamil liberation. This is the only group we can believe in."

An officer in the SLA disagreed. "The LTTE is not a liberation group. It is a martial group. Without weapons they are nothing." The officer cited the case of a government agent from Kilinochchi, a Tamil, being shot because he wouldn't pay up an LTTE extortion demand. The LTTE refuted this, saying the man was stealing money and supplies meant for refugees and was executed after two warnings.

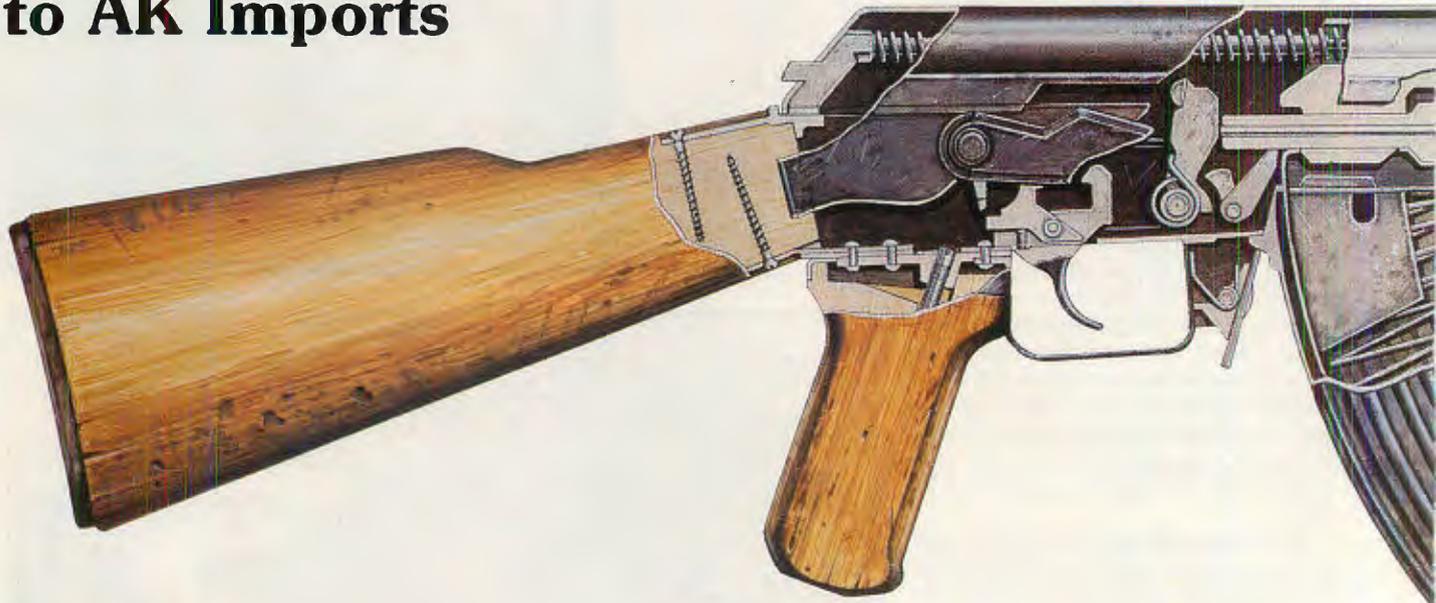
A retired Tamil in Kilinochchi accused the LTTE of stealing rice and cash from a godown (warehouse). The Tigers denied it, saying it was a trick by the Three Stars to discredit them. Whatever the truth of this matter, it highlights the enmity between the LTTE and the three other Tamil groups TELO, PLOT and EPRLF, collectively, though colloquially, known as the Three Stars.

To add to the confusion, there is the ENDLF, which features three stars on its flag, and a pro-LTTE group called the Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS). The mutual antagonism between the LTTE and so-called Three Stars, which

Continued on page 72

KALASHNIKOV

A Consumer Guide to AK Imports



**Text & Photos
by Peter G. Kokalis**

THERE is no more ubiquitous assault rifle than the Kalashnikov. It has been estimated that more than 50 million have been manufactured to date. Although principally associated with the ComBloc nations, it will be encountered, to one degree or another, in nearly every country of the world. During the last decade, tens of thousands of Kalashnikovs have been imported to the United States in a semiautomatic-only format. There is hardly a gun show or gun store in the country where you

won't find one or more variants of the "Kalash."

Various Kalashnikov models have been imported into the United States from no fewer than six nations. How do they differ? Are some more desirable than others? If you can't own them all, which is the best buy? Let's take a close look at them all and try to separate the wheat from the chaff. No need to concern ourselves with the method of operation or disassembly procedures, as they are almost identical in every instance,

and we've covered that ground many times before (see "Steyr's Firing Line," SOF, April, '82; "Soviet AKS-74," May '83; "Bamboo Curtain Imports," September '84; Full Auto, October, '85; "Kalashnikov's Sidefolder," October, '86; and "Hungarian AKM," February, '87). We'll omit semiauto versions of the RPK since, without the full-auto option, these squad automatics serve no function. We'll also limit our discussion to those Kalashnikovs chambered for the original M43 7.62x39mm cartridge, leaving out the Galil (See "Israel's Deadly Desert Fighter," SOF, July, '83) and the 5.56x45mm NATO Models of the Valmet and People's Republic of China Kalashnikovs (see "Chicom AK," SOF, April, '86).

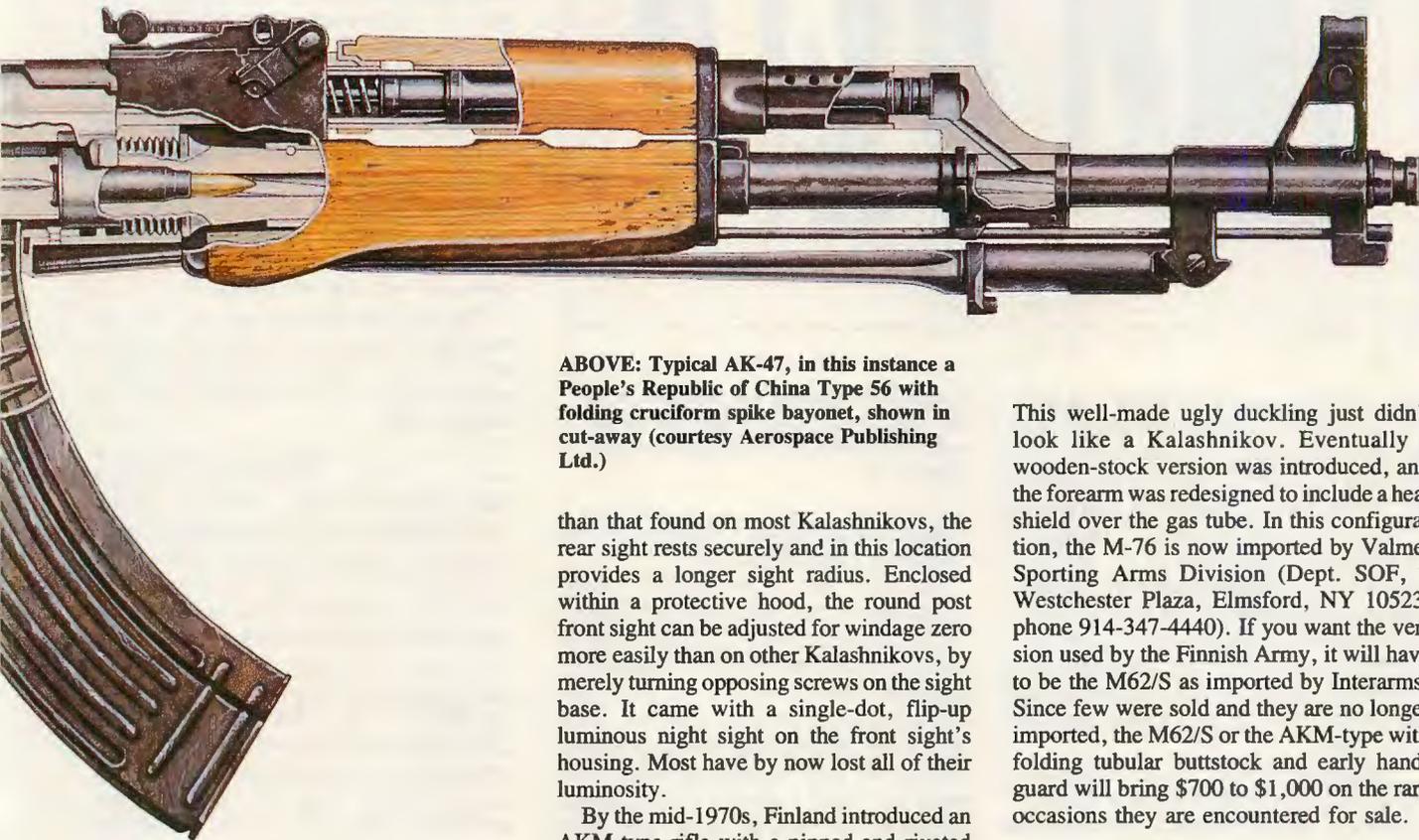
The very first semiauto Kalashnikov to reach these shores was the Valmet (*Valtion Metallitehtaat* or State Metal Works) M62/S, imported from Finland by Interarms in Alexandria, Virginia. Based upon the third model AK-47, the M62/S was a decided failure. Although internally a Kalashnikov in every detail, except for its selector lever, magazine and mill-finished, forged receiver, externally it bears little resemblance to the Kalashnikov stereotype.

Its odd, but effective, three-pronged flash



LEFT: Firing the ubiquitous Kalashnikov. Unless he has a telephoto lens, that empty case is going to zap the photographer right between the eyes.

NIKOPIES



ABOVE: Typical AK-47, in this instance a People's Republic of China Type 56 with folding cruciform spike bayonet, shown in cut-away (courtesy Aerospace Publishing Ltd.)

than that found on most Kalashnikovs, the rear sight rests securely and in this location provides a longer sight radius. Enclosed within a protective hood, the round post front sight can be adjusted for windage zero more easily than on other Kalashnikovs, by merely turning opposing screws on the sight base. It came with a single-dot, flip-up luminous night sight on the front sight's housing. Most have by now lost all of their luminosity.

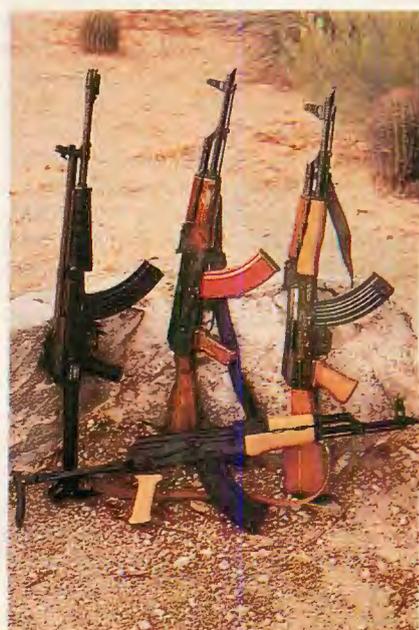
By the mid-1970s, Finland introduced an AKM-type rifle with a pinned and riveted sheet-metal receiver. Designated the M62-76, it was also imported in semiauto-only form as the M-76. Early specimens were identical in appearance to the M62/S except for the receiver, a more appealing pistol grip and the tubular buttstock, which was now hinged and folded to the left. It didn't help.

hider is pinned to the barrel and carries an integral bayonet lug that accepts only the indigenous Finnish knife/bayonet with its green leather, Lapp-style sheath. The gas tube is unprotected; there is a black plastic bottom handguard only. The oversize, flapper-type magazine release lever has a large protective housing which serves as the front of the trigger guard. Ribbed and oval-shaped, the black plastic pistol grip is totally unorthodox in appearance. Even more grotesque is the buttstock, which consists of plastic-coated steel tubing with a sheet-metal buttplate. M62/S rear sights are mounted at the rear of the sheet-metal receiver cover. They are adjustable for elevation zero only and can be set in 100-meter increments from 100 to 600 meters with a 150-meter battle-sight position. As the receiver cover is of somewhat thicker gauge

RIGHT: Semiauto Kalashnikovs from the PRC. Left to right: Type 56-2 sidefolder; Type 56-1 with typical downfolding stock, this one in caliber 5.56x45mm NATO and equipped with folding cruciform spike bayonet; Poly Tech's AK-47/S; and, in foreground, early Clayco AKS with shortened barrel converted to full-auto.

This well-made ugly duckling just didn't look like a Kalashnikov. Eventually a wooden-stock version was introduced, and the forearm was redesigned to include a heat shield over the gas tube. In this configuration, the M-76 is now imported by Valmet Sporting Arms Division (Dept. SOF, 7 Westchester Plaza, Elmsford, NY 10523; phone 914-347-4440). If you want the version used by the Finnish Army, it will have to be the M62/S as imported by Interarms. Since few were sold and they are no longer imported, the M62/S or the AKM-type with folding tubular buttstock and early handguard will bring \$700 to \$1,000 on the rare occasions they are encountered for sale.

BELOW: Semiauto Kalashnikovs from four nations. Left to right: Valmet M62/S from Finland; Egyptian Maadi ARM imported by Steyr-Daimler-Puch; Mitchell Arms' Yugoslav M70B1; and, in foreground, Hungarian AKM (SA 85M) with folding stock.





Kalashnikov cleaning kits. On the left for the PRC Type 56-2 sidefolder and on the right is a typical AK-47/AKM buttstock cleaning kit.

In contrast, the next semiauto Kalashnikov imported to the United States was, in almost every regard, an exact duplicate of the Russian AKM. During the late 1950s, the Soviet Union, as part of its military aid program, established the production of Soviet-pattern small arms in the Arab Republic of Egypt. AKM rifles were manufactured at "Factory 54," the Maadi Company for Engineering Industries in Cairo. Key Egyptian personnel were trained in the Soviet Union, and the plant was supervised by Russians prior to their abrupt expulsion from Egypt.

Designated as the "ARM" (Automatic Rifle Misr), a semiauto version of the Egyptian AKM was introduced to the American public in 1982 by the U.S. division of Steyr-Daimler-Puch in Steyr, Austria. For all intents and purposes this is as close as most of us will ever come to a Russian AKM. The laminated wood handguards and buttstock are correct in every detail. The lower handguard has the proper hand swells, and the buttstock has been reinforced with steel pins in all the right places. All the wood furniture was imported from Finland but finished in Egypt. The plastic pistol grip has been molded to the correct Soviet configuration.

The metal components are exactly those of the Russian AKM. Small recesses on each side of the receiver, directly over the magazine well, serve as magazine guides and instantly distinguish this as an AKM. The four gas escape holes found on each side of the AK-47's gas cylinder have been omitted, and there are two gas relief holes on each side of the gas block where it mates with the gas tube. The bayonet lug is directly under the gas block. Rear sights are graduated to 1,000 meters (with a 300-meter battle-sight setting marked "P") instead of the AK-47's 800-meter maximum. An AKM muzzle brake has been installed. The sheet-metal receiver cover has transverse ribs and a rolled edge over the ejection port. Chambers and bores are hard-chromed. All of the exterior metal surfaces have been finished with a baked-on black

enamel over phosphate. Only the green web sling is of Egyptian design.

No doubt about it, except for the selective-fire option and markings on the receiver, this is a Soviet AKM. Yet, no more than a few thousand were brought in before importation ceased. (Note: Two years ago, about two dozen semiauto Egyptian AKMs with a side-folding stock similar in appearance to the East German MPiKMS72 entered the United States via an independent importer). So rare is the Steyr/Maadi AKM today that salivating collectors will eagerly pay \$900 to \$1,000 for a specimen in NIB (new-in-the-box) condition.

Why did it fail? There were two principal reasons. First, at the time it was being imported a supply of reasonably-priced ammunition was not available. Berdan-primed, noncorrosive, Finnish Lapua 7.62x39mm ammunition (usually head-stamped "VPT" with two digits indicating the year of production) cost 45 to 55 cents per round. Norma's boxer-primed ammo in this caliber was selling for 85 cents per round. Yugoslav ammunition was just starting to trickle into this country. Americans don't buy firearms unless they can afford to shoot them.

Second, within a year after the introduction of the Steyr/Maadi AKM, the PRC gained Most Favored Nation status with the United States, and Clayco Sports Ltd. of Clay Center, Kansas, commenced importation of the first PRC semiauto Kalashnikovs at a price substantially lower than the Egyptian version. Both rigid and folding-stock variants were imported under the designation "AKS." While these rifles were both of the AKM-type — that is the receiver body had been fabricated from a 1mm-thick U-section of stamped sheet-metal extensively supported by pins and rivets, numerous features of the AK-47 were retained.

The rear sight had a maximum elevation of 800 meters, and the 300-meter battle-sight setting was marked "D." The receiver cover was without transverse ribs or a rolled edge over the ejection port. There were four gas escape holes on each side of the gas cylinder. There were no hand swells on the lower handguard. Handguards, pistol grip and buttstock on early Clayco AKS rifles were of reddish-brown plastic. This was quickly changed to black plastic in an attempt to broaden its appeal to American shooters. All exterior metal surfaces were salt blued. Bolts and bolt carriers were left in the white (unfinished) or phosphated. Clayco provided these rifles with only one magazine (blocked to accept only five rounds), plastic oil bottle, sling and buttstock cleaning kit. Spare magazines and bayonets were also available.

The semiauto Kalashnikov was off and running. Clayco dropped along the wayside, but several other importers picked up the slack, and rifles started to pour in from the PRC.

One of the more interesting was a sidefolder (PRC Type 56-2) that is standard issue with the People's Liberation Army. First imported by Pacific International Merchandising Corporation (Dept. SOF, 2215 'J' Street, P.O. Box 8022, Sacramento, CA 95816) and manufactured at arsenal 66-in-triangle (an abbreviation for arsenal 626) in Hei Long Jing Province, it was fitted with a pistol grip resembling those of the Browning M1917A1 and M1919A4/A6 machine guns (apparently an export-only feature, as I observed these grips on PRC Type 56 rifles in Afghanistan). Type 56-2 rifles are now distributed with a PLA-issue, AKM-type pistol grip by PTK International, Inc. (Dept. SOF, Suite 340, 2814 New Spring Road, P.O. Box 724827, Atlanta, GA 30339; phone 404-438-9699), which represents the small arms products of Poly Technologies, Inc. All Poly Tech Kalashnikovs are now manufactured at arsenal 386 in Fu Jian Province, although some early specimens were produced at arsenal 416 (actually arsenal 976) in Shan Dong Province.

The original AK-47/AKM folding stock has been in need of a PIP (Product Improvement Program) since its inception. A double-strut type, controlled by a large press-button release located above the pistol grip on the left side of the receiver, it folds under the receiver, and the magazine passes through it. Patterned directly after the German World War II MP38/40 submachine gun stock, it's adequate for firing the 9mm Parabellum pistol round but will not take the sustained pounding of a rifle cartridge. I recently examined an early Soviet folding-stock AK-47 in South West Africa near the Angolan border. The stock latch was so worn that the rifle could be rotated 15 degrees in either direction after the stock was securely braced against the shoulder — not very beneficial to the Kalashnikov's already limited accuracy potential.

Soviet designers addressed this problem in the caliber 5.45x39mm AKS-74 by de-



signing a side-folding stock. PRC designers arrived at an even more robust solution. Their stock's skeletonized frame has been fabricated from a single piece of heavy-gauge sheet metal, bent and folded into the proper shape. Five horizontal ribs have been stamped into the buttplate portion. There is a 4.75-inch long, reddish-brown plastic panel on each side of the stock at the forward end. These panels have ribbed gripping surfaces and are retained by a threaded screw and pin. They serve as a compartment to hold the cleaning kit. Depress a spring-loaded pin on top of the stock and the cleaning kit will pop out to the rear. The latch mechanism is operated by a checkered, spring-loaded release button on top of the stock. Press down on the button, and the stock can be swung to the right, where it locks in place. The button must be pressed again to open the stock.

The latch mechanism is quite substantial, and this stock is every bit as stable as a non-folding wooden stock. When folded, access to the trigger is maintained, although access to the selector lever is somewhat more difficult. Both handguards and the pistol grip are fabricated from reddish-brown plastic. All other features of the Type 56-2, as imported by PTK International, Inc., are those of the other PRC AKM-type rifles, except that there is no provision for the attachment of a bayonet. If you need the compactness of a folding-stock rifle, then this is the one to acquire. Suggested retail price for the Type 56-2 is \$439.95 complete with cleaning kit (all Kalashnikovs carry a cleaning rod under the barrel), sling and three "premium-grade" magazines (checked for functioning and all sharp edges removed).

PTK International also distributes rigid, wooden-stocked (PRC Type 56) and down-folding (PRC Type 56-1) versions of the AKM-style (sheet-metal receivers) Kalashnikov, each of which retails for only \$409.95. Both are equipped as above, with the addition of a cruciform-shaped folding spike bayonet. All three of these models are catalogued as the AKS-762.

A faithful semiauto copy of the third model AK-47 (*Avtomat Kalashnikova obrazets 1947g* or Kalashnikov assault rifle model 1947) has just been produced by PTK International, Inc. Its cold-hammer-forged receiver requires a total of 105 individual machining operations. Barrels are selected for uniformity and accuracy potential.

Pistol grip and tubular buttstock of the Valmet M62/S, although Finnish Army issue, were too unorthodox for American tastes and few were sold.

Chambers, bores and pistons are hard chromed. Polish and bluing of the external metal surfaces is exceptional. Both the bolt and bolt carrier are lightly phosphate finished. The wood buttstock, pistol grip and handguards have been stained and varnished to an exact image of a Vietnam-era AK-47. Cross-checkering on the grip is crude and correct. An AK-47 muzzle nut has been attached to the barrel. The front sight post has open protective ears instead of a hood with a hole for the adjustment tool (either is proper for the AK-47).

A Russian-style AK-47 bayonet is supplied with the AK-47/S rifle. It has an 8-inch satin blade with a spear-point shape and centrally-placed fullers. The blued-steel hilt has mahogany-stained wood grips (usually wood-fiber-impregnated plastic on Soviet specimens) held in place by two bolts and slot-head nuts at each end. A web hanger is attached to two metal loops at the rear of the blued-steel scabbard.

No doubt about it, except for the selec-

Kalashnikov magazines. Left to right: early slab-sided Soviet 30-round for AK-47; typical ribbed all-steel 30-round; current Soviet-issue synthetic 30-round; and ribbed PRC Type 63.

tive-fire option, this is a genuine AK-47. If that's what you want, there's no other game in town. Complete with bayonet, sling, buttstock cleaning kit, three "premium-grade" magazines and a limited five-year warranty, the AK-47/S carries a suggested retail price of \$569.95.

Rifles distributed by PTK International, Inc. differ in one very important regard from all of the other caliber 7.62x39mm semiauto Kalashnikovs imported to the United States: Military-issue Kalashnikovs and their semiauto equivalents do not have spring-loaded firing pins. If commercial or reloaded ammunition — with primers more sensitive than milspec because of a thinner cup and sometimes a difference in the primer mixture — is fired in rifles of this type, the free-floating firing pin can, and eventually will, result in a slam-fire with ignition out of battery. The resulting detonation can lead to self-destruction of the firearm and anatomical damage of varying severity to the shooter. At my suggestion, all Kalashnikov-type rifles distributed by PTK International, Inc. have been fitted with *spring-loaded* firing pins (Note: All caliber 5.56x45mm NATO AKS 223 semiauto Kalashnikovs exported by Poly Technologies, Inc. can be retrofitted with a spring-loaded firing pin free of charge by Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc., Dept. SOF, Suite 222, 6030 Highway 85, Riverdale, GA

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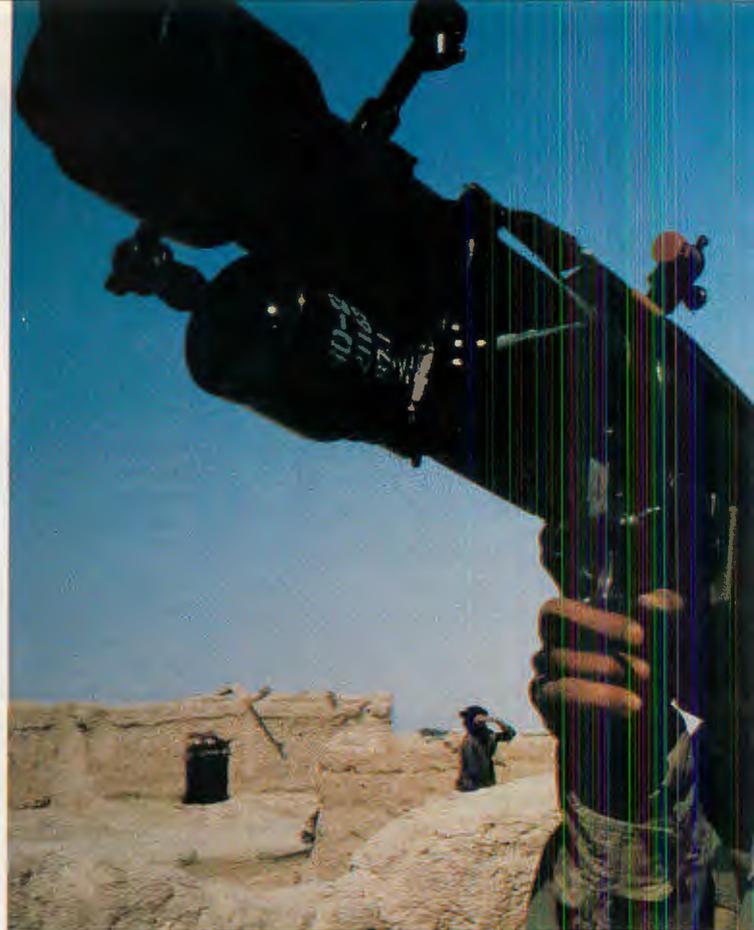


OMEGA JIHAD

PART 2

Robert K. Brown Leads SOF Team in Afghanistan

by Mike Williams



In last month's part one of "Omega Jihad," SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown rounded up a small group of volunteers, consisting of Mike Williams, former second-in-command of Rhodesia's Grey's Scouts, Paul Fanshaw, 13-year veteran of the French Foreign Legion, and Hunter Penn, Vietnam vet and photographer, for a firsthand look at the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The SOF mini-A-Team journeyed to London, then onward to Quetta, Pakistan, where they crossed the border into Afghanistan. Joining up with the Afghan freedom fighters, our intrepid staffers soon found themselves in the midst of a mujahideen assault group on its way to capture a Soviet fort.

MAD MIKE WILLIAMS

Mike Williams' life reads like one of the books in SOF's adventure series.

After being introduced to combat as a grunt in Italy in WWII, he was one of the first officers assigned to the 10th Special Forces, when it was activated in 1952. In 1953, he was ordered to Korea, where he commanded the 7th Battalion, 3rd Partisan Infantry Regiment, which was composed of between 1,200 and 1,500 North Korean and Chinese defectors. Upon his return from Korea, he was assigned to the 77th Special Forces Group and later served with the 101st Airborne.

In 1964, he joined "Mad Mike" Hoare's mercs operating out of Kamina Base in Katanga, Africa. In 1976, he joined the Rhodesian Army as a captain, was promoted to major, and prior to his resignation was commanding officer of 1 Squadron, Grey's Scouts, Rhodesia's famed mounted infantry. (For more on that that adventure, see SOF, November 1978, January 1979.)

It's not surprising Williams let Brown talk him into going to Afghanistan. What true adventurer could turn down a chance to meet the Afghan freedom fighters face to face?

THE late afternoon sun was disappearing behind a high mountain range. Tired, hungry and thirsty, we rattled around in the Toyota like pinballs. The road gradually shrank to a trail leading down an increasingly steep canyon. Rocks, shale, basketball-sized boulders and mud puddles from a small stream blocked the way. Ahead of us, a long column of armed muj walked on either side of the trail, AKs, RPGs, and RPDs slung. Several hundred meters ahead, three muj drivers were carefully easing Massey-Ferguson tractors, ammunition carts in tow, over the obstacles. Our Toyota stopped, and Mohammed, a former Afghan army colonel, tapped on the side of the door.

"We get down and walk now."





ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT: Muj with SA-7 Grail surface-to-air missile. The SA-7 comes in two models: SA-7A (1,600 kilometers per hour and effective up to three kilometers) and SA-7B (2,000 kilometers per hour and effective up to five kilometers). The SA-7 is a copy of an American Redeye, which found its way to the USSR through Scandinavia. The SA-7 is reported to be fragile and not terribly effective. Soviet weapons intended for export are often marked with English lettering, and therefore the one here probably was captured in the Middle East and then transferred to the Afghans. Photos: Robert K. Brown

ABOVE: SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown loads 107mm rocket round before firing on Russian fort. Photo: Hunter Penn

Satisfied we were all together, he led us up a billy-goat trail winding toward a cave high on the rock face. Standing aside at the entrance, he waited until one by one we ducked under a low stone overhang and entered the dim cavern. Inside were several older muj sitting with their backs against the damp rock walls. There was a strong odor of hash in the cool air, and a dim pall of blue smoke lay next to the blankets spread on the dirt floor.

Mohammed stuck his head inside and spoke to one of the younger muj sitting near the entrance. “*Chai*,” he ordered. The boy went outside and returned with the usual tray, battered pitcher and four glasses, which he set down before us. There wasn’t the usual ration of cakes and oranges, only green tea heavily laced with raw sugar.

Brown and Hunter were showing the effects of the dysentery that had begun earlier. Although the Flagyl was helping to a limited degree, their faces were drawn and tired. For that matter, I wasn’t feeling too good myself. According to the doctor, Flagyl takes time to work properly, and you can’t take a couple of pills and expect instant results. I was still sipping the brackish, strong green tea when Brown and Hunter got up and left the cave, taking their cameras with them. Fanshaw and I gulped down the rest of our *chai*, thanked the mujahideen sitting against the walls, then followed Brown. Outside, the light was turning yellow. The columns of mujahideen were still

LEFT: Major Mike Williams near the end of a long, waterless and breakless march up a steep canyon. Photo: Paul Fanshaw

passing below, followed by more tractors pulling carts heavily laden with ammunition. Mohammed tapped me on the shoulder. “We go now.”

Our Toyota had disappeared, and in its place was one of the four-wheeled ammo carts hitched to a Massey-Ferguson. Instead of 107mm rocket rounds, the cart was crammed with muj who grinned and nodded as we climbed aboard. Mohammed and Musa, our guide and translator, were the last to climb on, and the tractor started down the canyon, bouncing and jolting from rock to rock. I sat with my feet on a water bladder made from a truck tire and inner tube, its water seeping from around a wooden plug wrapped in cloth that only slowed the steady trickle flowing down the side and on to the truck bed.

A 12-year-old boy who had been with us at the commo bunker rode next to Brown and offered to carry Robert’s AK. When Mohammed saw this, he leaned over to Brown and warned him to never let his AK out of his possession. Musa looked at some of the muj walking along the trail and whispered to me. “These are bad people . . . some bandits. Be careful.” I couldn’t fault his judgment on that score; some of the muj looked like members of the Golden Horde who’d formed an advance party for Ghengis Khan.

After an hour, the cart jolted to a halt, and everyone dismounted to rest. Hunter, Brown and Fanshaw busied themselves taking pictures of the attack force, while Musa broke out a TV camera and started filming both the mujahideen and members of our party. During Musa’s filming, he asked Hunter to give a running commentary on the march. Hunter managed a very professional voice-over that appeared to be excellent for TV purposes.

There was very little transition from twilight to night: One minute it was dusk, and several minutes later purple darkness blotted out everything except for objects only a foot or so away. The tractor’s engine fired up, and people began climbing back into the cart. One thing was for damned sure — we were a part



Afghan freedom fighter (wearing American BDU uniform) prepares to fire SA-7 Grail surface-to-air missile. Photo: Robert K. Brown

of the assault force.

The terrain ahead flattened out, and the column of vehicles began to stretch out, their intervals changing as we moved at a more rapid pace. Suddenly, with no warning, tractor horns began blowing throughout the column. Yells, howls of *Allah Akhbar* and, incredibly, the loud noise of sirens exploded in the night air. Sirens? Good God! Unless the Afghan army garrison troops were completely stoned on hash and vodka, we should be getting mortared or shelled within the next few minutes. There was no way in hell that this amount of noise couldn't be heard at the fort.

Brown yelled at me. "Do you believe this SHIT?"

"Fuck no!" I shook off the hand of one of the muj, who was trying to get me to climb down and go with his group.

The column started up again, and we passed what appeared to be the huts of a small village. Several figures detached themselves from the dark buildings and trotted along beside our cart. Before I started cursing the mujahideen's apparently chaotic tactics, I realized two things: First, for nine years these people, with only the barest supply of weapons, had been kicking hell out of the Soviets; second, and more important, you can't argue with success. "*Allah Akhbar!*"

After 15 or 20 minutes had passed, our tractor driver pulled over next to a clump of trees, braked to a halt and shut down the engine. The muj in our cart piled out, jumped to the ground and formed in a group. Brown counted noses to make sure we were all still together. When he'd finished, Musa and Mohammed joined us, urging us to follow a column of muj walking ahead in the darkness.

We stumbled along, feeling our way over the hard-packed sand, occasionally bumping into the mujahideen ahead. I missed a step and fell into a ditch. By that time I was so tired I didn't give a rat's ass *what* was in the ditch.

Musa grabbed my arm and helped me up. "Are you hurt?" he asked. I shook my head "no" and followed the muj ahead as they entered a large room with cement floors and walls.

"Musa," I asked, "what's this place?"

"This is village mosque," he whispered. "We stay here . . . sleep." We found out later the mosque was about 2.5 clicks east of a village called Jara, about halfway between the village and the fort.

Shortly, bodies were lined up on either side of the room, heads to wall, feet toward the center. Snoring, groans, farts, spitting and wheezes began almost immediately. No matter; I was going to sleep regardless, or so I thought. Squirming around on the hard floor, I tried to adjust my ammo pouches. The neck straps on the chest webbing were cutting into the back of my neck, and I started to pull the canvas over my head.

"No. No." Musa grabbed my hand, shaking his head.

"Leave magazines on."

"What's the problem?"

"Leave magazines on. Not let anyone have Kalashnikov."

He tapped the AK's stock and pointed to my right leg.

"Put sling around leg and not let *anyone* take Kalashnikov."

He looked around at the sleeping muj. "Many bad people — Khomeini people — take guns from you." Before I could ask him to point them out, he had gone. No communication, no liaison with the commander, possible Khomeini backers.

Another fine mess you've gotten me into Robert.

There was a flurry of activity at the entrance to the mosque. Two mujahideen were motioning to a muj sitting across from me, his RPG launcher balanced across his knees. Words passed in Pashto, and he scrambled to his feet and ran out the door, following the two into the night. I lay back down on the cold cement floor and went to sleep.

"*Chai. Chai.*" Musa was shaking me awake. I sat up and looked around. Brown, Fanshaw and Hunter had gone outside to stretch, leaving their cameras with me.

"You drink." A muj boy set a battered tray with a teapot and glasses in front of me. There were no cakes this time, only a thick roll of bread that sported a squadron of large, blue-bellied flies practicing touch-and-go landings on the large piece the tea boy had handed me. What the hell. Better diseased than starved. The rest of our group walked back into the mosque and sat down with me to tea and bread-flies. Outside the door, lined against the wall, were 10 to 15 muj, eating bread and chatting away. There was no sign of either Musa or the older Mohammed.

BLAM! A distant, muffled rocket blast caused us to put down the tea glasses and move outside. Thirty seconds later a BOOM and a cloud of dirty grayish smoke exploded on the far side of the fort some two clicks to the southeast of our position. Brown stuffed a handful of Skoal in his mouth and scoffed.

"What happened to the 1,000 107mm rounds that were supposed to hit the fort between 0300 and 0600?" he asked.

"*Inshallah,*" answered Hunter, wiping sweat from his face.

The water situation had reverted to its previous status: low and none. "Where's the water point?" I asked a muj trotting past us. He shrugged and kept going in the direction of several scrawny trees 100 meters behind the mosque. There seemed to be other mujahideen crowded around the area. "That looks like a pond." Hunter started walking toward the group, followed by Fanshaw carrying our canteen.

I caught up with them, and we circled a wall to stand at the edge of a fair-sized sinkhole filled with the dirtiest water I could recall ever seeing. The surface was muddy, the edges covered with a greenish scum. Standing at the far edge were two sheep and a donkey, their feet soaking in the muddy shore. Near them were several sheep turds floating gently near the green scum.

"You find water, OK?" I turned to see Musa at my elbow. "Good water. You drink." He assured me that the pond scum was first class. Fanshaw filled the canteen and shook his head in disbelief, and we started back to the mosque.

A white haze baked the area. Although it was only 1000 hours, the sun was murderous, and there wasn't a catpaw of breeze to provide relief, no matter how small. Flies now filled the mosque to the point where it was impossible to eat without

ingesting several of them unless you were damned careful when you shoved bread or tea in your mouth.

Next to the mosque were four mulberry trees full of ripe fruit, and under their lowest branches were several muj standing on the shoulders of their friends and flailing away with sticks at clumps of ripe berries, causing the bunches of fruit to cascade down to the ground below. I watched the spectacle and reflected that, although I was desperate for anything wet and cool, the effects of the antibiotics coupled with the pond scum water and sheep shit hors d'oeuvres had made me so sick that all I wanted to do was kill Brown and lie down.

The first day passed in a slow-motion haze of heat, flies, more pond scum water and a steel-hard cement floor to sleep on. On the morning of the second day, I asked Musa when the attack was supposed to start. Further, where the hell were the 1,000 rounds of 107mm rockets that were supposed to have plastered the fort? Also, where were the 340 other members of the attack force? Not to speak of the reserve of 500 other muj.

"No problem," came the answer. "Attack force waiting for word from fort."

"What word from the fort?"

"Inside fort is agent from mujahideen," Musa smiled. "He talk with Russian commander of fort. When commander say hands up, we get four tanks."

"What four tanks?" Nobody had said anything about tanks.

"Have four tanks in fort." Musa wrinkled his brow. "Tanks are Russian. You call 'T-62s.' You know about these?"

"Yes." You could say T-62s are pretty well known around the military trade. The tank has a U-5TS(2A20) 115mm smooth-bore gun with a bore evacuator. Maximum rate of fire is four rounds per minute, and it can fire HE-FRAG, (FS and OF-18), HEAT-FS (BK-4 and BK-4M), and APFSDS (BM-6) ammo. A 7.62mm PKT machine gun is fired co-axially. The T-62 can, like other Soviet tanks, lay its own screen of white smoke by spraying diesel on hot exhaust manifolds; the smoke exits from exhaust ports on the left side.

"Is good, T-62?"

"Is good. At 3,000 yards firing APFSDS rounds, first-hit probability is 100 percent."

Musa shrugged.

Given the presence of the T-62s, I had hopes that the Soviet commander would indeed "hands up." I had a pretty good picture of the effect of four 115mm guns working over the muj attack formation as it crossed a line of departure in the open area around the fort. Come to think of it, we'd be with them! With that thought in mind, I asked Musa, "What tactics do you use when you attack the fort?"

"No problem. First lie down on ground." He demonstrated. "Then stand up." He jumped to his feet with his AK at port arms and hesitated, watching me for a reaction.

"OK, then what?"

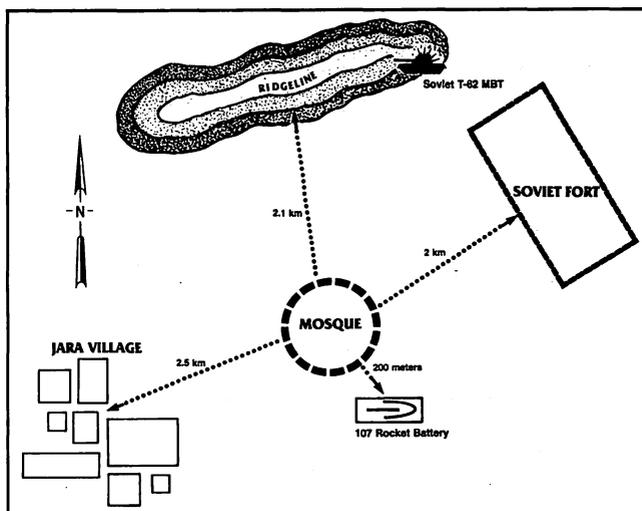
"Then stand up straight." He squared his shoulder, brought the AK to an assault position from the hip. "And yell *ALLAH AKHBARRR*, then run forward."

I could tell from that demonstration there was quite a bit of variance between the mujahideen's infantry assault tactics and our own. "Musa, how close you get to fort before you stand up and yell, *ALLAH AKHBARRR*?"

"No problem. Maybe 1,000 meters. No problem."

Fine. I started walking back toward the mosque. Hey, once again, you don't argue with success. The Soviets had shown for nine years that using conventional tactics against the "Warriors of God" hadn't been one helluva success.

Later that afternoon, Fanshaw, Brown, Musa and I investigated a grove of trees a couple of hundred meters to the south of the mosque. We had some bread and oranges, which we ate while sitting in the shade. A gentle breeze had sprung up, and it was as pleasant as the circumstances would permit, although there were some giant red ants that made frequent moving a must. Before we'd finished our oranges, the rockets started once more. This time there were more than an occasional series of scattered rounds. We trotted back to the



Map (buildings not to scale) shows location of mosque where SOF A-team stayed, in relation to village of Jara, Soviet fort and Soviet T-62 tanks. Short distances explain almost continual outgoing and incoming fire experienced during stay in this AO.

mosque to find Hunter.

Musa was stopped by two muj just outside the mosque entrance, and an exchange of Pashto was ended with laughs all around.

"What is joke?" I asked.

"On first night here, mujahideen with RPG go to village and capture deputy Russian commander and two Afghan soldiers ... all drunk and asleep from hashish." More muj tactical surprises. We went back to the mosque.

The flies were so thick inside the room that we considered trying to find a place to sleep outside, but Musa shook his head. He pointed to a group of muj standing around a 14.5mm KPV heavy machine gun.

"Those are bad. Better you stay inside mosque."

At nightfall we had *chai*, bread, oranges and flies. Everyone in our group was sick, with low energy, dysentery, constant thirst and nausea. As each day passed, the number of muj around the mosque grew smaller. Only the group around the 14.5 seemed to remain intact.

The number of rocket rounds increased, but nowhere close to the point where it could be called a barrage. Mortar rounds from the fort occasionally answered, but at a very slow rate of fire and very inaccurate.

On the morning of the third day, Fanshaw and I walked to the grove of trees and scouted around for a hole in the event the fort batteries decided to give the mosque and the surrounding huts a pasting from mortars, artillery or, worse scenario, the T-62 MBTs. On the way back, Fanshaw turned and walked toward the 14.5 and a truck that was partially hidden by an adobe wall. While he was looking at the vehicle, a young muj — maybe in his early 20s — dressed in clean cammies stopped me, and in perfect English asked, "Are you a Muslim?"

"No."

"Are you an American?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing here?"

I walked away from him and headed for Paul and the truck. We looked for Brown and Hunter and located them behind a long, adobe wall running perpendicular to the eastern side of the mosque. They were studying the fort through Steiner binoculars, watching the exchange of fire between the Soviets and the muj 107mm rocket batteries emplaced some 100 meters to the southeast of the mosque compound. Musa ran up from the rear of the adjoining buildings and called to us.

"What's the problem?" Brown asked when we gathered around the Afghan.

"You come now." Musa panted, catching his breath.

"Come where?" I asked.

"You no come? Why you are doing this to me?" The more agitated he got, the worse his English became.

"Bullshit. We want to know where the fuck you're going and how far it is before we're leaving here." Fanshaw shook his finger at Musa who turned to Brown and Hunter.

"You come with me?"

"OK, we go." Brown fell in step with Musa, and Hunter, now very sick, followed.

"They're gonna get their ass blown away going with that idiot." Fanshaw and I watched as the trio marched away around the corner of a building.

BOOMMM! I looked at Paul, then in the direction of the explosion.

"That's the muj. They're firing the 107s again. Get a count."

We waited for the next round, which wasn't long in coming. BOOM! I started counting the seconds — 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 — THUMP.

"Twenty-two hundred yards." I estimated the range from the rocket batteries to the point of impact.

CRUMMP, CRUMMP. "Holy Shit!" Paul started running toward the truck, unslinging his AK. All the muj around the 14.5 began running away from the gun to look at an open field some 800 meters away. I skidded to a stop next to Fanshaw, who had his binos up to his eyes and was pointing toward several muj advancing across the field from our left to right.

CRUMMP. A 120mm mortar round from the fort landed behind one of the running mujahideen, temporarily masking him with grey smoke. As the smoke cleared, there was no sign of the Afghan, then within seconds he was up and trotting again. To his left were two other muj, advancing across the thick grass. CRUMMP. Another round impacted to their front, throwing chunks of earth, stones and grass stalks high in the air, covering them with smoke and cordite fumes.

"Paul, if those Afghans in the fort traverse those tubes to the left, we're going to be in a world of hurt."

"That truck behind the wall's sitting over a grease pit that's deep enough for us both. The wall might go, but the truck'll cover us except for a direct hit. Then we're fucked anyway."

We started toward the truck when Mohammed, standing near the 14.5, waved to us and walked quickly over.

"You must come with me! Now!" He pulled at my arm, casting a glance in the direction of the muj gathered near the truck.

"Hell, no!" Paul shook his head at Musa and turned to me. "If he's going to go back to the mosque, we'll get our ass blown off if they start hitting the buildings."

"No. No. Please come with me. I must speak with you. There is much danger for you here." Mohammed started toward the mosque.

"Come on, let's give him a few minutes. We can come back here." I fell in behind the old man, Fanshaw following.

There were no muj to be seen when we entered the mosque. The tea boy had left a tray with pot and glasses in the center of the floor, and we sat down around it, laying our weapons on the floor next to us. Mohammed waited until we'd put sugar in the dirty glasses, then poured tea for all of us.

"Alright, what's the problem?" Fanshaw asked, blowing on the tea.

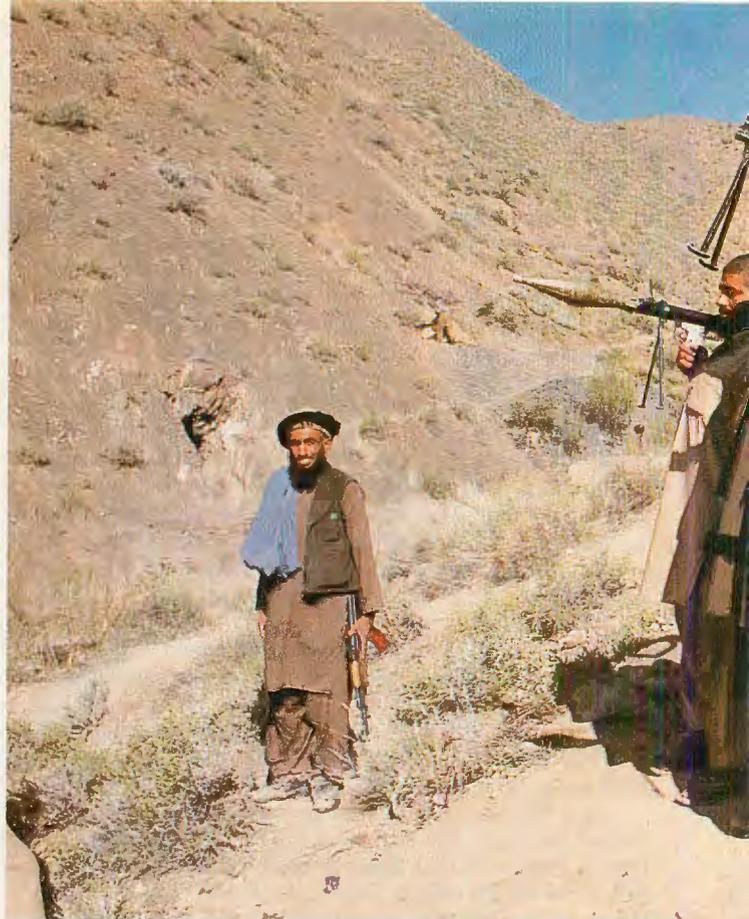
"You must leave quickly. There is a vehicle at the back of the building." The Afghan's face was drawn and his eyes bloodshot.

"Leave? Why?" I put down my glass and glanced at Fanshaw, who was staring at Mohammed as if the old man was off his rocker.

"You know mujahideen who ask you if you are Muslims?"

"Yeah, what about 'em?"

"They are Khomeini people from village." He paused and wiped his nose with the back of one gnarled hand. "Many times they meet and take money from KGB in fort. They say when we attack, they will shoot Americans."



Several times during the time we spent at the mosque, Mohammed had told us of his experiences at the hands of the Soviets when he was a prisoner in Kabul. He'd repeated the stories more than once, and I wondered if maybe his mind hadn't slipped some from the pain. I turned to Fanshaw. "What do you think?"

"I think it's time we got the fuck out of here. I believe the old man," he said. "What about those people? Why'd they ask us about being Muslims and why we were here?"

"I go look for vehicle. You stay here in mosque — safer." Mohammed stood up and moved toward the door. He stopped for a moment and peered around the edge. Satisfied, he left and walked toward the buildings across the courtyard.

"We've got to tell Brown and Hunter." Fanshaw picked up his AK and followed the Afghan out of the mosque and into the courtyard. Musa, Brown and Hunter were rounding the corner of the mosque when I walked out on the littered path and stood next to several muj who were watching the 122mm mortar rounds from the fort explode in the distance. While Paul and I faced Hunter and Brown, Musa stood at the edge of the little group and listened.

There was a question as to whether or not we should let Musa in on what Mohammed had said, so I decided to explain the situation to Brown in Spanish.

"Why you not talk before Musa? Why you not trust me?" Before anyone could stop him, the Afghan stomped off after Mohammed. Fanshaw filled in what I left out, and the whole story caused Brown to blink. Hunter, however, was of a different mindset.

"I don't believe any of this bullshit," Penn snorted and wiped his face with the sleeve of his Afghan blouse. "The old man is crazy. There aren't any Khomeini people here, and even if there were there's no way the muj are going to let them hurt us. That would be the *worst* possible thing they could allow."

I looked at Brown, who was mulling it all over in his mind. Fanshaw tapped Brown's arm, "Where'd Musa take you guys?"

"We walked about a hundred meters over to the 107s. I got a chance to fire a couple at the fort. Musa took some pictures."



Muj assault team (two RPG men, a 7.62mm RPD light machine-gunner and an ammo humper) standing inspection before the assault. Photo: Robert K. Brown

"Fuck the pictures. What are your feelings about leaving?" I pressed Robert for a decision.

He wiped a trickle of Skoal off his moustache before he answered. "I think we should di-di out of here," he said. "We haven't got communication with a swinging dick here who's got any authority. We're all sick from drinking pond scum shitwater — Hunter and I've both got the shits." He paused and spit, "There hasn't been fuck-all in the way of an attack on the fort, and sooner or later the Russians in that sonofabitch are going to call Kabul, and all shit's going to hit the fan."

I said, "OK, we're all agreed. Paul, where's the old man?"

"I'll go find him." Fanshaw headed for the area behind the building where Mohammed was last seen. We were getting our gear together when Musa ran in.

"Why you want to go? There is no danger. No Khomeini men. Tahir come. Russians go hands up maybe." He was as wound up as before.

Brown looked up. "Fuck it, Musa, we go."

Hunter made a face and looked at Musa, "Musa, they think some people in village try and kill us during attack."

"No, not possible. Mujahideen not let happen."

Mohammed suddenly walked in, looked around at the group and sat down near Musa. The two started a heated argument, and it wasn't necessary to understand Pashto to gather that Musa was raising hell with the old man because of the threat incident. In the middle of the dispute, Musa waved his hands, got up and stormed out. Mohammed smiled and shook his head. "Musa is boy," he said. "He not understand."

Brown stood up and turned to Fanshaw. "Is all our gear ready?"

"We're set to get out of here."

"I go now to see vehicle. You wait at wall outside."

Mohammed shook hands with us and scurried out the door. We gathered outside at the adobe wall that faced the Russian fort. The top of the wall reached to the bottom of our necks and

gave us quite a bit of cover from any of the Afghan garrison that might be scoping the mosque and the surrounding buildings. I was focusing my binoculars on the fort, watching for muj 107 impacts, when a sudden CRACK sounded to our left.

"What the hell's that?" Brown turned to search for the cause of the explosion.

About 45 degrees to my left was a high ridge line, some 1,500 meters away. As I changed the focus on the binos to sharpen the terrain, a long spurt of orange-red flame flared from the direction of the highest point on the ridge line, followed by another CRACK.

"Holy shit!" Fanshaw yelled.

The flame came from a 115mm gun attached to the bulk of a T-62, which was sitting atop the ridge line and firing at the muj rocket batteries in the valley. The tank sat in full view. It made no attempt whatsoever to take up a hull defilade position that would afford some protection against the 107s. Apparently the tank commander felt the muj rockets posed no threat. Through the binos, the T-62 looked as big as a Rhodesian bull elephant. That was an illusion. It was, of course, much bigger.

Suddenly a ball of fire throwing orange showers of flame erupted near the T-62. One of the muj 107s had landed short but on line with the Soviet tank. The 115mm tube was at right angles to us, and I wondered how long it would be before the gunner decided to traverse the turret in our direction and check out any activity around the mosque. There were a helluva lot of other places I would prefer to be than standing behind an adobe wall when the 115mm cut loose an AP round at 1,500 meters.

BLAM. A second orange fireball exploded, and, incredibly, this time hit dead center against the T-62's hull, enveloping the tank in flames that kept burning long after impact, sending a column of greasy, black smoke high in the air, obscuring any view of the turret and hatch. Brown pointed to the building at our rear. "There's Mohammed. Maybe he's got our vehicle squared away." The old man was trotting toward us, casting glances toward the burning tank. He stopped in front of Brown to catch his breath.

"Vehicle will be ready soon. We go back in mosque to wait."

"Horseshit. Another 'No Problem' scenario. Fuck it. Let's find out what the hell's going on." Fanshaw turned and stuck his face close to Mohammed's. "Where's the fucking vehicle?"

"Vehicle back there. Behind building."

Brown motioned to Fanshaw. "Paul, take a recce and see what's going on with our ride." The ex-Legionnaire left at a run, long legs moving like pistons, Mohammed walking swiftly behind him. The light was fading into dusk, and I had my doubts about the muj getting us out of there after dark. Fanshaw was back within minutes.

"Bob, the Toyota's there, but it's locked and there's no driver anywhere around. What do you wanta do?"

"Fuck it. Let's go." Brown headed for the vehicle, the rest of us following, Mohammed bringing up the rear. When we reached the Toyota, I crawled up into the cargo compartment and squatted down with my back toward the wall of a darkened building only a few feet away. Fanshaw took up a position between the truck and the building, giving him a field of fire covering both flanks. Brown and Hunter stood at the rear of the vehicle, waiting for Mohammed to close up. Before the old man stopped next to them, Musa and several muj walked quickly around the side of the building and headed for the truck. There were a series of dull CLICK-CLACKS as rounds were chambered. Brown, Fanshaw and I locked and loaded. Brown pushed his fire selector to AUTO.

Musa and the muj, hearing the familiar sounds, skidded to a halt. He raised both hands chest high, turned palms outward and protested, "Bob, Mike . . . no shoot mujahideen." Brown pointed his AK at Musa's chest. "I no shoot if mujahideen no shoot." Musa walked away from Brown and toward me.

"Mike, mujahideen no shoot you." I moved my fire selector from SINGLE to AUTO and pointed the AK at Musa's middle.

"Musa, we go. Now!"

The next two-and-a-half hours were a Keystone-Cops comedy. The muj ran back and forth between us and the mosque. First there were protests that the driver wasn't available, then that they couldn't find the commander. Musa ran and fetched the mullah, who assured me on his sacred oath that we were completely safe from everything. Musa ran up and told me that everything was OK. They'd better be, for the first man who made a wrong move would be martyred *tout de suite*.

Finally, Farouk, the assault party's commander, appeared and another discussion began between him, Musa and Mohammed. While they were yelling, several muj appeared with a radio that they set up several feet away from the truck. Farouk knelt down near it and started to transmit. I guessed he was talking to Tahir, but there wasn't any way to verify that, because all the transmission was in Pashto, and it was obvious that Musa wasn't about to barge in during the transmission and interrupt Farouk to ask if he could act as an interpreter for our benefit.

After at least 15 minutes of non-stop yakking, Musa ran over and spoke to Brown. "Bob, commander say we go now." From nowhere, a driver suddenly appeared, unlocked the door and crawled into the driver's seat. Several armed muj approached the Toyota and climbed into the back with me. Fanshaw followed them with Brown and Hunter at his heels. Farouk spoke with Mohammed and Musa, ordering them into the second Toyota that pulled up behind our vehicle. Satisfied they were aboard, he walked back to our truck and seated himself on the passenger's side. With a grinding of gears, we were underway.

There was no moon. What light there was came from the parking lights of the Toyotas, and those gave damned little

illumination. But the drivers had no problem following the trails that passed for a road. Banging, rattling and jolting along in the darkness, rocks and pebbles flying, we were about as silent as a herd of zebra. "If the Russians are half the soldiers they should be, we'll be ambushed within the next half-hour," I thought.

Off to our right was a small village not identified on our maps. Not far from Jara, the stomping grounds of our Khomeini would-be assassins, the village inhabitants were now putting on a fireworks display with a series of flares that arched into the black sky. The nearest flare was only 400 yards off on our right flank, and its swaying light cast shadows on the two Toyotas bouncing along on the snaking trail.

One of the muj jammed next to me, his RPG pressed against my shoulder, spoke. "Road very dangerous, yes?"

"Who gives a fiddler's fuck?" I answered.

He laughed. "Yes, yes, OK." So much for English 101.

Four hours passed and the road climbed steadily upward. The drivers had now turned on their headlights, which revealed steep drop-offs inches from the front tires. Gravel, dirt and shale crunched under the wheels and were propelled out into the blackness far below.

Fatigue from tension, very little food, bad water and dysentery had set in. Mistakenly, I'd assumed that we'd be driven all the way back to a reserve area, so when we finally stopped to dismount I looked around for signs of a bunker or cave. There were none. On either side there were high canyon walls. Vaguely familiar, they disappeared into the blackness, making their true height difficult to estimate.

As soon as the Toyota stopped, the muj jumped to the ground, formed into a column and began climbing. Brown, Fanshaw and Hunter got down from the Toyota and followed.

KHOMEINI IN AFGHANISTAN

The Khomeni supporters the SOF team ran into at Jara are a new development, complicating even further the ethnically and religiously divided Afghan resistance.

For about a year now SOF has been hearing rumors that Moslems from various areas of the world, but particularly from the Persian Gulf area, have been showing up in Afghanistan to serve a tour with mujahideen forces in a war widely considered a *jihad* or "holy war" in the Moslem world. Participation in a *jihad* is an achievement for Moslems. Non-Moslem foreign volunteers have come from other countries as well — including the United States, Belgium, and Japan.

But in the last year, SOF has heard that Arabs have shown up in large enough numbers from the Persian Gulf region that all-Arab units, sponsored by wealthy patrons from countries like Oman, Dubai, Kuwait, have been formed, especially in the south of Afghanistan.

The group SOF came into contact with were obviously from the Shi'a side of Islam. Islam is divided into two major factions, Sunni and Shi'a. Iranians are predominately Shi'a, which is the smaller and more fundamentalist of the two. Only about 10 percent of the Afghans are Shi'a — mostly ethnic Mongols who live in the Hazarajat (southcentral region of Afghanistan), west of Kandahar. The majority Sunni Afghans are further divided into religious/political factions. Some, like the *Jamiat-i-Islami* party the SOF team was traveling with, are considered to be fundamentalist, while others like the *Mahaz* and *Herakat* are considered to be moderates.

Actually the terms don't mean much in the context of Afghanistan. All Afghans are intensely religious and devout, and some are more fundamentalist than others but not really fundamentalist in the way we understand the term in the West. Afghans in general dislike Iran and Khomeini's fire-brand "Death to America" fundamentalism. But the Afghan fundamentalists have been a problem throughout the

war and one particular faction, the *Hezb-i-Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has fought battles against all of the six other major parties and especially against the *Jamiat-i-Islami*.

Hezb-i-Islami mujahideen have also made travel in Afghanistan increasingly dangerous for Western (infidel) reporters. *Hezbi* muj killed Britisher Andy Skrzypkowiak in 1987. Skrzypkowiak, traveling through Nuristan in Afghanistan's north with *Jamiat-i-Islami* forces, was killed while asleep. SOF's Mike Winchester and two other reporters were some days ahead of Skrzypkowiak with another small *Jamiat* escort when confronted by hostile *Hezbi* forces. Winchester and an American were captured by the *Hezbi*, while the third reporter, an Italian, got away but was separated from his Afghan escorts. Winchester, who is fluent in Dari and Pashto, was able to persuade the *Hezbi* commander not to harm them, and after a few days they were released. But while they were held by the *Hezbi*, the Italian was captured by government troops.

Questions are also now being raised about two other deaths — Lee Shapiro and Jim Lindeloff killed west of Kabul in 1987 while traveling with *Hezbi* forces — and the disappearance of a French reporter, missing since late 1986, while traveling with *Hezbi* forces.

Two other SOF writers — John Jameson and Peter Douglas — have also had trouble with *Hezbi* or fundamentalist forces. Douglas was captured by fundamentalists deep in the Hazarajat in 1985 and was told he was going to be put on trial as a suspected spy. Douglas and a companion escaped from the hut in which they were being held, saddled up their horses and escaped in a mad nighttime ride through the mountains. Jameson got caught in a *Hezbi* ambush of a *Jamiat* supply caravan in 1985.

As the Soviets pull out of Afghanistan and factional fighting becomes more common among the Afghans jockeying for post-Soviet power, Afghanistan will become increasingly dangerous for Western reporters.

— Jim Graves

As I started after them, two young mujahideen fell in behind me and began chattering to themselves, their conversation punctuated with occasional giggles. I didn't know what they were laughing about. The fucking trail — if it could be called that — was strewn with rocks and small boulders and zigzagged across a mountain stream whose cold waters ran across patches of soft mud. The mud grabbed the soles of my mountain boots, clutched them, and suddenly turned to ice-slick liquid. A fall here would at least result in a broken ankle, or worse, a broken leg.

Farouk, not carrying anything, strode in front of me, silent, intent on the trail, sometimes glancing back at me and the two young muj. What energy I had was long gone, and I concentrated on putting one foot firmly ahead of the other. The Cotrim antibiotic I'd taken required plenty of water, but we hadn't had enough to get by, much less the amount required when taking the medicine. My boots slogged into cold water several inches deep. The dried, leathery piece of Polish sausage that was my tongue could feel the mouthful of priceless fluid that I was about to lean over and drink. My knees touched the damp earth at the edge of the stream, and I braced myself with my left hand, scooping up water with the palm of my right, feeling the cold shock of it against my skin.

A powerful hand grabbed me by the shoulder and jerked me to my feet. "Op ney! Lop ney!" It was the taller of the two muj. "No water. No rest." We had been warned that Afghans on the march didn't believe in water stops and seldom rested. To the sound of more giggles, I staggered to my feet, adjusted my webbing and stumbled onward — and upward.

There would be a problem if I shot them both, I thought. Maybe the Al Mar knife, right in the back above the kidneys. Then I could run to the nearest stream. Run? Shit, I could barely stand. Extreme fatigue, a polite term for total exhaustion, can cause you to do strange things: hallucinate, sing, make funny noises. I made noises: "BAAAHH BAAH!" If there were any goats around, maybe we could get it on. Females only, of course. That caused more laughter and an endless conversation between my guards.

Brown suddenly materialized, sitting at the side of the trail. Why had I thought about wasting the two muj when here was the prick who had talked me into this madness to begin with.

"Let them carry your webbing and ammo," he suggested, leaning back against a rock.

"Fuck you," I answered. "I'll carry my own." Staggering along, I heard the trickle of water to my right and started for it, determined to drink or die. Before I could reach the sound and cold liquid, I heard the dreaded words: "Op ney! Lop ney!"

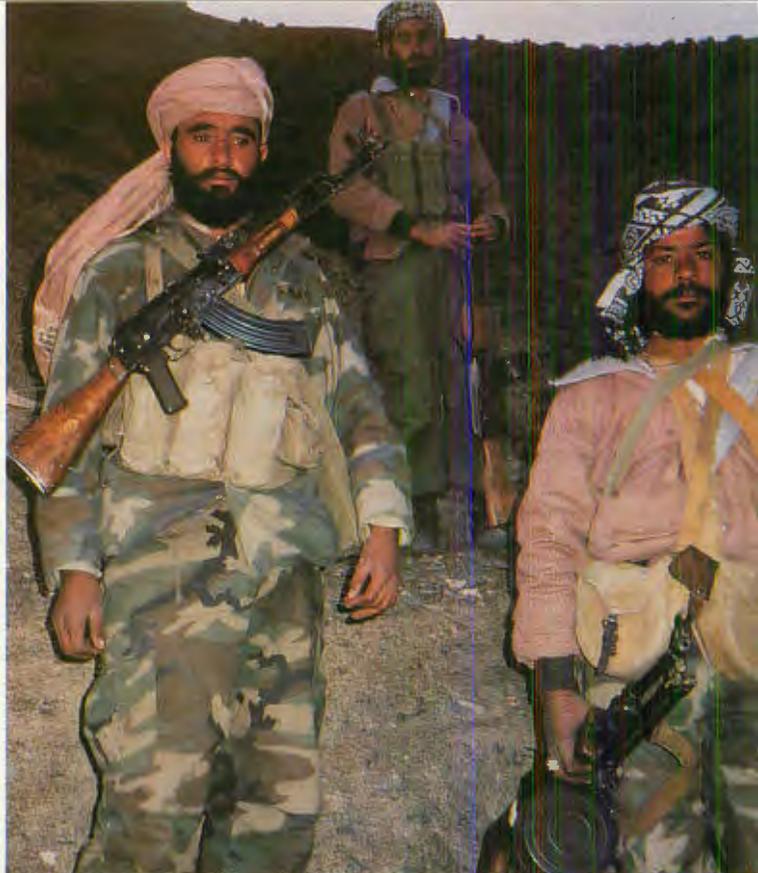
Right. *Op ney, lop ney.* Yeah. I took five lurching steps, pulled off my webbing and handed it to Mutt and Jeff.

"*Salaam a Leikum. Allah Akhbar!* Take this fucker." They giggled, grabbed me by either arm, and we wobbled upward, my webbing carried like a popsicle in Jeff's hand.

And this point, when I had decided a massive coronary would be a blessing, the sound of a Massey-Ferguson came to me from the front of the column. It stopped 50 meters ahead of us, engine ticking over, its large cart looming black in the pre-dawn starlight. Brown, Fanshaw and Hunter climbed on before me and tried to stand up on the oil-slick floor, while the driver turned around and started back to the commo bunker.

We jolted along, barely faster than a jog trot, the oil-slick floor under our boots forcing us to hang on to the cart's top. Gradually, we climbed the wide path atop the ridge leading to the communication bunker. At the summit, we climbed down from the cart and walked the last 500 meters. Once inside the building, we lay down on the carpet and slept.

Daylight woke us. The carpet inside the bunker felt like a waterbed compared with the cement floor of the mosque. I rolled over and felt for my AK. It was gone, as were my webbing, magazines and bins! Great. The only thing I had left was my knife. Brown and Fanshaw were outside, and I could hear Musa, Farouk and the old man arguing. Hunter was still asleep at the end of the bunker. After five minutes the dialogue



Muj fighters with an AKM (left), a 7.62mm RPK light machine gun with 75-round drum magazine (center) and a 7.62mm RPD light machine gun with a 100-round belt carrier. Photo: Robert K. Brown

ceased and Farouk left.

Brown and Mohammed entered the room, followed by a tea boy with a tray. While we ate cakes and drank green tea, Musa stuck his head in the door and announced, "Vehicle comes. We go."

Instead of the Toyota, we walked out to find the tractor and cart that brought us in earlier that morning. In addition to the driver, there were three muj standing on the cart's oily floor, grinning and idly fingering their AKs. Mohammed helped us carry our gear to the transport and shook hands, smiling as we climbed up the cart's sides. He stood and watched us until the driver turned the curve, starting down the ridge line. It didn't take long before the sun's heat turned the cart's metal floor into a hot plate, but it beat the hell out of walking.

Around us the terrain changed to a series of low hills broken by deep draws and an occasional shallow stream of muddy water. Rounding one of the hills, the driver came to a fork in the road. One branch, to the left, rose sharply and continued straight along a wide ridge line; the right fork continued ahead along the deep draw, following a muddy creek. We took the right fork and within 50 yards plunged into a bog hole.

Fanshaw jumped down to the muddy bog side and looked carefully at the tractor's right front tire, embedded up to the middle of the wheel in the sludge. Grinding gears, the muj tried to rock the Massey free. With each gear change, the wheels sank deeper into the glue-like muck, spinning slowly and throwing up plate-sized chunks of brown mud that spattered the other two mujahideen standing near the tractor's front wheels.

An hour and a half passed with no success. Fanshaw, stripped to the waist, grabbed the shovel carried in the cart and tried time and again to dig out the right front wheel, but each time the mud grabbed the tire.

"Fuck it. Let's walk." Paul put on his shirt, called Musa and we started out for the next command post. According to the muj, we only had a hike of some 10 kilometers over a well-defined trail that followed the top of a ridge line and dipped down into the valley where the CP was located.

The day had cooled somewhat, and a gentle breeze blew from time to time down the mountains, making our movement easier and lessening our thirst. Walking was less difficult than that nightmare climb up the canyon the previous night. Paul's map showed a 1,000-meter increase in elevation over the short distance from where we had dismounted at the foot of the canyon to make the forced march back to the CP.

Time passed. The terrain to the north opened up into a valley that ran some 25 clicks to a high range of mountains back further in Afghanistan. Musa walked along at the head of our little column, idly kicking pieces of dirt and sucking on a blade of grass he'd picked from the side of the road. I noticed Fanshaw looking at a folded, 1/1,000,000 topo map he carried. He stopped, took out a compass and shot a bearing to the highest of the peaks across the valley. He shook his head, replaced the map and compass and picked up the pace to catch up with us.

Halfway up the hillside to our left was a small boy guarding a herd of sheep. He watched us closely as we passed beneath him. Musa halted and motioned to Brown. "Wait here. I go talk to boy."

"Ask him how far to the CP." Robert sat down at the side of the road, resting his back against a rock. Fanshaw, Hunter and I sat down beside him. Paul pulled out his map again and turned to Brown. "Bob, he's fucking lost. We should be going north, not east. Look at this."

Brown followed Fanshaw's forefinger as it traced the route we were taking. It moved back to point out the peak and the area where the CP was located across from a river. "Goddamit, you're right."

Brown got up and waited for Musa to stumble down the slope and walk over to us. The Afghan wiped his face with the sleeve of his shirt and pointed to the shepherd.

"He is nomad. He says we go that way." Musa pointed to a road that curved gently down toward the valley floor and slowly northeastward.

"Bullshit, Musa. That'll take all day, and we'll be stuck on that fucking road all night and tomorrow. Don't forget we're low on water, and I've only got one canteen for the five of us." Fanshaw tapped the G.I. canteen attached to his belt.

"No problem. We can go that way." Musa pointed again to the winding road.

Brown shook his finger at the muj. "No, Musa. We go Fanshaw's way."

Musa shrugged and turned away, sucking on a new blade of grass. Hunter and I stood up and waited for Fanshaw to lead out. Taking out his map and compass once again, he checked the bearing to the peak and started off cross-country in determined strides. We were still pretty fresh, but now time was beginning to become a factor. The sun had perceptibly started sinking, and the peak we were marching on was still a good 20 kilometers away.

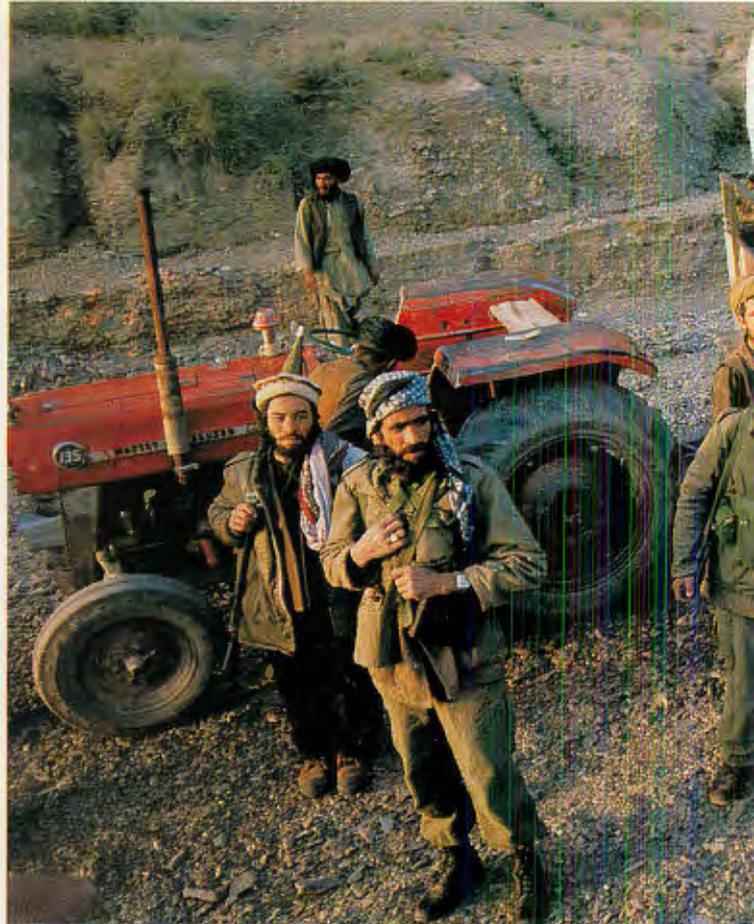
Musa joined Paul at the head of the column, marching along without a care in the world, carrying the only AK in the group. Thirst and hunger now had become more than a minor inconvenience. Instead of a smooth road leading along a ridge, the terrain now led across stubbled fields covered with scrub brush and rocks, dipping down into deep ravines and up the opposite sides where we slipped and slid, sometimes grabbing roots and branches for handholds. Brown suddenly stopped and turned his head northwest.

"Listen!" Faintly at first, then growing louder, came the familiar sound of powerful jet engines. Musa shielded his eyes with his right hand, looking in the direction of the sounds.

Hunter was the first to see them. He pointed and yelled. "MiGs! They're dropping heat flares to stop the Stingers!"

I couldn't make out the jets, but the heat flares were easy to pick up — silvery-white smoke columns against the light blue of the Afghan sky. A few seconds passed, then BOOM, a dull thud in the distance. "They're bombing the village."

Hunter turned toward the distant peak marking the CP's location and began to jog down the slope, shouting. "Come on!



If those bastards catch us out here in the open we've had it!"

Before he had gone 10 feet we were following, running across flat areas, slowing to a quick walk through heavy bush and jogging along crumbling banks of dry gullies. The MiGs were evidently making several passes at the village, but there were no more sounds of bombs impacting, only the noise of jet engines.

We scrambled up a small rise, and ahead of us was a crude hut built of earth and grass, where two nomads were sitting on the ground watching their sheep. At our approach, one of them got up and waited. Musa went ahead and spoke to him, shaking hands. Both men were curious and looked in our direction, sizing us up and watching closely as Musa came back to us and spoke in a low voice. "These people nomads . . . sometimes spies for Russians. Do not speak."

We sat down and rested while Musa walked back to the pair. The elder — short, squat and wizened with Mongolian features — motioned to his companion, who rose and walked toward the hut behind us. We waited a short time before the nomad returned carrying a large tin pitcher. He passed us and stopped before Musa and the other nomad, offering them a drink from the container that had beads of moisture dotting its battered sides. They refused it and pointed towards us. He knelt in front of us and offered the jug to Fanshaw, who took a couple of swallows, then passed it to Hunter who did the same. Brown had his turn and passed it to me. The water was cold and clear, but the fact that we could see the bottom of the pitcher didn't mean there weren't as many bugs doing the backstroke as there'd been in the pond scum cocktails we'd drunk at Sar Kelizoy. Fanshaw used the remainder of the water to fill our canteen, and we started off again, watching the lengthening shadows with growing concern. We had one AK, no food, minimal water for five men, and the barest of communication.

Just how bad Musa's command of English really was surfaced as we stumbled along down another deep ravine. Brown attempted to find out how much farther we had to go before we reached the CP. Failing to get an answer, he asked Musa if he understood the question. "Yes." The Afghan nodded several times. I caught up with Brown. "Robert, can't



Muj preparing to move out for attack. Massey-Ferguson tractors hauling carts are used extensively in southern Afghanistan to move ammo and men. Photo: Robert K. Brown

you see he doesn't understand a fucking thing you're saying?"

"Sure he does. Right Musa?"

Musa nodded his head. "Yes. Yes. No problem."

Brown smirked at me.

"OK, Brown," I replied, "ask him if he's an astronaut."

I waited for the question.

Robert motioned for the muj to slow down. "Musa, are you an astronaut?"

"Yes."

"Ask him if he's a fucking brain surgeon." Maybe Brown was beginning to understand the problem we had.

"Musa, are you a brain surgeon?"

Again the happy smile, a nod of the head and a happy, "Yes."

We humped on, moving faster, watching the light fade.

Fanshaw, at the head of the column, urged us to speed up.

"Come on! You've got to hurry. If we're caught out here at night with no water, no food and one AK, we could be in a world of shit."

I looked at him and at the high peak looming in the distance. "We're already in a world of shit."

Musa nodded. "Yes," he remarked.

Topping the next ridge line, we saw a nomad with a small boy and a good-sized herd of sheep. Musa stopped them, and after a brief conversation in Pashto, the shepherd pointed straight ahead in the direction we were traveling. "OK. No problem. Tahir that way. Not far." He thanked the nomads and broke into a trot.

Off to our right was a familiar-looking hill that faced a river and the small grove of mulberry trees marking the CP area. Fanshaw stopped and waited until I staggered up beside him. "You've got to hurry! We can't go into the camp after dark; the sentries will shoot us."

"Five minute break." I started to sit down.

"Fuck the break. COME ON! If we were in the Legion, I'd

tie a rope around you and drag your ass." He started trotting ahead, glancing over his shoulder to make sure I was still moving.

Musa was well ahead of us, starting down a steep incline, when a shout sounded from atop a barren hill to our immediate right. Hunter, walking ahead of me, stopped short and froze, his head turned toward the summit. I followed his gaze and saw a muj. He was pointing an AK at Hunter. The CLICK-CLACK of a chambering round came faintly over Musa's answer. After what had happened at Sar Kelizoy this would be in character: survive that and get shot by a trigger-happy sentry here.

Yells between Musa and the sentry went back and forth for several minutes. Hunter stood frozen in place. Fanshaw was kneeling. Brown was spitting Skoal. I was evaluating how quickly I could reach a ditch 20 feet down the hill. Musa turned and waved his hand, motioning us up the trail leading to the sentry. "No problem, everything fine. We go."

Fanshaw led the way behind Musa, with Hunter bringing up the rear. As we descended the reverse slope, dusk deepened into night. Had we been an hour later, we'd probably wound up talking to the ants and listening to AK rounds snapping around our heads.

Chai, oranges, cakes, and the familiar smell of the lean-to made us feel at home. Brown and Hunter celebrated by making repeated runs to test the effectiveness of the Flagyl. Fanshaw cursed Musa under his breath, and I scratched the first of 800 flea bites that were now beginning to surface all over my body.

Tahir was nowhere to be seen, so Musa was sent down the hill to the CP building to find him and, if possible, arrange for a vehicle. He stayed for 20 minutes, then came scrambling up the trail, a smile on his face.

"A vehicle will take us back to Quetta in the morning.

Inshallah."

Here we go again. It had all the trappings of Jara and Sar Kelizoy, only this time we weren't armed and had nothing to threaten anyone with. Fanshaw walked up to Musa and put his face six inches from the Afghan's. "Musa. We all go to Quetta tomorrow morning! No *inshallah!* We go!"

"OK, yes. No problem."

I turned to Fanshaw. "Ask him if he's been on the moon."

After rooster-reveille, we packed our remaining gear and finished *chai*, bread and cake-flies. Musa, who had slept at the CP, came to the bottom of the hill and yelled to us, motioning for us to come and pointing to a Toyota parked near the CP. We broke all previous records in getting down the hill. By the time we reached the bottom there were several muj gathered around the truck, talking and watching us move toward them, curious as usual about the "infidels."

Ramadan had not yet ended, and I noticed the driver kneeling on his prayer rug a short distance away. His back toward us, his head toward Mecca, he was deeply involved in prayer and oblivious to anyone. I leaned against the door on the passenger's side and glanced into the cab. Over the rearview mirror was a thick spray of flowers, firmly wedged between the mirror and the windshield. I turned to Hunter, whose knowledge of the muj and the Moslem religion is far superior to ours.

"What're those flowers for?"

Penn looked in the cab and smelled them. "Those are chrysanthemums. They've got a religious meaning for the muj. Don't screw with them — the driver would really get pissed, and you know what these people are like."

"No problem." I walked away from the Toyota to take a last look at the CP and our "home." Finally the driver walked around the Toyota, opened the door and crawled in behind the wheel. He glanced up at the sacred flowers and sang out, "*ALLAH AKHBARR!*"

Brown wedged himself next to the driver. I sat half against him and braced myself against the door, my arm resting on the top of the rolled-down window. The driver cranked the engine

Continued on page 74



BANDITS

Recently, certain top Bahamian politicians have been accused of taking payoffs from drug smugglers. While these allegations may or may not be true, there is *one* group of Bahamian officials that dopers avoid at all costs. In the last few years agreements reached between

the government of the Bahamas and the United States have established a protocol permitting Customs fliers to land on Bahamian islands in hot pursuit. As part of this agreement, U.S. Customs planes must carry a team of Bahamian police and a U.S. DEA agent.

The Bandits, as the Bahamian police

are known, are earning a lot of respect and a great deal of admiration for their drug work. "They do all the work. We just get them there," long-time Customs pilot, John-Jack, told me.

"They're tough and they're good and they play by a different set of rules," added AIO Wayne.

"I'm warning all dopers: Stay away from the Bandits," Joe Tedeschi, a Customs supervisor, said.

All agree this protocol between the Bahamas and the United States has limited the safe harbors for dopers. "If our lives are not in jeopardy, we're not permitted to shoot at fleeing dopers. The Bandits'll drop them if they try to run," says another AIO.

Customs crews tell of a big dope drop in March when 18 suspects were rounded up. One boat broke and headed out to sea with the Customs Blackhawk in pursuit. A Bandit fired his Sten gun across the bow of the fleeing boat. It did not stop. He fired into the bow of the boat, and the doper dropped from ricochets to both knees, but the boat kept going. The Bandit then fired a full magazine into the outboards. The boat stopped.

Dopers don't get away from Bahamian Bandits. Suspect skipper is given first aid by U.S. DEA agents.



DRUG WAR ACES

SOF Flies with Elite U.S. Customs Air Branch

Text & Photos by
Marty Casey

LEFT: "Big Ed the Drug Warrior" in front of Customs Air Blackhawk emblazoned with "kill" decals. Rifle is H&K Model 33KA3, in 5.56mm NATO.

"WE are in a war — a war we are losing," a top U.S. Customs official recently stated. He added, "The last war we won ended in 1945. Since then we had Korea and Vietnam. The American people never understood nor cared about what happened on the other side of the world. They don't realize it yet, but drugs are having a much longer lasting effect on our nation than any war. Drugs could signal the termination of our status as a superpower."

Many U.S. agencies are involved in the war against drugs. On the federal level are the FBI, DEA, U.S. Customs and the Coast Guard. Almost every local police force or county sheriff's office has a narcotics squad. Narcotics work can range from the tedium of a long-term surveillance to the heart-pumping high of a good take down. One of the most, if not *the* most, exciting types of narcotics work is that carried out by U.S. Customs Air Branch.

"This is, without a single doubt, the finest flying outside of combat," U.S. Customs Miami Air Branch Chief Roger Garland said. He added, "And, it's almost as much fun." Garland holds the Distinguished Flying Cross among other honors from his service as an EC-47 pilot (Air Force EW version of the old Dakota) in Vietnam.

"Ripcord . . . 35, give me bogie-dope."
"35 . . . Ripcord. Your target is at your 197 for 15 miles, 120 knots. Angels one-

FLORIDA FREELANCER

After a stint in the U.S. Marines and with *Time* magazine, long-time friend of SOF Marty Casey is now a Florida-based freelancer, covering the action in south Florida and the Caribbean.

point-five (altitude 1,500 feet). Heading 015." The Citation jet swung to the left, pinning a journalist hard to his seat. Minutes later we were closing on a twin Aero Commander which had turned south, heading

A BOY AND HIS DOG

When inexperience is mixed with inattention, stupidity and incompetence, the result can be a disaster. Late one night in April, we were in the Citation looking for a target that had passed Fort Lauderdale, flown out over the Bahamas, disappeared for 20 minutes over Andros Island and then reappeared, heading west-northwest. It looked as though it were a dooper who had dropped down to Andros to pick up dope from a stash. We quickly located the target 50 miles southeast of Miami.

"41 — 35, He's yanking and banking all over the sky."

"35 — 41, Maybe he's on nose candy — he's banging the compass — angels is erratic."

"35 — Ripcord, your target is squawking on the emergency frequency."

The airbase tower contacted the target who said he was lost, his compass was out, and he had about eight gallons of fuel left. The target then was advised that a Cessna 404 in the area would guide him into Tamiami Airport. John-Jack in

away from its appointed dope drop zone. Minutes before, a U.S. Coast Guard Falcon jet had been following the target, but was having trouble keeping from overrunning the intruder.

At one point the Coast Guard pilot was heard saying, "He's started a 360. I don't think I can turn with him. I'm sure he's seen me. I think he dropped something; he dropped something." We lost precious minutes circling over the spot where the Coast Guard pilot thought he saw the target make his drop. When a Customs Blackhawk came on station to look for bales, we broke off and sped after the target.

"Tally-ho the target," cried Vickie, the AIO (Air Interdiction Officer), as she acquired the target on the F-16 radar. "We have a Judy," she said as the target appeared on the FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) screen in front of her aft station.

Apparently, the target was aware that he was not alone. We stayed close on his six o'clock for a few minutes.

"This turkey must have a blue box," (an electric instrument that detects radar and radio transmissions and can determine signal strength), said Carl the PIC (Pilot in Charge), who two years ago pushed F-4s for the Air Force. "Let's take a closer look."

As we came abeam the Commander, we could see bales stacked up to the ceiling of the light twin. The co-pilot had his right arm up trying to hide his face. He dropped his guard just as Carl eased the Citation forward a little and glanced back. "I know those two turkeys. Busted them in the Bahamas two months ago. Didn't have enough evidence to hold them."

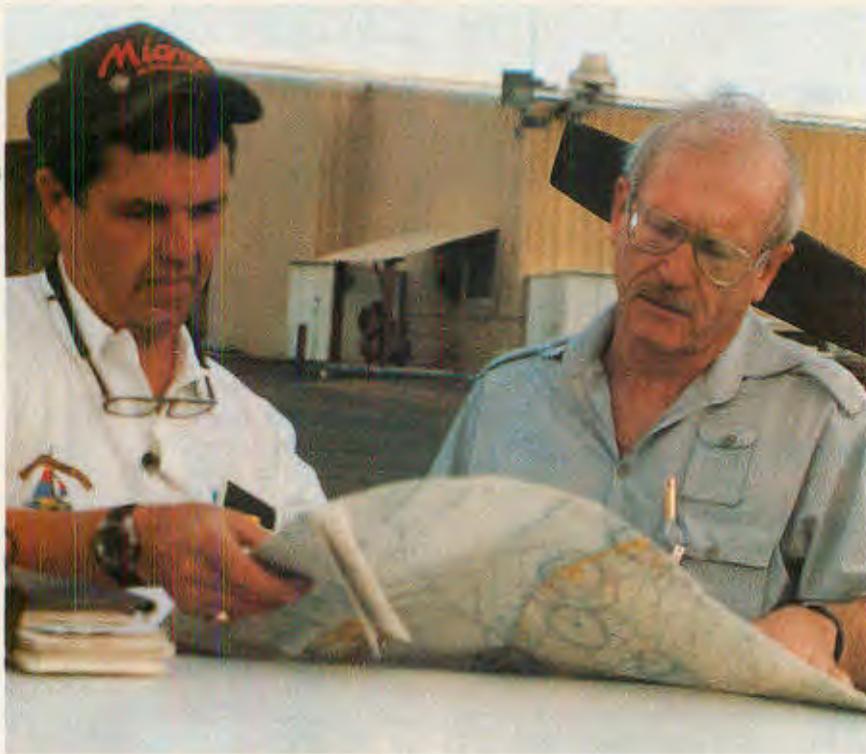
"Twenty-fourth parallel coming up. We have to break off," said Rick the co-pilot, a

41 took the lead. We broke off when they were on final into the airport.

John-Jack went into Tamiami with the target, where he and his two AIOs, Wayne and Bill, searched the plane. Finding no dope, they talked to the two-man crew. The pilot said they were bound for a veterinary clinic in Fort Lauderdale with a sick Labrador retriever. They had missed Fort Lauderdale and upon descending saw nothing but water. They kept circling thinking they were over Lake Okeechobee. When they climbed to 1,500 feet they saw the glow of Miami and headed for it. When their fuel was about exhausted the pilot punched in the emergency code on his transponder.

Although the agents wore caps and jackets boldly emblazoned "U.S. Customs" the pilot told the lawmen again and again how happy he was that the *Coast Guard* had been out patrolling and had saved them from a watery death.

When they returned to base Bill laughed and said, "The smartest one on board was the one in the back, barking."



SOF publisher Robert K. Brown and Customs pilot John-Jack check maps at Air Branch portal before familiarization flight from Homestead AFB.

C-130 pilot in the Air Force Reserve. Flying south from Homestead Air Force Base, the 24th parallel marks the start of the Cuban ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone). Aircraft cannot enter the zone without prior clearance and Fidel just won't give the OK to Customs planes in pursuit. It's bad for business.

"Another one escapes to Cuba," Vickie said. Like others involved in this war, she knew that Cuba has long been a refuge for dopers. When we returned to base, Vickie's statement was confirmed. Fat Albert, the radar balloon at Cudjoe Key, kept its electronic eye on the target until it landed at the military airfield in Varadero Beach, Cuba.

On the ground SOF publisher Robert K. Brown waited in the ops room. When

Brown was told what had happened he looked at me and said, "I think we have the start of a story."

In the operations room at Miami Air Branch the walls are covered with large-scale charts and duty schedules. At one end of the room a computer spits out the latest weather maps. A large board lists recent activities, complete with registration numbers of aircraft, location of seizures, amount of dope seized, number of arrests, arresting officers, and type of aircraft seized. A door at the west end of the room opens to reveal the weapons storage locker. Inside are racks of shotguns, M16s, H&K Model 33s, Walther MPKs, and Sten guns (carried by

"Passengers" in Piper Apache gave Customs Air Branch a brief scare until they realized they were nothing more than styrofoam mannequins wearing Prince Charles and Lady Di rubber masks — sitting on hundreds of pounds of dope.

Firearms instructor "Corky" shows the boys at Customs Air Branch how to shoot. Weapons training is intense, thorough, continual — and necessary.

the Bandits — see sidebar, page 50). All weapons are clean, rust-free and ready for use. At the ODO's (Operations Duty Officer) desk a small switchboard handles normal traffic while two red phones, hanging on the ODO's desk, are the harbingers of action. One of the red phones is a direct line to the Air Force Base control tower. It's used to get a quick clearance for takeoff. Aircraft must be airborne within eight minutes of the CDO's (Command Duty Officer) call to launch. The other is a direct line to C-3 (Command, Control and Communications). This is the line used for relaying the news that a target has been located. Everything stops when this phone rings; this is the one that starts the adrenaline pumping.

The midnight to 0800 shift can be dull





beauties could be the law.

Wayne, a former Special Forces trooper, did undercover police work in Georgia before joining Air Branch. "Undercover work in Georgia was hairy, but pales compared to chasing a doper through a thunderstorm, landing on an unlighted field and hoping there's only one or two bad guys out there."

Six-foot, five-inch, 270-pound "Big Ed the Drug Warrior" spent four years with the 8th Special Forces Group before joining the Customs Sky Marshall Program 17 years ago. After two and a half years flying, he spent the next 10 on horseback chasing dopers in Arizona. Then he rode the Blue Lightning boats for two years.

Smokey did a tour in Vietnam with the Air Cav before joining Customs, and Corky was a park ranger before becoming a marksmanship instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Complex. Now she shows the boys at Air Branch how to shoot.

AIOs are not just cops who fly to work. The primary duty of an AIO is to operate the sensor equipment and locate the target; first with the advanced F-16 radar, then put the FLIR on the target and hold that target on both the radar and the FLIR. When a doper is aware that he is being pursued he runs his plane through thunderheads, and climbs, dives, turns — anything to shake the pursuers. When this happens training and teamwork make the difference.

Most new hires have previous law enforcement experience. Nevertheless, it's back to school. Eight weeks of criminal investigation school are followed by eight weeks of Customs basic investigator's school, both held at Glen Cove, Georgia. A three-week aviation enforcement course at Marana, Arizona, is next. Then two weeks at Corpus Christi, Texas, where sensor training is given. After that, two days are devoted to altitude chamber work and egressing aircraft in case of water ditching or a crash and burn. When a new hire graduates he returns to Miami Air Branch to find that it's not over. In-house training starts. There

Another dope plane goes swimming in the shoals of west central Bahamas. Millions in planes are just a business expense when you're running billions in dope.

and boring if no dopers are detected. For a journalist this is a time of few distractions, a time when it is possible to probe and peer inside the minds of people who are more than a few steps ahead of the crowd. Over a cup of steaming hot coffee one finds that this group of men and women is unique. Conversation covers different facets of their job; the current hot topic is whether to shoot or not to shoot.

Recently, Commissioner of Customs William Von Raab requested that the National Drug Policy Board take up the question of whether Customs Air should have the right to shoot at fleeing drug planes. The board issued an emphatic answer: NO! What we have read in the local rag has not come near to explaining the full story. Yes, Customs wants to shoot down planes. But no, they are not looking for blanket approval of a policy of hip-shooting. Over those hot mugs of coffee pilots and AIOs expressed what the policy meant to them.

"We want to disable only those aircraft that we *know*, not just *suspect*, are carrying drugs and only those who cannot be captured in any other legal manner," says a longtime member of Air Branch. "There are a lot of times that a druggie drops a load on a key or out at sea to waiting boats and we have troops in the area that can grab bundles and verify the contents. If the druggie leaves Colombia with a load, makes his drop and returns to his base, there is no way we can stop him. He can do that month after month, year after year. Yet each time he does this more lives are wasted, more people are corrupted and we lose another round. We have to take this dilemma to the congressmen, better yet the people. They can make Congress sit up and take notice."



"This is the only federal law enforcement agency that hires pilots first, for their flying skills." Customs Air pilots practice close pursuit flying.

Air Interdiction Officers

AIO Vickie was a Panama Canal Zone police officer until, as she says, "Jimmy Carter gave away the canal and my job." She started at Customs driving a cigarette boat. She and her female partner caught many an unsuspecting doper who thought there was no way the two bikini-clad



"This is, without a single doubt, the finest flying outside of combat — and it's almost as much fun."

is an additional two-week sensor course run by Vickie. Weapons training is continual. All weapons carriers must qualify every quarter. Those who don't qualify had better start looking for another job. New hires are accompanied by experienced officers who supervise them and fine-tune them in the skills not taught in school. Additionally, AIOs are required to complete 10 hours of pilot ground school. On one hand it's for familiarization; on the other, it's for that rare occasion when it might be necessary for an AIO to aid a stricken pilot.

The training pays big dividends. It's a pleasure to have a headset on and eavesdrop on the chatter as a target is acquired. The pilot is ever ready to help out the AIO and vice-versa:

AIO: "He's climbing."

Pilot: "I got him. Go wide, he's banking to the right."

AIO: "Got him."

It's not only for efficiency in tracking the target, but the interplay between the front and back of the aircraft can prevent tragedy. A target may have spent hours doing 90 knots at angels 200, the normal speed and altitude for a drop. When the AIO spots the door opening he immediately warns the pilot so that the bales don't get the tracker. A 90-pound marijuana bale might hurt a little slamming through the cockpit.

The Pilots

John was in the Marine Corps for nine years and flew a number of different aircraft including OV-10s, T-5s and Harriers. Bob was a Marine helicopter pilot for 11 years. Mark and Vic spent a couple of years in Central America in Army Special Operations flying Otters and OV-10s, respectively. Robbie was an F-4 pilot in the Air Force for eight years. Big Larry flew hard and soft rice for the Agency in southeast Asia. Bill flew just about anything with wings or rotors before deciding the Air Branch was for him. Roger, the unofficial chief pilot, John-Jack, Vinnie and Red were at Miami Air Branch in the old days when a two-man team rode a Cobra. One flew and the other would jump out and bust the bad guys.

"This is the only federal law enforcement agency that hires pilots first, for their flying skills," says Larry Karson, a supervisor at Air Branch. The former Army paratrooper looked me straight in the eye, pointed his finger for emphasis, and said, "You know you're flying with the best."

Air Branch pilots are selected rather than hired. Many are called, but few are chosen. Pilots also attend the eight-week criminal investigators course followed by the eight-week Customs basic investigator's course, three weeks at Marana studying aviation enforcement, and the two-week sensor

school at Corpus Christi. After those 21 weeks, pilots attend flight school for specific aircraft in the Customs fleet. But before they spend a day pounding the books they spend a lot of time being interviewed. After clearing the interviews the job seeker is tested. Customs has special clearance from the FAA to run as close to a target as necessary, to enter areas of bad weather in order to pursue a narcotics trafficker, and to generally violate the hell out of normal flight rules. A prospective pilot is taken on a checkride to ascertain if he or she has the right stuff. "They've got to be able to yank and bank with the best of them, not losing the target or their stomach," says Jim Dingfelder, director of Air Operations East. He adds, "There's a large number who come in from that first checkride, jump out of the plane, jump into their cars and disappear."

The red phone rang at 1523 hours. C-3 had a target south of Cuba. The target had made a brief stop in Jamaica. Vinnie Tirado, the CDO, placed the Citation, the Blackhawk and a Cessna 404 on standby. A few minutes later Tirado called C-3 and advised that Jacksonville should be alerted. "It looks like a New York Express," he told me. "You want to fly?"

"Damn right," I replied. Vinnie got an okay for me to fly from Roger, the Blackhawk PIC. Vinnie explained what a New York Express was. When the target stopped in Jamaica it was assumed that it had refueled and would head almost due north from Cuba, staying well off the U.S. coast until it paralleled the Carolinas or Virginia. Then it would take a westerly heading and come in anywhere from Carolina to Connecticut.

"You will be with the bust team on the Blackhawk. It'll be your best chance for some action." It wasn't until the target emerged off the north coast of Cuba that John-Jack launched his 404. Aboard he carried two Bandits, a DEA agent and a Customs AIO. Rich and Rick took the Citation with Jim on the sensor gear. By the time the 404 and the Citation picked up the target north of the 24th parallel, the Blackhawk was 90 miles north of the base hoping to get a leg up on the intruder.

We monitored radio traffic and heard the AIO on the Citation call out, "There's three boats down there . . . he's slowed down . . . his door is opening . . . the boats are making a run for it . . . one is heading east, one north, one west . . . he's dropping his load, he's dropping his load." The AIO and anyone watching the FLIR counted the bundles as they were pushed out the door. "One, two, three, four . . ." The count went to 21. Even though the boats had to split, the target still made two distinct passes on the drop zone and headed north toward Bimini. John-Jack in the 404 suckered the target by landing in Bimini before the target got there. The target landed, rolled to the end of the runway and turned. By the time the target was fully turned the ex-Marine was

THE MARINES WHO DO NOT LAND

You might know the Marines would want to get a piece of this action. One of the few constitutional provisions allowing the armed forces to be assigned civilian law enforcement duty is in support of U.S. Customs. For the past few years OV-10 Broncos and pilots from the Marine Corps Air Station at New River, North Carolina, have been rotating in on a continuing basis to assist Miami Air Branch. The Rockwell-built Bronco is particularly well-suited for this type of work, as are the pilots and crews. Tracking dopers in the air requires the ability to fly low and slow. The twin turbo-prop Bronco with a pilot forward and an aerial observer aft can reach a cruising speed of 200 knots, but, more important, can do less than 100 knots and maintain stable flight. The FLIR-equipped Broncos, which are unarmed in this role, can stay airborne for more than four hours.

"Our mission is aerial observation

and surveillance and this gives us real-time training." Lieutenant Colonel James Eicher, CO of VM-1, said. "This type of training is a big plus for us. We can get the maximum out of both aircraft and crews because the targets are real. Our tours at Miami Air Branch keep our crews right up on their stumps.

"No," he responded in answer to my question, "we don't land to assist in arrests. Our mission ends when the bad guys go to ground."

The Marine crews don't do any bragging about their role in south Florida; Customs does that for them. "These guys are good," says Supervisor Larry Karson. "They hang onto a target like a pit bull, never letting go until we are on station." Karson tells of a target that tried to shake his Marine pursuers by flying between the skyscrapers in downtown Miami. "That Marine stayed with him all the way, back and forth through the tall buildings. Finally the target gave up and landed at Opa Locka. We landed right behind him to make the bust. It's a pleasure to work with professionals."

Suspect is taken down, agents converge on plane.

blocking his way. Within seconds the Bandits were out and the bodies were taken down. That night a Coast Guard cutter recovered 18 duffle bags of cocaine and three sacks of marijuana. Apparently Jamaica had not been a refueling stop, but a pickup of the three sacks of grass. We returned to base to await the conquering heroes.

At 1720 the following evening a three-man Customs crew from New Orleans left Homestead in a CHET (Customs High Endurance Tracker) to return to their base. John-Jack and his Bandits were in Nassau giving statements on the previous night's bust. It looked like it might be a quiet night. It wasn't.

Twenty-five minutes later the red phone buzzed. Larry Karson, the CDO, spoke to C-3. An Air Force AWACS from the 963 AWACS Detachment had a plane up looking at Florida's Gulf Coast. Lo and behold, they spotted a slow-moving target, wave hopping at 50 feet, 60 miles south and west of Marco Island, Florida. The 963 detachment would stay on and advise. Karson placed the Citation on standby. John-Jack, who was now airborne between Nassau and Miami, was alerted and the New Orleans crew was alerted to start "orbiting" their current location and to be ready to intercept.

At 1925 the target turned east, still at 50 feet, and headed through a slot between Naples and Fort Myers. When the target was inland it climbed to 500 feet as if on a VFR flight to Miami. Twenty minutes later we were out over the Everglades. Rich and Rick were at the controls of the Citation. Jim and Pete, working the sensor gear, were scanning for the target.

"Tally-ho the target," Jim said. Pete, a senior AIO, was supervising Jim, a recent hire. "He's at two o'clock low."

I made the mistake of picking that moment to reach over and pick up some film that had fallen to the deck. Rich threw the nimble jet into a tight turn that straightened me right up against the seat back and pushed my stomach out through my ears.

Rick was working the radios. "We have a Judy," he announced after he confirmed that the AIO had the target on the FLIR. The New Orleans crew also was on the target. Within minutes we were approaching Miami where we were joined by John-Jack and his Bandits. The target headed south, passing over Tamiami Airport then Homestead General. John-Jack was ready to follow them in if they landed. They didn't. The target then headed over the coast out into the Florida straights.

"He's climbing, he's climbing," yelled Jim. "He's passing through angels one-point-five. He's now at angels two, angels three, angels three-point-five. He's slowing down; his door is open. He's dropping his load. He's dropping."

The count got up to eight. Jim and Pete confirmed there were no boats down there to receive the bundles as the target turned west



AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT

Dopers themselves provide a large number of aircraft to the Customs Air Branch. The Cessna 400 series has long been a favorite of the dopers due to its long range and heavy load capabilities. As the number one plane used to transport dope, it is also the number one plane confiscated. Hence, the Miami Air Branch uses five seized Cessna 404s as bust planes. The 404 will carry a pilot and up to seven armed agents. Aside from some added communications gear the 404 is no different than the day it was grabbed.

While the 404 is the main fixed-wing agent carrier, no one can throw any rocks at the Customs Blackhawk helicopters. Twenty thousand pounds of whirling steel and aluminum coming at you at 160 knots is enough to make even the most hardened smuggler throw up his hands and pack it in. We were told of a recent bust where the dopers landed on a Bahamian cay. As the Blackhawk following had no Bahamian Bandits aboard, it could not land. Not to worry. The Blackhawk pilot placed his craft directly over the offender and hovered. The rotor wash was so strong that the dopers could not muster the strength to open the doors against it. Fifteen minutes later another Blackhawk carrying the Bandits arrived. Mission accomplished. About the only modification given to the Blackhawks, which are property of the U.S. Army, is to add internal, long-range tanks. These big brutes can easily, if not comfortably, carry eight agents plus a crew of two on a very long range operation.

The 404s and the Blackhawks are

backed up by a C-12, a Naval model of the Beech King Air. The C-12 is usually airborne only if the 404s or the Blackhawks are unavailable.

The Piper Cheyenne and the Cessna Citation round out the fleet. Both of these craft are equipped with very sophisticated sensor gear. Both have F-16 radar which is classified. What can be said is that the radar is able to give speed, altitude and heading on multiple targets. It is a real joy to watch the AIO work the FLIR (forward looking infrared) on a target. The FLIR, a passive infrared system, seeks out heat sources and presents an outline of a target to the operator, and to the cockpit crew via a repeater. All the while the image is being recorded on a video tape system in the aircraft. You can actually see the door being opened and bundles of dope leaving the plane. In fact, the FLIR is so sensitive that AIO Vickie once was able to direct ground agents to two dopers hiding in a clump of bushes. The FLIR was picking up their body heat.

The Customs-modified Cheyenne is called a CHET (Customs High Endurance Tracker). "With the sensor gear and the long-range modifications, the CHET is a long-legged, all-seeing demon to the dopers," supervisor Larry Karson said. "The Citation will get out and go and outrun and outmaneuver most doper planes," he added.

Capable of speeds in excess of 300 knots, the Citation can quickly acquire a target and stay with it, whether it's going fast or slow. Because of additional tanks and the sensor gear both the CHET and Citation are flying with special FAA waivers. If the Citation takes off with a full load it has to stay aloft for at least an hour to burn off fuel because it's too heavy to land safely.



With Customs Air Branch hot on his tail, this suspected dooper opens the cabin door. Photo: courtesy U.S. Customs

and headed toward Miami. Rich radioed the coordinates of the drop to a Coast Guard cutter in the vicinity. It would be their task to recover the dunked dope.

We watched the FLIR as the target landed at Homestead General, followed closely by John-Jack. Rich had the Citation in one of those belly-bursting tight orbits, putting us over the target at all times. We watched John-Jack pin the target in the southwest corner of the airport and saw five warm spots (FLIR readings) — two Customs AIOs, a DEA agent, and two Bahamian Bandits — quickly exit the 404 and surround the target. From the air we could see the blue and red lights of two carloads of Dade County deputies who had been called in to assist. After ascertaining that all was OK, we returned to base.

Larry, the CDO, was waiting. "Jump in your car. If you hurry you can be at Homestead General in 10 minutes." When I arrived the crew of the target Piper Navajo was wearing Customs bracelets. John-Jack and the locals were searching the target, finding four hidden fuel tanks. All in all a very good night's work. At shift change we all retired to the Circle K, a convenience store just outside the west gate. Larry bought the first of a few 12 packs.

"The girls at the Circle K like it when we have a good night," said Rick, the co-pilot. "The stickup men stay away."

BELOW LEFT: This Apache dope runner was adorned with stick-on phoney numbers.

BELOW RIGHT: Counting the spoils of an Air Branch bust. Seized were one Piper Apache, one house, two vehicles, one hangar, and mounds of dope.

Customs Air backs off a little, as *whatever* comes out of that door — the barrel of a gun, or a barrel of dope — will be a flight hazard. It was a bale of dope. Working in concert with Customs Air, the bale will probably be picked up by a Customs boat or the U.S. Coast Guard. Photo: courtesy U.S. Customs

The tethered balloons swaying high above the southeast Florida coast at 10,000 feet looking down for hundreds of miles are a necessary component of the war on drugs. Their value is immeasurable. But when one of the the balloons is down for maintenance a huge hole opens, a hole that is hard to plug. On 18 May Fat Albert went down for repairs. The hole was open. That morning a Blackhawk from the Jacksonville Air Branch, a Customs P3 Orion and E2C, and three Broncos from the Marine OV-10 Squadron had flown in to participate in a special operation planned for the weekend





docks for weigh-in. Last year Customs seized five doper boats masquerading as tournament fishermen. The extra aircraft arrived at the right time. The hole caused by the repair of Fat Albert was plugged. The P3 was launched to the southeast, the E2C to the southwest.

At 1855 the red phone rang. C-3 reported that the E2C had a target south of Marco Island on Florida's west coast. The target was at 200 feet, headed north. Harry Betz, Miami Special Operations Chief, was coordinating the activities of the extra aircraft. Betz sent the Miami Blackhawk northwest to get the jump on the target if it continued heading north. He asked Doug, the Jacksonville Blackhawk PIC, if he could squeeze in a fat journalist. We were airborne six minutes later.

By the time the target, a Piper Apache, broke east north of Fort Meyers we were north of Palm Beach, running back and forth along the beach. The Citation, which had gone in for a closer look, reported that there were three souls aboard the target: a pilot and two passengers in the rear.

The Citation vectored us in close to the target which now was on a final approach to

an airpark, a small private strip surrounded by luxurious houses in Delray Beach. We were 17 seconds behind the target when we started our approach at 160 knots. Now, you don't stop 20,000 pounds of helicopter on a dime. We started to shimmy and shake and oscillate as Doug brought the monster in. There were four of us in the rear seats facing aft. I looked at everyone's face hoping to see a look of confidence. I didn't. At the moment when panic was about to overtake me I remembered the quick briefing Doug had given moments before boarding the bird. "When we go in, we go in fast in order to preclude the target from thinking. You're going to feel like we are about to crash. We aren't."

Seconds later, we hit the grass strip next to a private hangar. "Go, Go, Go!" yelled Meek, the Blackhawk co-pilot. In a flash seven agents were out the doors running toward a very stunned pilot. The target had pulled directly into his private hangar, shut the engine down, got out and was letting the door down when the agents surrounded him, his house and his hangar. I was the last out, but out in time to see Wayne, Billie and Garry on either side of the pilot. He had his hands up trying to grab a piece of the sky.

"Down, on your face," yelled Wayne. The pilot obediently went down to converse with the ants. Garry, the case agent, ran over and hauled the hangar door back up. Then he and Wayne went inside the hangar, looking for the passengers.

"My heart went up in my throat and stuck there when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw those two still sitting there in the back seat," Wayne said. The former Georgia cop and Special Forces trooper looked at the strange scene and realized something was amiss. Closer inspection revealed that the two back seat passengers were nothing more than styrofoam head/shoulder mannequins adorned with rubber masks of Prince Charles and Lady Di. Rubber royalty was sitting atop 12 very full and very suspicious duffle bags. Wayne pulled one out, reached inside and, like a magician, displayed a loaf-like package. He pierced the package, revealing the classic white powdery substance. A testing kit was used to confirm that the substance was cocaine. The DEA was alerted and on their way. The count was 12 duffle bags, each containing 25 kilos of high grade cocaine, 300 kilos total. The DEA placed the wholesale value at three million.



of the 20th. A fishing tournament was scheduled that had drawn more than 700 boats — the kind of event dopers dream of. They mix in with the fishing fleet and come in at the close of the day as the fleet goes to the

ABOVE: Forced down in Bahamian shoals, this plane loaded with dope immediately became a tourist attraction ... and local salvage opportunity. Photo: courtesy U.S. Customs



Picked up on radar long before it entered U.S. territory, this Piper Apache was followed by Customs Blackhawks to a private strip in fashionable Delray Beach.

As the pilot shut her down and was closing the hangar door, he found himself surrounded by seven agents and looking down the barrel of a gun.

Customs Air operations have been successful, and the Miami Air Branch is having another banner year. In 1987 Miami Air Branch seized 16,000 pounds of cocaine (about 160 million dollars wholesale if sold in large quantities). From 1 January to 15 May 1988, Miami Air Branch has brought in 82 arrests, seized nine vessels, one vehicle, nine weapons, 46 aircraft, 10,902 pounds of marijuana and 14,413 pounds of cocaine. ✕



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT



**Text & Photos
by David Fallon**

FM for Fast Roping

GRENADA, Tuesday, 25 October 1983: In the early morning hours, a small contingent of American Special Forces operatives fast roped onto a tiny beach landing zone on the Caribbean island of Grenada. Their mission: Rescue the survivors of a downed Army Blackhawk helicopter. The lightning speed of their fast rope insertion enabled the rescue team to successfully extract the survivors and avoid the overwhelming fire of the hostile force pursuing the party to their extraction point.

Fast rope technique was developed to overcome the main disadvantage of rappelling, which is the need to be physically connected to the rope by the rappelling rig during an insertion. The time needed to hook up and release from the rappelling rig was unacceptable on rapid insertion missions where every extra second over the target increases the risk element for the insertion team, the aircraft, and the success of the mission. The answer to the problem was to eliminate the mechanical hookup.

The fast rope is a thick, soft rope that the assault team slides down much like the firemen's pole in a firehouse. Descent is controlled only by hand friction on the fast rope, which requires a mini-

Coiling fast rope for next elevator insertion. White nylon weave at the end of the rope is for extraction purposes.

imum of physical strength but a high level of training for proficiency.

Once proficiency is achieved, fast rope insertions are blindingly fast, even compared to rappelling. The Army Rangers can deploy a platoon-size element from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter in less than 20 seconds and a squad can be deployed from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in eight seconds — only one quarter of the time it would take to deploy the same size forces by rappelling. This technique has almost unlimited application in a wide variety of combat insertion scenarios. Today, every troop-carrying rotary wing aircraft in the U.S. military inventory is capable of being rigged for the Fast Rope Insertion and Extraction System (FRIES).

After having been thoroughly battle-tested, fast roping is now in use by every major special operations group in the world. The United States Army's Delta Force, Rangers, and Special Forces; elite Air Force Pararescue Teams, Navy SEALs, and the FBI Hos-

FAST ROPE FIRST TEAM

David A. Fallon knows whereof he speaks when it comes to fast roping. He spent five years with 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger) as their senior fast rope instructor, and his current military assignment recently took him to Spain where he trained Spanish Legionnaires in the technique. We welcome his expert comments on the subject in his first contribution to SOF.

Fast ropers demonstrate proper body position as they look below to the target.

tage Rescue Team all maintain an extremely high level of proficiency in the technique. Notable among our allies, the British Special Air Service (SAS), and German GSG-9 have also adopted fast rope. In fact, it was the SAS who pioneered the technique and instructed the U.S. military on its applications.

Today, the most common aircraft used by U.S. forces is the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. Because of this a fast rope system design is manufactured specifically for this configuration and is deployed to all Blackhawks in the military's special operations aviation units. Less common aircraft have custom designed rigs which suit their particular configuration.

The Blackhawk rig uses an "H" bar design which is mounted to the ceiling of the troop compartment by four bolts (eight if an optional seatbar is installed) and is located conveniently out of the way. Two extension bars slide out of the "H" bar sleeves which lock into position by two retention pins on each side of the "H" bar. When locked in place, the bars then protrude out of both sides of the aircraft and are ready for the fast ropes to be attached to a quick release mechanism.

The systems for dual main rotor aircraft, like the CH-47 Chinook and HH-53 Jolly Green Giant, are installed using a large aluminum frame mounted in the exits. Two fast ropes are deployed from the aft ramp and a single fast rope is deployed from the right front crew door. The three-rope system allows a platoon-size element to exit in almost the same time it would take if the aircraft were able to land.

The original fast ropes were made of camel hair, and they were extremely



Fast roper prepares to exit the aircraft while crew chief advises pilot of rope adjustments.

expensive and difficult to procure. Fast ropes used today are made of an eight-strand weave of Ph Moor nylon and provide the same qualities and non-stretch characteristics that made the camel hair ropes desirable.

Fast ropes are made in six standard lengths — 30, 45, 50, 60, 90, and 120 feet — but can be specially ordered in other lengths. All fast ropes are a standard 1.75-inch diameter (5.5-inch circumference). The standard fast rope color is olive drab with black or white optional.

In operations, no more than 1,500 pounds are placed on any fast rope connected to a single rotor helicopter (2,000 pounds for dual rotor aircraft). This weight limitation is a restriction for the aircraft, since fast ropes are rated at 35,000 pounds. A choice of fast ropes must be made depending on mission requirements.

Fast ropes are designed with two separate types of hookups. The first is designed to be compatible with the commercially-made fast rope bars. The second is made with a loop on the end for the custom-built fast rope bars.

The terminating end (ground end) of the fast rope has a black and white nylon weave providing four individual hookup points per rope for extraction purposes. Either an expedient rappel seat with carabiner can be used for hookup or a more sophisticated suspended tactical airborne operation (STABO) rig can easily be attached to provide a timely exfil from a hostile environment.

The fast rope is connected to the bar using an aluminum sleeve with a donut ring spliced into the end of the rope for easy hookup. The fast rope bar has a quick release system consisting of a



Fast rope master instructs soldiers on correct method of maintaining control of the fast rope during elevator training.

steel tong that passes through the donut ring and rests on the far side of the bar. The fast ropes are released after the fast ropers have exited by either the aircraft crew chief or the pilot by means of a cable attached to both tongs which passes through the "H" bar to the cockpit. All the pilot has to do is pull on the cable release handle mounted on the aircraft's center overhead console to manually release the fast ropes and they will fall free.

To prevent the inadvertent release of the fast ropes during training, two safety features can be used. The first is an additional safety pin which prevents the tong from releasing the rope. The second is a 36-inch nylon safety rope which is spliced into the fast rope and secured to an anchor point inside the helicopter's passenger compartment ceiling. In the event that the aluminum sleeve breaks, the fast rope will remain attached by the safety rope. On actual operations neither of the safety features are used since they would greatly increase the aircraft's vulnerability by increasing its exposure time.

When the fast ropes are installed they must be carefully coiled on the aircraft's floor for deployment. This is accomplished by simply taking the free end of the fast rope and back-feeding it into a neat coil. The coil should be made as small as possible to allow for maximum personnel space in the aircraft. If coiled properly, the weight of the fast rope will ensure its correct deployment, saving additional seconds over the target.

Fast rope deployment must be coordinated in detail with the aircrew to establish items such as speed of approach, height above target, angle of flare, and emergency in-flight procedures.

Fast rope deployment will usually be on the pilot's command initially, but as the fast ropers become more proficient

the pilot will usually allow them to deploy the fast rope on their own call.

During early training, the use of a tower is strongly recommended. However, fast rope configured towers are not readily available so a helicopter is normally used as an elevator. With the elevator technique the aircraft lifts to the desired height and the ropes are deployed over a flat target, preferably a grass field.

The number of personnel going off the ropes on each side should be equal to ensure aircraft stability. The only equipment needed is a good pair of leather work gloves or rappel gloves and some type of liners to act as a buffer between the hot gloves and the skin. Polypropylene or issue OD wool liners work fine. Liners are sometimes forgotten; however, once a good fast rope burn is experienced a fast roper is not likely to forget them again.

When the fast rope is deployed the first man on each rope has the primary responsibility of making sure that it hits the target. A fast rope master may be used for this, but it is not necessary or desirable since the extra person takes up valuable aircraft space.

Once the fast rope is deployed, the lead man simply grabs it and rotates 90-180 degrees to face the helicopter. His feet should be spread with the knees slightly bent. The fast roper continuously monitors his descent by looking between his feet toward the ground. Two thirds of the way down he begins braking by applying gradual hand pressure on the fast rope until reaching the ground at a controlled speed. Initially a parachute landing fall

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WARRIORS

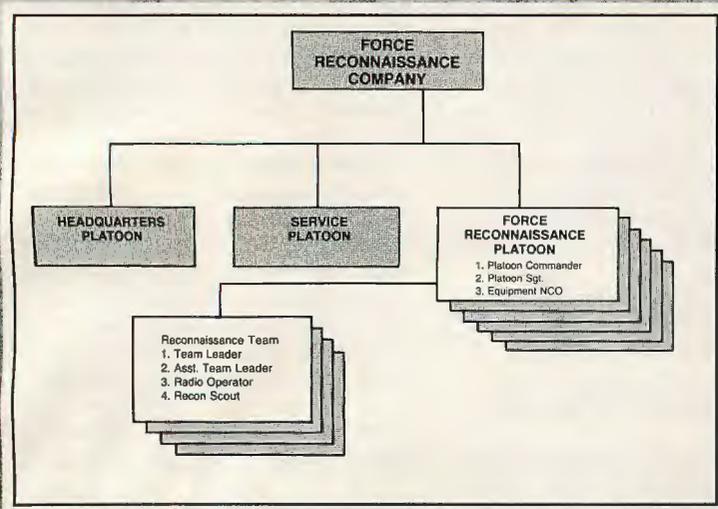
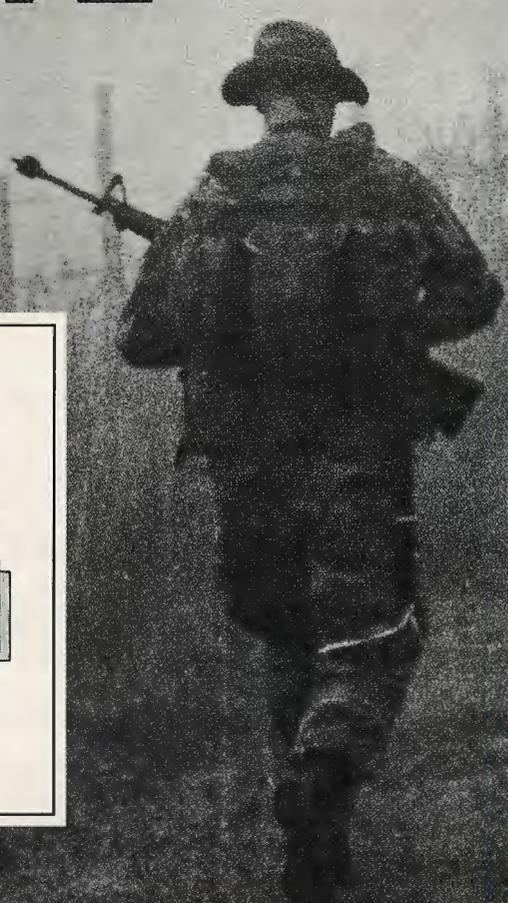


ABOVE: Practicing insertion, a Marine quickly exits the helicopter. Photo: Dave Hamby

IN RESERVE

48 Hours with Force Recon

by G.B. Crouse



STANDING in chest-deep, ice-cold water in a coastal Alabama swamp hunting ducks seemed an appropriate end to a visit to the 4th Marine Division's 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company. The problem was I'd stepped in a rather deep hole retrieving a mallard hen, and the water was inside as well as outside my waders. We had broken thin ice on the surface walking into the swamp, so I knew the water couldn't be much over freezing. I also knew that mentioning how cold I was to Skull, Spletzer and Duke, my hunting companions from 3rd Force, would have been considered very bad form.

As much as I wanted to get out of that swamp and those waders, I could just imagine what would happen if I suggested we leave. "The hunting was great," they would say later, "but we had to leave early because the SOF guy got a little wet and said he was cold." That wouldn't do, so we stayed in the swamp until the wood ducks and mallards quit flying, the decoys were retrieved and I was beginning to think I'd probably never have children.

I wouldn't want anyone to think duck hunting was the real reason behind my visit to the 3rd Force Recon, not the Marine Corps and certainly not SOF Managing Editor Jim Graves. My being in Alabama the last week of hunting season was purely coincidental.

Prior to the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company being reactivated recently re-

BELOW: Men of 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company, after a night's training, return to their vehicles. Photo: Dave Hamby

serve force companies (the 3rd and 4th) provided the Corps with 67 percent of its Force Reconnaissance assets. The active duty counterpart to the reserve companies, the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company is stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Fred Reed, then an SOF staffer, reported on the 2nd back in 1980 (see SOF, May & August 1980), but we had yet to do an article on the reserve component. So in January (duck season), I headed off to the Navy & Marine Corps Reserve Center in Mobile, Alabama.

To avoid confusion, a distinction needs to be made between the two types of reconnaissance units in the Marine Corps — the reconnaissance battalion and the force reconnaissance company. There are three reconnaissance battalions: the 1st at Camp Pendleton, the 2nd at Camp Lejeune, and the 3rd on Okinawa, one for each Marine division. The primary distinction between the battalions and the force recon companies is their mission. According to the manual (FM 2-2, Amphibious Reconnaissance), "the primary mission of the reconnaissance battalion is to conduct ground reconnaissance and observation in support of a Marine division or its elements." These recon elements, usually one platoon attached to each infantry battalion, fulfill traditional reconnaissance roles, providing information to the commander of the ground combat forces. Their activity by and large takes place within the range of artillery and/or naval gunfire.

Again citing FM 2-2, "the primary mission of the force reconnaissance company is

to conduct pre-assault and distant post-assault reconnaissance in support of a landing force." Although tasks and techniques may be shared with the Marines of the recon battalion, force recon works beyond the artillery fan and answers to the commander of the landing force and his staff.

Gunnery Sergeant Duke and Sergeant Spletzer, trying to maintain order on the drop zone. Photo: G.B. Crouse





LEFT: Marines from 3rd Force Reconnaissance exit a CH-46 while on annual training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Photo: Dave Hamby

BELOW LEFT: High-speed recovery, used to retrieve swimmers from the surf. In the rubber boat is the company corpsman, Doc Cooper (left), Staff Sergeant Reeves, preparing to catch the swimmer, and Sergeant Weatherby, standing on the port side of the boat. All three are active duty personnel assigned to the Inspector-Instructor staff of the company. Photo: Dave Hamby

(with whom I'd served in the 2nd Marine Division), the 0400 Saturday reveille came a little too early for my liking. But with only 12 weekends and one 14-day annual training period, the reserve company has to compress as much as possible into each available day. By 0430 Duke was knocking at the door. Twenty minutes later we arrived at the reserve center, which, thanks to my hangover and a Navy remodeling project, looked like the aftermath of a terrorist attack.

Third Force is organized similarly to the other force recon companies. There is a headquarters platoon, a service platoon and six force reconnaissance platoons.

Headquarters consists of the commanding and executive officers (a major and a captain), the first sergeant and a nine-man admin section. Although a rifle company would have a captain and first lieutenant as CO and XO (standard company organization in the Marine Corps), the force recon headquarters includes elements more typically found in a battalion than a company. There is a four-man intel section, led by a first lieutenant; a six-man operations section, led by a captain; the armory, with three armorers and a master sergeant; the communication section, with a captain, two staff NCOs, a repairman (sergeant) and seven radio operators; and a 12-man motor transport section. Also in the headquarters detachment is the amphibious equipment maintenance section, which looks after the scuba gear and the boats, and a parachute maintenance section, with a chief (sergeant) and eight riggers.

Operational force reconnaissance platoons usually consist of one officer (a first lieutenant), a platoon sergeant (a staff sergeant), and an equipment NCO, in addition to four recon teams. Recon teams, the basic operating unit of the company, consist of a team leader, usually a sergeant, an assistant team leader, a radio operator and a recon scout.

Beyond organization, however, the similarities between 3rd Force and their active duty counterparts pretty much comes to a halt. The skills required of a reconnaissance Marine are almost unlimited. And while those on active duty train every day, the reserve company's training schedule is greatly abbreviated by time. The company is required to complete the routine training expected of all Marine units everywhere: leadership training, physical fitness, essential subjects tests, NBC (nuclear, biological



Force recon's mission goes beyond traditional reconnaissance tasks. Raids, prisoner snatches, demolitions and related tasks are all potential missions for the company. In a recent clash between American and Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf, force reconnaissance Marines participated in the destruction of an oil platform after naval gunfire

failed to do the job. With greater emphasis now being placed on low-intensity conflicts and special operations, it's likely the mission of force recon will continue to expand and change.

After a long Friday evening of questions, answers and Corona with the company training NCO, Gunnery Sergeant Duke

and chemical) warfare training, swim qualification, marksmanship, and classes on things like sexually transmitted diseases and drug and alcohol abuse.

Beyond that, the Marines train to maintain the particular skills required by their military occupational specialty (MOS). For 3rd Force that generally means parachuting, diving, communications, navigation and amphibious reconnaissance. After that the training schedule calls for unit training, to test everyone's ability to apply their skills in an organizational environment and an operational setting.

As if that isn't enough, Marines who have not already done so are ordered to attend courses outside the unit, such as airborne, scuba, amphibious reconnaissance, combat swimmer, Ranger and other schools.

For the truly deserving, those deemed "substandard," there is the additional burden of remedial training, which takes precedence over their other activities. The old rule about every unit having its 10 percent holds true here as well. The occasional "fatbody" or poor swimmer is expected to get his carcass up to speed, or he can expect to be sent away.

For the weekend of my visit, the training schedule called for patrolling, S.P.I.E. rigging (more on that later) and parachute operations from fixed and rotary wing aircraft. A maintenance stand-down on Marine CH-53 helicopters almost cancelled the helo jumps, but Gunny Duke had gotten hold of some Army Blackhawks from Fort Benning, whose pilots were eager for the flight time.

In addition to the Blackhawks, which would be used for jumping and S.P.I.E. rigging, OV-10 Broncos (a Marine high-wing observation aircraft suitable for clandestine, low-level parachute insertions) from a reserve unit were scheduled to fly down from Atlanta. The Broncos would be used to drop four-man sticks from the small cargo hold in the rear of the aircraft. This potentially dangerous method of dropping parachutists had led to casualties in the past, but the casualties this weekend had less to do with the aircraft than with the trees around the drop zone (DZ).

Parachuting is only one of the means of insertion used by reconnaissance Marines. Although the three reconnaissance battalions have extremely limited billets for jumpers, force recon requires parachute qualification of all operational Marines in the company. Some Marines in the unit, such as administrative, motor transport, supply etc., are not required to be jump qualified. Most often photos of recon Marines show them jumping from aircraft, helo-casting, rappelling or diving. If you didn't know better, it would be easy to think those things are what they spend the bulk of their time doing. Nothing could be farther from the truth — the real work begins after the insertion. But activities such as night patrols or underwater hydrographic ops aren't easy to photograph, which unfortunately leaves many people, even within the Corps, with the wrong idea about recon.

Day One

After a jump briefing by the unit's corpsman, Petty Officer Cooper (all medical personnel in the Corps come from the Navy), the jumpers drew their 'chutes and rubber copies of Soviet and American weapons and headed for the drop zone (DZ). Rubber copies were used to prevent damage to real weapons and yet still give Marines the feel of the weight of jumping with their combat loads. Although real weapons are used on operational jumps, damaging a weapon in a routine jump in the fiscally tight environment of the 4th Marine Division is strongly discouraged.

As the Blackhawks landed, Doc Cooper supervised rigging the birds for jumping, and the first two sticks loaded up. Except for the platoon patrolling on nearby Dauphin Island and a few "substandard" personnel left behind, most of the Marines had an opportunity to jump at least once, and more than a few jumped several times. Major Johnson, the company commander, completed his 10th jump and received his Navy Parachutist Device (gold jump wings given to sailors and Marines after completing five additional jumps while serving in a jump billet, after graduation from the Airborne School at Fort Benning) shortly after hitting the DZ.

While some Marines were jumping, others were engaged in S.P.I.E. rigging operations. S.P.I.E. (Special Purpose Insertion and Extraction) allows small teams to be inserted and extracted quickly, without requiring the helicopter to land on the landing zone. Typically, up to eight Marines hooked into a harness can be moved in this manner, using a variety of helicopters. The method is somewhat difficult to explain, but the photographs provide ample illustration of the technique.

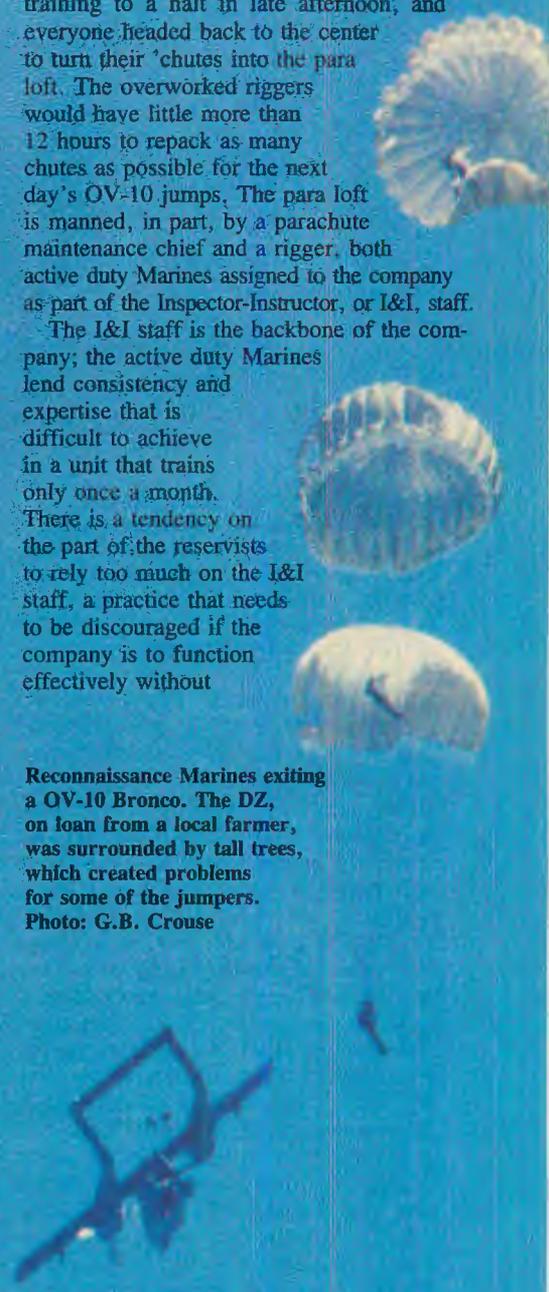
BELOW: Helo-casting from a Marine UH-1N off the coast of Alabama. Photo: Dave Hamby



January's shortened days brought the training to a halt in late afternoon, and everyone headed back to the center to turn their 'chutes into the para loft. The overworked riggers would have little more than 12 hours to repack as many chutes as possible for the next day's OV-10 jumps. The para loft is manned, in part, by a parachute maintenance chief and a rigger, both active duty Marines assigned to the company as part of the Inspector-Instructor, or I&I, staff.

The I&I staff is the backbone of the company; the active duty Marines lend consistency and expertise that is difficult to achieve in a unit that trains only once a month. There is a tendency on the part of the reservists to rely too much on the I&I staff, a practice that needs to be discouraged if the company is to function effectively without

Reconnaissance Marines exiting a OV-10 Bronco. The DZ, on loan from a local farmer, was surrounded by tall trees, which created problems for some of the jumpers. Photo: G.B. Crouse





ABOVE & RIGHT: S.P.I.E. (Special Purpose Insertion and Extraction) rigging. Eight Marines secure their harness to a line dropped from a hovering helicopter. When everyone is ready, the helo takes off, carrying the suspended Marines beneath the aircraft. Photos: Dave Hamby

their presence in combat. Third Force's I&I staff includes Marines who served in active duty reconnaissance units, as well as veterans of Vietnam and Beirut. Administrative billets such as administrative chief, unit diary clerk and service record book clerk are manned by regulars. Regulars also serve as training NCO, assistant training NCO, communications chief and comm technician, supply chief and clerk, motor transport chief and company corpsman. They also maintain the para loft, armory and scuba locker. Led by the Inspector-Instructor, an active duty major, and his first sergeant, the success or failure of a reserve company depends in large measure on the competence and dedication of the I&I staff.

As for the reservists, most of the junior enlisted men (lance corporal and below) have not served in the regular Marine Corps, except for their recruit and initial training. But approximately 60 percent of the personnel are former active duty Marines, including one awarded the Navy Cross in Vietnam. Often, Marines who enlist as reservists discover they rather like the reconnaissance business and transfer to the regular Marine Corps. Most of the reservists are people from the Mobile area, but there are some who serve in the company though they live long distances from the city. Major Johnson, the company commander, commutes from Chicago each month.

Day Two

Sunday's training consisted of jumping from OV-10s. Marines jumped four at a time, almost falling rather than jumping from the small rear compartment of the aircraft. Two Broncos, flying barely over the trees, would approach the drop zone. When given the command by the DZ commander, the pilots would pull back on their sticks until the planes were almost vertical, at which time gravity took over, and the



Marines fell from the aircraft. In years past, poor communications between the cargo hold and the cockpit has resulted in injury. Jumpers would fail to clear the aircraft, because their uniforms or equipment snagged on it. Pilots, unaware of the situation, would land their aircraft, seriously injuring or killing the dangling Marine.

As a result, the technique was banned by Headquarters Marine Corps for some time. But better communications has led to reinstating the practice. Of course, this doesn't greatly improve a Marine's chances of survival, but it does give the pilot more time to allow the jumper to correct the malfunction. If all else fails, the pilot requests that airfield personnel spray the runway with foam to ease the landing of the suspended jumper.

With the exception of a few Marines who

ended up dangling from the trees surrounding the DZ, the day's jumps were successful, which is to say everyone cleared the aircraft. Although injuries were sustained in the trees, all of those injured have returned to duty.

After the Broncos left for Atlanta, the gear was returned, and the weekend's drill activities came to a close. The next drill weekend would be devoted to NBC, leadership and swim training. In weekends to come, the reservists would engage in field operations at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, which included a jump and dive, communications training, a week's diving in Key West for those who could go (this trip was separate from their annual two-week training) and preparation for the annual training.

In Time Of War

In the event of war, the company no longer belongs to the 4th Marine Division, its parent command in peacetime, but is transferred to an operational command in the fleet. Its relationship with the 4th Marine Division is largely administrative; the company functions more or less as an independent command. On the active duty side of the house, force recon companies answer administratively to the Force Service Support Group that supports each Marine Amphibious Force, but operationally they belong to the lieutenant general who commands either the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic or Pacific.

As for the I&I staff, its duty in time of war is to accompany the unit to its initial destination, and then it is subject to reassignment. While the I&I staff may be assigned to the company itself, it may also be sent to other Marine units.

The inevitable question when discussing reserve units is "how do they compare to the regulars?" It's difficult to answer in a way that doesn't insult the regulars or offend the reservists. Reservists, after all, are civilians first; they have full-time jobs and careers that demand most of their time and attention. That they have chosen to spend their weekends and summer vacations jumping out of airplanes and patrolling in the swamps of south Alabama is commendable, but it is difficult to compensate for the tremendous amount of time required to train a Marine to be proficient in the skills required of a member of a force reconnaissance unit, which raises the question of why try? The answer is twofold. First, the company provides a pool of skilled Marines who can be used to augment the active duty companies, which is far better than having to train someone from scratch. Second, it is unlikely that the company would be committed to combat before having an opportunity to train together full-time, which along with the incentive imminent combat provides, would allow the company to come up to speed before deploying.

When the question of comparison to the

Continued on page 74

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KALASHNIKOPIES

Continued from page 39

30274; phone 404-996-2079).

Two other countries have exported semi-auto Kalashnikovs to the United States. Hungary is on the State Department's restricted munitions list. However, two years ago Kassnar Imports, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 6097, Harrisburg, PA 17112) obtained a waiver to import 7,000 AKM rifles. Along with the model designation (SA 85M), caliber, importer and serial number, the left side of the receiver is marked with the state arsenal's logo, "FEG" (*Femaru Fegyvar es Gepgyar* in Budapest).

Available with either a downfolding or rigid wood stock, the wood furniture was cut from native blond beechwood (twice steamed, disinfected, dried to a humidity level of 10-12 per cent and then oil varnished with a waxed paste). The wooden pistol grip's shape is quite distinctive and taken from the plastic grip on the Hungarian AMD short-barreled assault rifle.

While the four gas escape holes on each side of the gas cylinder have been retained from the AK-47, the pinned and riveted sheet-metal receiver, the two gas relief holes on each side of the gas block where it mates with the gas cylinder, the muzzle compensator, sheet-metal receiver cover with transverse ribs and rolled edge over the ejection port, bayonet lug under the gas block, rear sight graduated to 1,000 meters, and all other features are exactly as found on the Soviet AKM. All exterior metal surfaces, including the bolt group and magazines, are finished with a matte black enamel baked over phosphate. Like all other semiauto AKMs, there is no auto safety sear or anti-bounce device.

Complete with three 30-round magazines, wire-cutter bayonet and scabbard, leather sling, two plastic lubricant bottles in a tray and the usual buttstock cleaning kit with jag tip, nylon brush and front sight adjusting tool, the Hungarian SA 85M could be purchased for approximately \$400. They were all sold in less than a year. Now you can expect to pay up to \$600 for one that's NIB.

Last, but most assuredly not least, are the Yugoslav AKMs imported by Mitchell Arms, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 3411 Lake Center Drive, Santa Ana, CA 92704; phone 714-957-5711). Marked as the "Model AK-47," these rifles are actually the semiauto equivalents of the wooden-stocked M70B1 and folding-stock M70AB2, both of which are essentially AKMs with sheet-metal receivers.

The receivers of all other AKM series rifles are fabricated from a 1mm-thick U-section of sheet metal. M70B1 and folding-stock M70AB2 receiver bodies are constructed using a U-section of sheet-metal that is 1.5mm in thickness. This 50 percent increase in wall thickness substantially decreases the accuracy-reducing twisting and

flexing of the AKM receiver, which is associated with the recoil and counter-recoil cycles. In addition, the barrel extension, which contains the bolt's locking recesses, is considerably more substantial than that of all other AKMs. There's no free lunch, however; the M70B1 weighs, 8.2 pounds, empty.

There are some other interesting features on these Yugoslav AKMs. They are equipped with beta-light night sights — a flip-up at the rear with a horizontal tritium bar on each side of the open U-notch, and a flip-up with a single vertical tritium bar that blocks the round post front sight. A spring-loaded cross-pin at the rear of the receiver, just below the receiver cover, must be depressed from the left side before the recoil spring guide rod/cover latch can be pressed forward to remove the receiver cover. This latter feature is of dubious value. The grenade launching sight found on all military-issue M70 series rifles has been omitted.

All of the wood furniture is teak. Dense and attractive, it has not been properly oiled, so I suggest application of a mixture composed of equal parts of linseed oil, turpentine and household white vinegar. Although standard-issue M70B1 and M70AB2 rifles come with ribbed, plastic pistol grips, those imported by Mitchell Arms, Inc. have been fitted with teakwood grips from the M76 caliber 7.92x57mm sniper rifle (See "ComBloc Sniper Rifles," SOF, August, '86). They may not look like Kalashnikov grips, but they exhibit excellent human engineering. M70B1 rifles have no butt traps for a cleaning kit, but instead a 1/2-inch rubber recoil pad which makes their overall buttstock length 0.8-inch longer than most Kalashnikovs. That's a significant difference as, in general, the Kalashnikov's buttstock is too short for most Westerners. All the steel components, except the bolt group (left in the white), have been salt blued.

Except for the receiver cover, which is that of the AK-47, all of the other features on the Yugoslav rifles are those of the AKM series. Well-made and exhibiting above-average wood-to-metal fit, these Yugoslav AKMs should please shooters with their somewhat enhanced accuracy potential. Complete with one magazine, buttstock cleaning kit, plastic oil bottle, twine pull-through and web sling, the M70B1 retails for \$675 and the folding stock M70AB2 for \$698.

Kalashnikov magazines come in several different configurations and, in my opinion, the Yugoslav variants are the worst. In outward appearance they are the standard 30-round, blued, all-steel magazine with reinforcing ribs on the sides of the body. However, the magazine follower is raised on the left side to block the bolt group in the rearward position after the last round has been fired. Since there is no hold-open mechanism in the receiver, as soon as the empty magazine is withdrawn the bolt group will jump forward into battery. That's dumb. These magazines are more difficult

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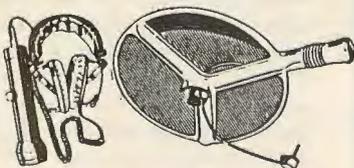
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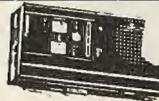
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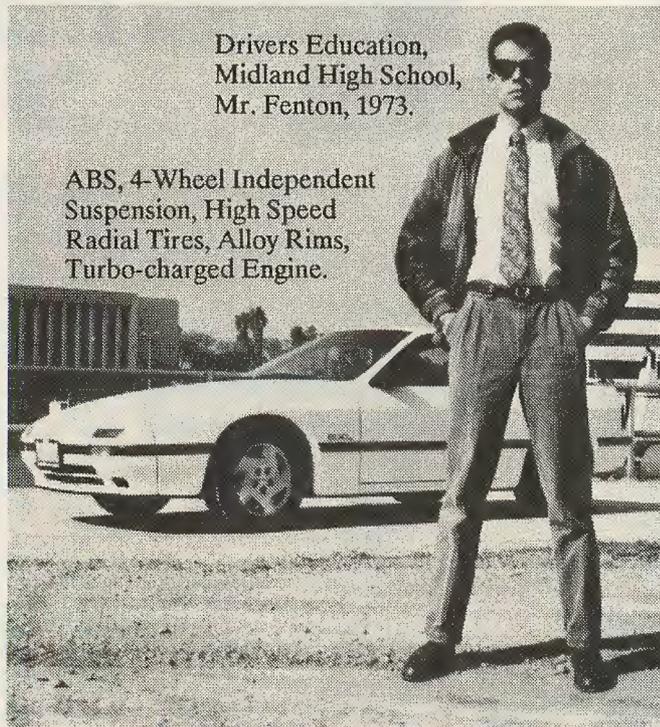
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to remove, because the full force of the compressed recoil spring presses the bolt group against the follower and, after insertion of a loaded magazine, the bolt group must still be retracted manually. Not to worry — just use standard Kalashnikov magazines in your Yugo AKM.

These ribbed magazines will be encountered either blued or painted black. With one exception (other than the Yugoslav), the country of origin cannot be determined. Finnish magazines have a rectangular steel ring on the floorplate to secure them to the soldier's LBE (Load Bearing Equipment). Early Soviet AK-47 steel magazines had slab-sided bodies without reinforcing ribs. They are uncommon, although a few were brought back from Grenada. Current-issue Soviet 7.62x39mm magazines are fabricated from a glass-reinforced, rust-colored, synthetic. Molded in two parts, the magazine body is assembled using a viscous, two-part epoxy resin adhesive. The adhesive residue is removed by hand-grinding. They are all marked with a factory code and either the Russian five-pointed star, arrow-in-triangle or, more rarely, star-in-shield. Most of the Soviet "red" plastic magazines in this country have come from either Afghanistan or South Africa. Depending upon condition, you can expect to pay from \$75 to \$125 for one. PRC Type 63 20-round ribbed, steel magazines are available from Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc. They can be used in the Kalashnikov, although the follower has been raised to operate a hold-open mechanism, and the bolt group will be held rearward until the empty magazine is removed.

You'll need ammunition to stuff in these magazines, and the surging popularity of semiauto Kalashnikovs is due, in no small measure, to the current availability of inexpensive ammo. PTK International, Inc. distributes match-grade ammunition (Headstamped '101 71' or '141 72') from the PRC. Its copper-washed steel case holds 28 grains of an extruded tubular kernel powder with a corrosive Berdan primer. It has a 122-grain FMJ (Full Metal Jacket) boattail bullet with a steel core that leaves the 16.3-inch, four-groove Kalashnikov barrel with an average velocity of 2,341 fps. Standard deviation of this ammunition is a consistent and phenomenal 12 fps. Best of all is the price, which is only 10 cents per round.

Not far behind is the commonly available Yugoslav cartridge (headstamped 'backward-N K 1983'). Its brass case holds 25 grains of an extruded tubular kernel powder with a corrosive primer. It has a 124-grain FMJ flat-base bullet with a lead core and an average muzzle velocity of 2,316 fps. Standard deviation is 19 fps. It sells for only a few pennies more than the PRC match-grade.

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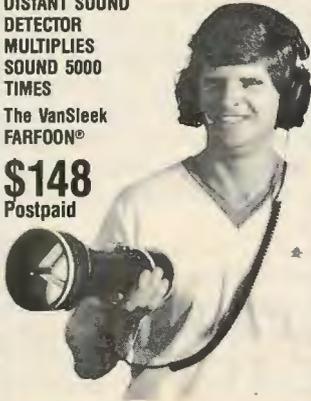
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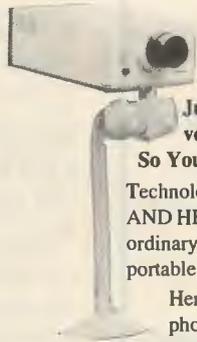


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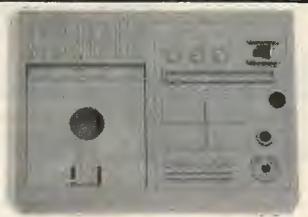
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answered the call. Through their generic label, "American Eagle," Federal is now marketing non-corrosive, Boxer-primed 7.62x39mm ammunition. Their brass cases (headstamped 'FC 7.62x39') carry less-sensitive milspec primers (non-mercuric) that should prove safe for all Kalashnikovs without firing-pin springs. With 25 grains of flattened ball powder, the 124-grain, FMJ, flat-base, lead-cored projectile leaves the muzzle with an average velocity of 2,205 fps. Bullet diameter is the specified .311 inches. Standard deviation is a match-grade 14 fps.

Hitting a target downrange with any of this ammunition requires zeroing the rifle. All adjustments are made at the front sight, so remember to move the sight in the opposite direction you want to move the point of impact. Changing the elevation zero is easy and accomplished with the front-sight tool in the buttstock cleaning kit. But, how do you adjust the windage zero? You could use a hammer to drive the post's large base pin one way or the other, but I don't think any rifle deserves that kind of abuse. For \$34.95, plus \$4 in shipping charges, you can purchase the PRC military-issue armor-er's tool made for that purpose from Keng's Firearms Specialty, Inc. If you also own an SKS, for approximately \$50 you can obtain a more elaborate windage adjustment tool with micrometer drums on each side. It comes packed in a wooden chest with adapters for the SKS and RPD.

I have fired tens of thousands of rounds through several hundred 7.62x39mm Kalashnikovs of every make and configuration without a single stoppage of any type. There is no more reliable assault rifle. Chambered for an excellent intermediate-size cartridge with enough push to give the proper shove at ranges up to 400 meters, its popularity is well-justified. Easily maintained and almost idiot-proof, Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov's creation will always remain one of the great classics in the history of modern military small arms.

To be sure, it's far from perfect. At best, a Kalashnikov is a 4 to 6 MOA (minute of angle) rifle, as there are just too many things flexing and swirling about inside its guts. It will never be found at the Camp Perry high-power matches. If you ever locate one that will consistently shoot less than 3 MOA, clutch it tightly to your bosom. Its clacking selector lever is far too noisy (although this can be partially corrected by wrapping mono-filament fishing line around the lever). Ejection is far too violent, and cases will be thrown up to 30 feet to the right and front of the weapon. While this may irritate reloaders searching for their empties, it's a far more serious consideration for those firing from cover and concealment. There's no hold-open, but that's a debatable feature. Trigger-pull weights will vary between 3 to 6 pounds, with an average of about 4 pounds. However, you'll travel a long, creepy road to get there.

No weapon system I have ever examined has been without flaws, but the Kalashnikov

shines through its idiosyncrasies. More than good enough, it has proven itself on almost every battlefield in every conflict since World War II.

Of those available, which, if any, is best? Purists will strike for the Steyr/Maadi, if they can locate one. Those who expect to shoot in the shadows will opt for the Yugoslav M70 and its night sights. But, if you can have only one, it must surely be Poly Tech's new AK-47/S. An authentic reproduction of the Vietnam-era AK-47, its forged receiver — more substantial than sheet-metal — will maximize the system's accuracy potential, and its spring-loaded firing pin will offer the greatest margin of safety. ❧

TAMIL TIGERS

Continued from page 35

frequently results in killings, arises in part out of the LTTE suspicion that TELO, PLOT and EPRLF receive weapons and training from the IPKF, in particular from the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's covert operations service. Though they deny any Indian connection, both TELO and EPRLF do operate offices in town under IPKF supervision, and at the final checkpoint entering Batticaloa I was approached by a Tamil civilian who asked me the usual questions.

"Are you a policeman?" I countered. "No, we are helping the Indian Army," he said. "I am EPRLF."

Early this year a press announcement stated that the Sri Lankan government had "recognized (the EPRLF) as a full-fledged political party."

While it may have been logical for the Sri Lankans to grant a measure of regional political autonomy to the Tamils, some might argue that it was cynical to have the Indians — former host of clandestine camps responsible for training the Tamil insurgents — try to steer them through the peace process and police the surrender of their weapons. In any event, they failed.

According to Maran, Nedunkerny Tiger commander, this is how the plan fell apart and hostilities recommenced: Seventeen high-ranking Tiger members were intercepted by the Sri Lankan navy off Jaffna and handed over to the SLA. The LTTE demanded that they be transferred to the IPKF under the amnesty provisions of the accord, which the Sri Lankans refused (claiming they were gunrunning). The 17 Tigers swallowed their cyanide in protest. When the authorities wouldn't hand over the bodies, the Tamils demonstrated, and the IPKF opened fire. The Tigers returned it and the conflict re-ignited.

There are other interpretations of this incident, but the accord also foundered on Tamil claims of Sinhalese "colonization" of their land, which they regard as a broken

promise to protect their civil rights. As an example, the Citizen's Committee of Nedunkerny reported that 3,600 Sinhalese names had recently been added to their voter's list, even though the persons don't exist in the town. The previous year, the election officer was transferred for protesting a similar offense.

The LTTE is cautious about a cease-fire and a return to the peace table. They distrust the IPKF, which says hand over your weapons before we talk. They want to talk with guns in reach. This impasse was not helped by the death of M.G. Ramachandran on 23 December last year. An actor-politician who rose to be chief minister of India's Tamil Nadu state, home of 50 million Tamils sympathetic to their Sri Lankan cousins' plight, MGR (as he was popularly called) acted as a power broker between New Delhi and the insurgent organizations.

Throughout the northeast I saw black flags hung outside Tamil houses in a show of grief. In Batticaloa the boys described MGR's death as a "serious loss." To come to some political settlement they expressed the need for a good middleman, lamenting the lack of a person "as powerful as MGR."

The cost of putting the Tamil Tigers on the endangered species list has included increasing the original 20,000-strong peacekeeping force to more than triple that number in six months, which in turn has prompted fresh fears not only among the



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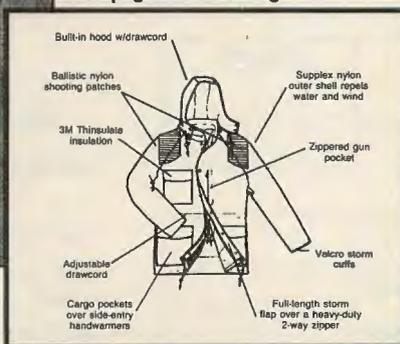
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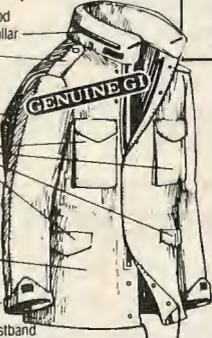
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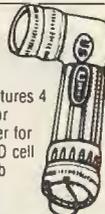
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Tamils but also the Sinhalese. A 3 January 1988 editorial in the Sri Lankan daily *The Island* stated: "What is even more disturbing [than the prolonged operation of the IPKF] are the diplomatic games which the Brahmins of the Delhi political establishment are apparently playing with Colombo as their pawn. There are some analysts who believe that the Indian Government is not keen to bring the LTTE to its knees, because New Delhi wants to keep its pipeline to the Tiger camps open in the light of future possibilities." Future possibilities indeed. A Jaffna Tamil was more succinct. "India is playing political tricks to capture this island."

Sri Lanka's usually tranquil southern region is also experiencing tremors from the accord, with a resurgence of the outlawed Sinhalese People's Liberation Front or JVP, which sees the accord as a sellout to the Tamils. Political assassinations are their specialty, including an attempt on the life of President Jayewardene, among others.

"All life is suffering," rightly proclaimed the Buddha, a concept previously understood as an intellectual abstraction which now has a sound base in practical reality, not only for Buddhist Sinhalese, but also Hindu Tamils — and Muslim and Christian Sri Lankans.

Therefore, in the final analysis, the pertinent question for Sri Lanka may no longer be who are the good guys and who are the bad guys, but rather, who is going to suffer the most. ☒



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MARINE RECON

Continued from page 64

regulars is put to the I&I staff, the answers are mixed. Major Hoover, the I&I, feels some of the Marines in the company are as good as any in the fleet. Others, when asked, quietly groan and roll their eyes — they obviously don't feel there is any comparison at all. As for who is right, that will only be determined in the unlikely event of a full-scale war, and then, given the dangerous and specialized mission of force reconnaissance, the question will probably be answered very quickly.

While all of the Marines in the company were helpful during my brief visit, a few were exceptionally so, both while I was in Alabama and when I called with follow-up questions. Among them, Majors Hoover and Johnson, First Sergeant Bohannon, Sergeant Weatherby, Petty Officer 2nd Class Cooper, and especially the duck hunting crew, Gunnery Sergeant Duke, Staff Sergeant Reeves and Sergeant Spletzer. ☒

OMEGA JIHAD

Continued from page 49

and turned on the radio, and we rolled forward, headed for Quetta — *inshallah*.

Our return trip to Quetta was long and dusty, but the prospect of food, all the water

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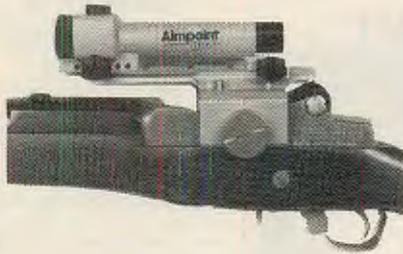
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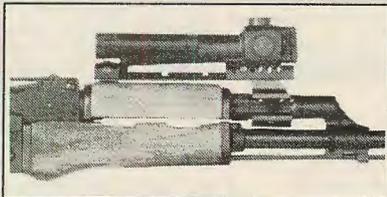
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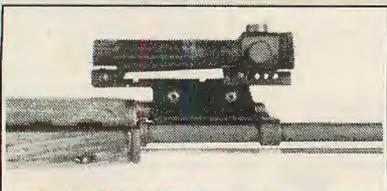
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we could drink, and much-needed rest made the time pass faster than usual. We had a chance to look back at what had happened, and to put it into a clearer perspective. There is no way a Western observer can equate mujahideen tactics with those found in any conventional military force. However, guerrilla tactics are pretty much the same the world over, allowing for terrain and weather variables. We were all impressed with the physical conditioning of the muj. They are among the bravest people in the world; their combat records against Soviet forces are clear evidence of that.

Tahir sent us a note explaining the reason he wasn't able to visit us at the fort. Shortly after we crossed the frontier into Afghanistan he was informed that by 15 May 1988 all his arms, ammunition and supplies would have to be out of Pakistani territory and inside Afghanistan, or they would be impounded. Presumably this was the Pakistani reaction to the massive explosion of an enormous ammo dump near Islamabad just weeks before, which was suspected by many to have been the handiwork of the Soviet KGB.

Musa did his best to help us, despite being handicapped by the difficulty in understanding us. He still was able to fulfill his primary mission of combat photographer. The TV pictures he took were terrific and definitely of commercial quality, although given the leftist bias common to all TV networks, I would be surprised to see any of them on ABC, CBS or NBC.

Hopefully SOF will return to Afghanistan in the near future to assist the Afghan freedom fighters however we can. The courageous mujahideen deserve the respect and assistance of freedom-loving people everywhere. ✕

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 59

(PLF) may be utilized on landing, but a stand-up landing is desired to clear the fast rope and allow for quick movement to a security position until the force is assembled. The most common mistakes made during fast roping are using feet on the fast rope and not monitoring the descent by observing below.

During elevator operations, the last man off each rope needs to maintain control of the rope to make sure it doesn't rise into the aircraft's rotor blades as it sets down. This is easily accomplished by simply walking the ropes out from the aircraft, keeping moderate tension, as it lands for another iteration.

If feet are placed on the fast rope the possibility of entanglement and injury due to a pileup at the bottom is greatly increased. This is the primary cause of injury during fast rope operations and

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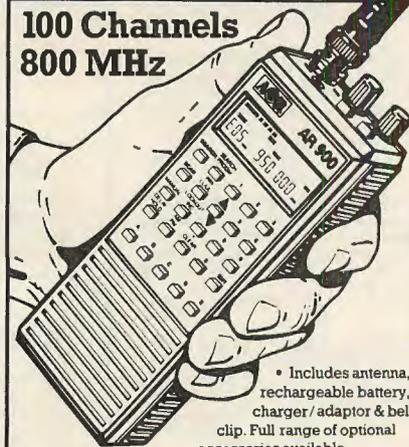
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can easily be avoided with disciplined training. Another reason that feet should not be placed on the fast rope is that it drastically shortens the life of a fast rope by causing excessive fraying.

The general rule for exiting the aircraft is as follows: When the man in front disappears below the aircraft floor, the next man goes. This averages slightly less than a one-second interval between men. In the early stages of training a much slower interval, two to four seconds between men, is recommended until proficiency is achieved.

Once basic skills are mastered, special applications such as team fast roping, night insertions, and high rise insertions can be attempted.

Team fast roping involves two men traveling down the fast rope together, effectively cutting the aircraft's exposure time in half. The two men exit the aircraft on opposite sides of the fast rope and arrange their hands one on top of the other. While descending, the team is facing each other and braking can be applied at the same time. The only drawback of team fast roping is that rucksacks are not practically deployed, therefore it should only be implemented in quick strike operations.

The only difference between night and daytime fast rope equipment is the addition of a visual aid. During nighttime operations a small chemlight should be taped at the bottom of the fast rope, another one five feet up, and another one on the fast rope bar anchor point. This will very effectively prevent unnecessary accidents by providing the aircrew and fast ropers with reference points to determine when the rope hits the ground and exactly how much is on the ground. The light on the anchor point provides a rope reference point for the individual fast ropers. Contrary to belief, the small chemlights do not violate any form of security. The aircraft silhouette and sound signature is easily identifiable without them and speed of the insertion through the use of visual aids is security in itself.

The only piece of equipment never to be used during fast rope operations is night vision goggles. The tunnel vision and depth error caused by them will almost promise injury and possible mission failure. Recommended procedure for using goggles is to secure them around the neck with a safety lanyard and wear them under your fatigue blouse. While the team assembles on the ground the goggles can be donned in minimal time. The only exception to this rule is the new state-of-the-art series-seven goggles that are currently in use by the majority of special operations aircrews. However, with the inordinately high cost it is unlikely that many ground forces will ever obtain them. The final advance stage of fast

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roping is being able to negotiate a high rise insertion. The operation stays fundamentally the same, however, a few safety precautions need be mentioned. It is not uncommon for a helicopter to drift away from a building top with fast ropers in action. Another accident that seems to occur occasionally is that of individuals walking off of rooftops due to spacial disorientation caused by the helicopter's rotor wash. The methods of preventing both these occurrences are, obviously, matters of extreme importance.

To stop on a fast rope and avoid descending to injury, the fast roper squeezes the fast rope as hard as possible to bring himself to a complete stop. Once he is at a standstill, the fast rope is placed over one foot and stood on by the other to maintain his position. A well-trained aircrew will be able to adjust the fast roper's position over the target quickly and allow the mission to continue. Spacial disorientation is alleviated by simply clearing the fast rope and taking a position on one knee until the helicopter releases the fast ropes and departs. No time will be lost by doing this since the fast ropes are released immediately after the last man hits the target.

Common to all fast rope techniques, some equipment safety procedures must be observed. All weapons should

be slung muzzle facing down and worn so the muzzle points opposite the direction of the exit. This is a safeguard against entanglement, a common occurrence when the aircraft is packed tight, for example when there are additional fuel bladders aboard. If rucksacks are worn, the team should individually descend the fast rope and avoid team fast roping.

If rucksacks are extremely heavy they can be attached to a 120-foot climbing rope run through one of the additional holes on the fast rope bar and lowered to the target in only seconds. A carabiner is hooked through the frames of the rucksacks and the climbing rope is passed through the carabiners with the free end knotted so as it won't pass through them. Upon arrival at the target, the rucks are kicked out and two to three men brake their impact using the block and tackle type method. When the rucks make contact with the target, the climbing rope is released and the remaining fast ropers are clear to exit. This technique takes only a few additional seconds and allows the remainder of the team to exit out the opposite side of the aircraft. On the ground, the team simply detaches their rucks from the climbing rope by the carabiners and moves toward their designated objective — all free of unnecessary in-

jury and ready for the operation ahead.

To put it simply, fast roping is like any other insertion in special operations. If done correctly, it will provide an excellent means of rapid assault. If executed poorly, it can and will destroy an operation and possibly lead to serious injury or even death. However, when rehearsed extensively and deployed in accordance with the aircrew and ground force's capabilities, it is clearly the front runner for a lightning-fast surgical insertion capable of penetrating all enemy occupied targets. ✘

SAYONARA

Continued from page 27

My new best friend started off like a drunk on a winter street. It took him a full 10 minutes to traverse the 50 yards of ground between the wire. Now I was certain this nitwit was certifiably crazy. But he was going home, and I was just arriving, so I did as he did and made it to the gap in the wire.

"Hey pal," I asked him. "You wanna tell me what the hell that was all about?"

"Sure amigo. We just crossed a tee-tee mine field. Nothing to worry about."

A quick look at his face convinced me he wasn't bullshitting. I wanted to strangle him.



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"You rotten sonofabitch! You almost got me killed."

"Relax, new guy, relax. No sweat. As long as you stick with me, your ass is wired tight. See I laid this minefield and damn near everything else in this village, so you're in good hands, buddy."

Somehow that wasn't much reassurance. I still wanted to choke this asshole, but it didn't seem to matter much to him. He kept walking and talking until we were at the back door of a run down shack of a building with a crude sign identifying it as the Number One Laundry and Ice House.

I would have never thought that my virginity would be lost on the far side of a mine field in a little shack 12,000 miles from home. But it was about to be.

My tour guide pushed aside the tawdry plastic strips that served as the door, and we entered a dingy little room. A couple of young girls lounged around the place looking bored.

The old mama-san greeted my partner enthusiastically, giving him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. Seems as though he was a regular.

We sat down, and Mama-san checked out my cash reserves. She left the room and returned with a couple of cold Budweisers. I didn't know much about women, but I sure as hell knew about Budweiser. I started sucking them down like a condemned man. Mama-san plunked down beside me and started massaging my thigh.

If she was as good as it got, I mused, I might be gay.

After four beers, the younger girls made their way over to our couch and sat down. I started to move over to make room for the homely bitch that picked me out, but I didn't move fast enough. She plunked her little ass on my lap and curled her arms around my neck.

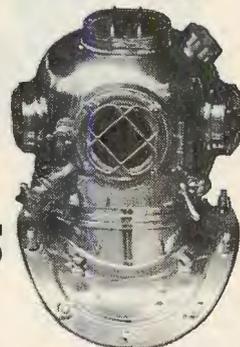
That Sunday afternoon, I learned what a 10-beer woman was. And it took every one of those 10 beers to convince me I was horny enough to boink this little whore. The buzz I had from the brews insulated me to some degree, but when my little Cambodian temptress laid back on the cot and pulled a brown, slightly rotten apple from beneath the bed and began to munch, I realized I was in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong person.

Unattractive as it was, our foray into the village was soon committed to the official folklore of the Phu Loi patrol, and I was on my way to shedding the tag of FNG in record time.

Life settled into something of a routine after that. We walked the wire during the day, and after dark we'd venture out two to three clicks from the perimeter to set up ambushes that always came up empty. The closest we got to actual combat was at the 601st Maintenance Battalion Enlisted Men's Club listening to the short-timers' war stories about a particularly savage battle just outside the wire during Tet. The men

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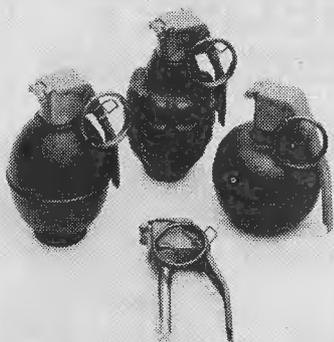
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had acquitted themselves with distinction at An My and loved to regale us with tales of heroism, real and imagined.

I was just about to pass my first month in-country when the word came down about a mission that really got the platoon's attention.

I had just come in from a night ambush and was dragging my ass. The two squads that had been off that night were clustered around the ammo Conex loading up.

"What's going on?" I asked my pal, Carson Cheek, a good-ole boy from Kentucky.

"We're headin' into the shit, Bear-san. Goin' out to the south, into some bad country. But the reservations are 'bout full up. If you wanna come, let me know. I'll get you in."

My curiosity started to override my fatigue. I found the platoon sergeant.

"What's going on, sarge?"

"Choppers said they saw some gooks out in the thick shit 'bout two clicks south of here," he said. "Lotta humpin' and probably ain't nuthin' to it."

Nothing my ass, I thought. Sergeant Collins had just come down from the 1st Cav. The Alamo probably seemed like nothing to him.

"Need a point man?" I volunteered.

"Need a shrink?" he spat back.

"Come on, sarge. Let me go with you."

"Well, Bear-san, this here patrol's all filled up. But I like you, so I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. You can take my place. How's that?"

"Come on over here, and I'll show you where they want us to go."

Such a deal.

Two minutes later, I saddled up and strode out smartly at the head of the patrol. Things were definitely picking up, I decided. The tense, serious faces of the old-timers confirmed my decision.

It was an hour before I started to wonder why I'd asked to be on the mission. We had walked down a soft slope from the highway through a couple of rice paddies and buried ourselves in thick, wild country. The sweat boiled up under my steel pot and dribbled down my dirty face. It cut little trails through the night's worth of filth that masked me and exposed salty streaks of flesh. My shoulders sagged under the weight and fatigue, and my legs pleaded for an end to the torturous climbs that punctuated our route. My breath came in short, desperate gasps, and the pain climbed into every muscle in my body.

I didn't recognize it yet, but the dull ache of fatigue and boredom that I wore like a wet, wool overcoat would become constant after this mission. It wasn't long after that day that fatigue became a welcome relief from the rest of what combat offered.

I crested a high bluff and started down the other side before stopping to take a long draught from my canteen. I was looking at 150 meters of down slope and then a sheer cliff of laterite that rose about 30 meters. I scanned the terrain for a way around the

cliff. No luck; it was shut out on each side by thick undergrowth. I glanced at the string of GIs winding behind me. It was almost reassuring to see they looked as tired as I felt.

There was no way around the cliff, I decided, and headed off to scale the bastard. I didn't get very far before I realized I'd need both hands for the climb. I slung my rifle and started up. It took about five minutes to make the ascent.

I got one last foothold and threw my right hand up to grab the edge of the cliff. I pulled myself up and poked my head over the precipice. There were two figures sitting at a fire about 25 meters to my front. If they'd heard the obvious noise I made in climbing the laterite wall, they didn't let on. In fact, they looked so natural and nonchalant I assumed they must belong there. No self-respecting VC would let an asshole like me sneak up on them.

But it did occur to me that farmers wouldn't be carrying machine guns. And they sure as shit had a machine gun. It sat on its bipod legs, long and black and ugly, crowned with a circular magazine. Still, I wasn't convinced.

Must be ARVNs, I figured. But it wouldn't hurt to check.

My back-up point was a French-Canadian from Boston named Fournier. He was less than halfway up the cliff.

"Frenchy, we supposed to have any ARVNs out here?" I asked.

"No, there ain't nobody out here 'cept us. They even moved the farmers a couple months ago."

I started to feel scared for the first time since the Number One Laundry.

"Then who the fuck are the two guys up here with the machine gun?" I asked, slinking back over the edge of the cliff.

"That's gotta be Charlie, you asshole," he said, getting down the cliff a hell of a lot faster than he got up. "Blow their ass up and run, Big Bear!"

I looked at the two men sitting by the fire, and I knew I was going to lose another cherry.

They still didn't know I existed. Low underbrush shielded the edge of the cliff from their view, but I sure as hell saw them. My body started to shake and spasm as I rested my elbows on the hard laterite. I sighted down the barrel and put the front sight under one guy's chest. He was sitting closest to the machine gun, and he would die because of it.

This is one fucked up way to die, I thought as I squeezed softly on the trigger.

The explosion of the round roared like a cannon in my ear. My target flattened out, and for an instant I couldn't tell if he ducked or had been hit. The doubts disappeared when I saw his foot quiver and his body shudder before he died.

I was so transfixed by his death throes that I never fired a shot at the other guy, who escaped into the thick brush to the south. I jumped over the cliff and ran to reach the dying man, not really sure if I wanted to

ANOTHER PEACETIME CASUALTY

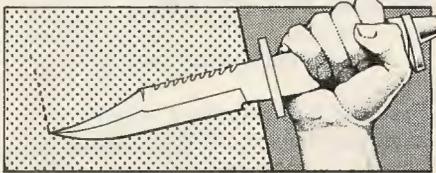
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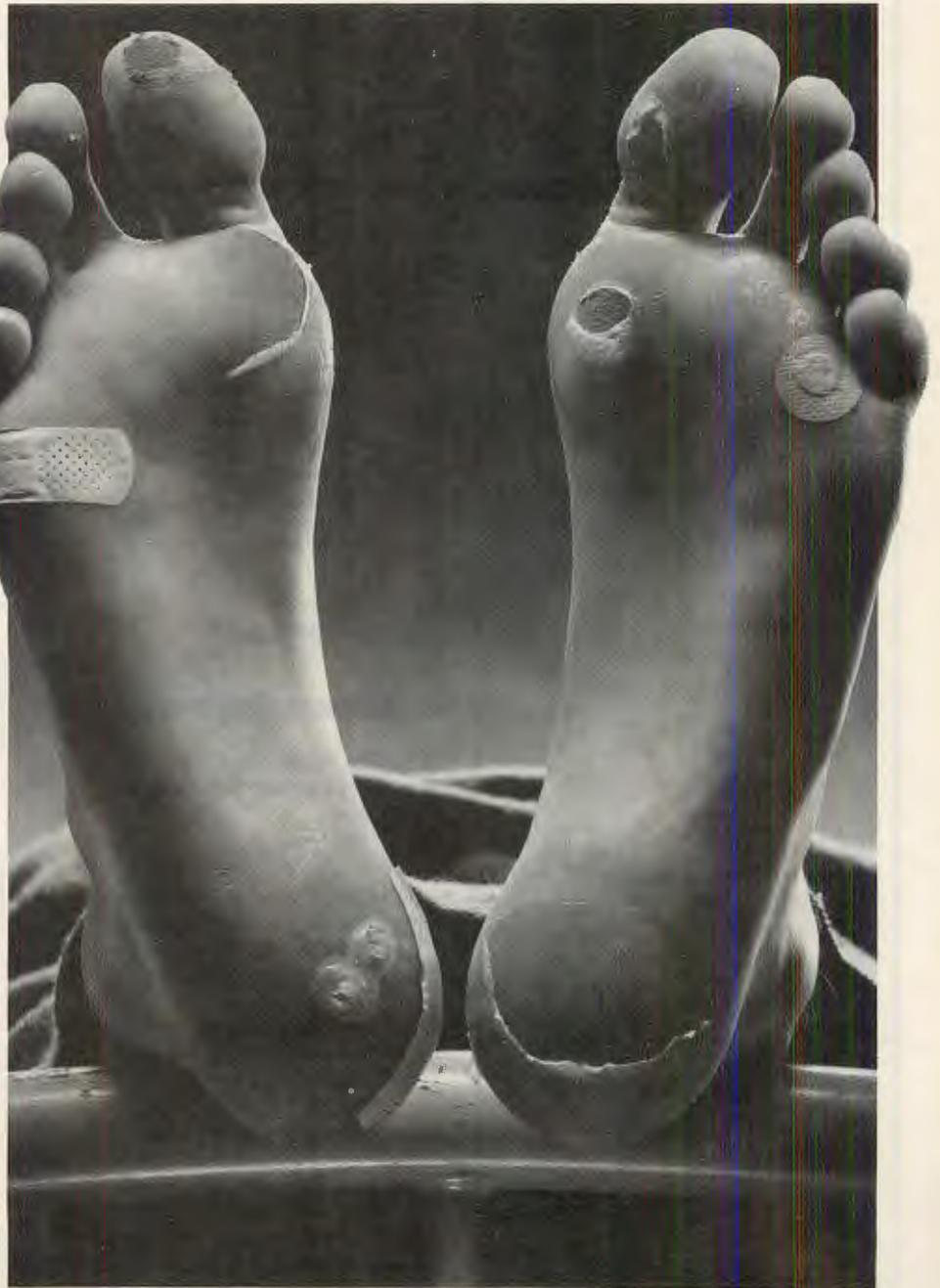
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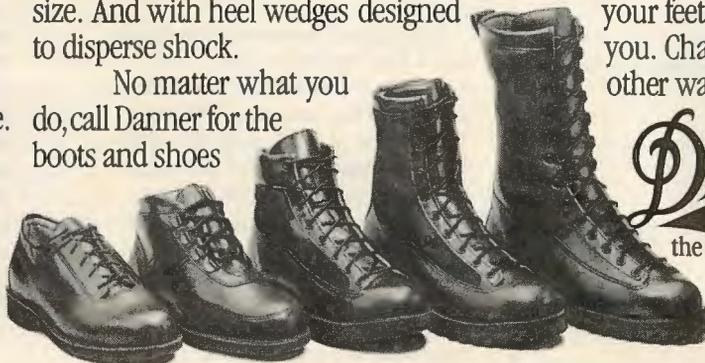
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help him or finish him. Something made me have to see him . . . what he looked like . . . how he died.

I knelt beside him as his life leaked into the dusty earth. My one shot had hit him in the left chest and ripped through his back. The rest of the patrol was scrambling up the cliff and shouting, but the only sound I heard was the soft bubbling of the dead man's blood as it soaked into the dirt. His eyes were still open, and his face was still young. He looked terribly fragile and strangely peaceful. His war was over, and mine had just begun.

The steady stream of blood from his wound made a widening circle of darkness beneath him, and I felt my innocence deserting me as his life deserted him. I'd come all the way to Vietnam now. I didn't know if I'd ever get out. I still don't.

As the rest of the platoon reached the plateau, I found a bush on the flank of the campfire and wretched violently.

I felt Fournier's hand on my shoulder when I stood.

"Welcome to the war, Bear-san. Sayonara cherry-san." ✕

FLAK

Continued from page 7

FROM HANOI JANE, WITH AN APOLOGY, NO LESS? . . .

Sirs:

I hope Vietnam veterans and their families have not been fooled by Jane Fonda's so-called "apology" on ABC TV's "20/20" news show. Some of us who watched the interview closely could not help but notice that she made no apologies for her infamous trip to Hanoi or for supporting the communist cause during the Vietnam War. She expressed some regret for her anti-American broadcasts to U.S. servicemen and apologized, rather reluctantly, for a few specific acts, such as sitting in the gunner's seat of an enemy AA gun. She offered no apology for her collaboration with the enemy and denied that she had been used.

During the interview, Jane Fonda could not remember ever calling American soldiers "war criminals" or slandering the tortured POWs as "liars," and she still maintains that the systematic torture of prisoners was never an official communist policy. She dismissed most of her treasonable acts as "naive and thoughtless mistakes" and continued to defend the barbaric North Vietnamese regime throughout the interview. No doubt she and her

leftist friends are still proud of their efforts, which led to a communist victory and turned all of Vietnam into a giant death camp.

Hanoi Jane has not changed her colors, and her phony apology was nothing but a despicable publicity stunt that should be rejected by every decent American.

F. Denneck

Winnipeg, Manitoba

SOF ON THE DEFENSIVE . . .

Sirs:

You guys are about to be attacked again by the New Zealand government. The Labor government will attempt to ban SOF within one year. The ban will be on anything the government deems to be indecent or violent. While lobbying for this issue the government tricked most people by using the highly emotional word, pomography, in place of the correct word, censorship. Most fell for it.

M.K.C.

Morrinsville, New Zealand

This type of censorship is not just taking place in far off New Zealand. Increasingly, censorship is rearing its ugly head in our own backyard. We at SOF hear about it every time a newsstand gives in to liberal pressures and cancels its allotment of the world's leading adventure mag. For example, B. Dalton Booksellers recently informed us that SOF was put on their censored list. This means some 2,000 SOF buyers in the U.S. are going to have to pick up their SOFs elsewhere. It's important that those who don't believe in censorship be heard. For those of you who can't contribute to Omega's First Amendment Legal Fund you can do SOF and fellow SOF readers a favor by writing a polite letter to B. Dalton (Attn. Magazine Buyer, B. Dalton Booksellers, Merchandise Dept./Magazines, 7505 Metro Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55435) expressing your disdain over their position. We also encourage our 600,000 readers to call or write their local B. Dalton's and tell them we are asking our readers to boycott them, and just how much they are going to lose in sales. Readers can also help us if any time you don't see SOF at a your local newsstands you ask why, and tell them perhaps your money is better spent patronizing other stores. Protecting the First Amendment is worth this effort.

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PIA VESTA

Continued from page 25

selling entertainment is a TV cartoon for children about the adventures of a little bird called "Wattoo/Wattoo." It's a bit like the film company front in "Scarecrow and Mrs. King," a CBS prime time spy TV show, except that Star is supposed to be an off-the-books French intelligence operation.

Duncan, Starckmann and de la Sagne are named in a list of weapons providers to the contras compiled by Robert Owen, who was North's ambassador to the "freedom fighters."

The CIA, which knew the *Pia Vesta's* record as a mercenary tramp plying the arms trade, had spotted the ship from the moment it sailed from Rostock and had kept it under surveillance on its long westward voyage out the Baltic Sea — not around Europe and south to Africa, but west to the Atlantic, southward to the Caribbean entrance of the canal, through the canal to the Pacific, south to the Peruvian port of Callao, and then north again to Panama.

All these details have been confirmed by intelligence sources, some of the participants, and by a Peruvian investigating commission. But they give no inkling of the alarms and excursions the *Pia Vesta* set off among government and intelligence agencies along its course.

In its wake on the way to an aborted delivery in Peru and then to the seizure in Panama, the ship left a spate of coup rumors in Peru, Panama and El Salvador, acrimony and anger in Washington, Panama, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras, Denmark, Geneva, and, perhaps, South Africa; and intimations of an overexposed weapons pass-through for the Nicaraguan rebels, or for the Sandinistas, or for the Salvadoran Marxist guerrillas, or for a still unknown and hidden purpose.

But there is no doubt that it was a bungled deal, and that Noriega, either by design or inadvertently, caught a lot of important personages out on a limb and sawed it off.

As time passed, more *Pia Vesta* legends or masks were floated; exercises reminiscent of the arguments between philosophers about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

A congressional committee looking into the alleged drug trafficking of Noriega and his connections to the CIA, from which he was said to have received a retainer of \$200,000 a year, was told by a witness that

Noriega and North intended to use the weapons to make believe that the Salvadoran army had intercepted a Sandinista shipment to the Marxist FMLN Salvadoran guerrillas. But, the witness added, Noriega pulled the plug on the deal with North after *The New York Times* ran a front page story citing American official sources on Noriega's connections with the Medellin cocaine cartel shortly before the *Pia Vesta* arrived in Panama. The idea, according to the proponents of the North-Noriega-El Salvador concoction, was to create a wave of resentment against the Sandinistas in Congress before a crucial vote on military aid for the contras in the summer of 1986.

One U.S. intelligence source familiar with the ship's passage has another game theory. He firmly believes that the *Pia Vesta's* weapons were the lure in a double-scam involving the Soviet Union's KGB, East German Intelligence and Cuba's DGI on one side with the National Security Council and the Pentagon on the other.

"They set up the NSC and the Pentagon to expose the secret weapons pipeline to the contras," the source said. "The CIA knew about the ship and its cargo, tracked it, and reported what it picked up from the satellites and sightings enroute and when it crossed the canal. It's possible the agency blew the *Pia Vesta* deal because it wasn't in the loop."

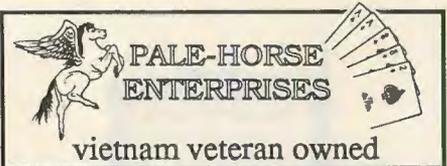
Another U.S. intelligence source, giving another image from the many mirrors reflecting different visions of the *Pia Vesta*, said the weapons were really intended to be a gift to Nicaragua's Sandinista government from Peruvian President Alan Garcia, who has been hostile to the Reagan administration's Central American policy.

The CIA, other sources said, had warned Garcia that the *Pia Vesta* was headed for Peru carrying weapons probably intended for one of the guerrilla movements operating in Peru, either Tupac Amaru or Sendero Luminoso. The warning came after the ship had been at sea for 37 days and was a week away from Callao.

Garcia ordered capture of the ship early in June when it was off the Peruvian coast, but it steamed away and escaped. Garcia then, according to a U.S. diplomat and a Peruvian official, got on the phone and tipped off Noriega that the *Pia Vesta* and its load were headed for Panama. The president wanted the general to check whether the weapons were still aboard, a request that made sense to the Peruvian, who feels threatened not only by leftist guerrillas but by rightists.

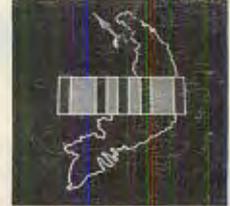
Noriega found them, confiscated them and charged the ship and its captain, Johannes Christiansen, with contraband. After all, he, too, felt he could be the target of a coup.

Vice Admiral John Poindexter, just after becoming President Reagan's national security adviser at the end of 1985, had warned Noriega, according to testimony to Congress, to clean up corruption in the Panamanian armed forces or face the wrath of the United States. North had accompanied Poindexter on the visit, and at least one



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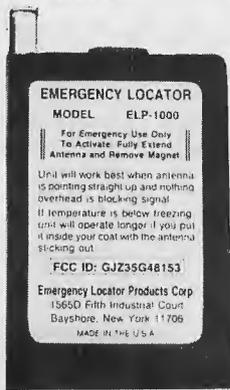
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of North's associates said that the Marine had no love for the devious Panamanian strongman.

Noriega, according to Panamanian sources, interpreted the article in *The New York Times* as a signal that the Reagan administration was preparing public opinion for a move to dump him because he was not cooperating — as were the Honduran and Salvadoran and Guatemalan military — in the fight against the Sandinistas.

A keen practitioner of intelligence tricks learned in years of dealing with CIA, DIA, Israel's Mossad, Cuban and Sandinista spooks (as well as Colombian drug dealers and their Miami Cuban-American money-launderers), Noriega began to track reaction to the commandeering of the *Pia Vesta* and its cargo to gather intelligence on the players.

He lost no time in setting up bugs and tape recording the telephone calls of the worried freight forwarder in Panama, Emilio Ortiz de Zeballos, who was feeling the heat from Noriega, and Duncan, in Miami, who was anxious about the fate of his weapons. Transcripts of the purported conversations, which Noriega passed on to Garcia in Peru and then published in *La Republica*, a Panama City newspaper he controls, make it clear that Duncan was lobbying the Pentagon through Eldon Cummings to pressure the Panamanian strongman to transfer the weapons to Howard Air Force Base, a major U.S. airfield in Panama, so that they could be flown to El Salvador. It was known that Howard was being used for "black" flights

over Central America's war zones and to coordinate U.S. Air Force activities in Honduras and El Salvador, including electronic surveillance.

Cummings and Duncan later confirmed that the transcripts are generally accurate. Sanchez said that he had been approached by Cummings, his former aide who was working with Duncan, but had turned down the idea.

What the transcripts make clear, however, is that Noriega was squeezing Ortiz to get the name of the officer in Peru who had ordered the weapons aboard the *Pia Vesta* and of the Salvadoran officer who was supposed to come down to Panama to claim the seized weapons from Noriega. Duncan and his associate, Coppo, who had been down in Peru to arrange unloading the weapons in Callao with the unnamed Peruvian officer and flown back to Miami when the deal went down the drain, refused to reveal any names.

The Salvador connection had been made by Duncan, who had flown there on 2 June 1986, when he learned from Coppo that Garcia would refuse weapons he had not authorized, to make a deal with Gen. Adolfo Blandon, chief of staff of the Salvadoran armed forces, to accept the load. Duncan says that Blandon agreed to "park" the weapons, which were going to be unloaded in Panama, placed in containers, and put aboard another ship bound for Acajutla, consigned to the Salvadoran armed forces.

The deal was aborted when Noriega called

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Blandon to inquire whether the Salvadoran actually wanted the weapons, Duncan says. But an intelligence source said that the United States urged Blandon to back away from the deal "because the weapons were tainted."

Duncan next turned to the Honduran military, but once again came the message from the United States: "Don't touch. Weapons are tainted."

At any rate, Noriega kept the weapons and the *Pia Vesta* keeps rusting away and awaiting trial. Shortly after the seizure, the 32 trucks, Duncan says, were used in a parade by Noriega's Panamanian defense force.

The paper trail for the weapons was tangled, which is usual for such shipments. It included a Peruvian end-user certificate for East Germany signed by Peru's naval attache in Washington, but a Peruvian government investigation reported the signature was a forgery.

East Germany in turn had a small scandal of its own. It told the Peruvian government that IMES, a state-owned trading firm, had received the order for the weapons from a Swiss firm, presumably Star Productions, but that the ship's manifest, which had been prepared by VEB Schiffsmaklessei of Rostock, had omitted mention of the weapons aboard the *Pia Vesta*. Several weapons dealers who do business with the Soviet bloc said this was not surprising. "S.O.P.," one said.

The bill of lading said the shipment had been ordered by Marnix S.A., of Montevideo, Uruguay, and consigned to Sinato International, Inc., registered in Liberia. Both turned out to be dummy fronts created by Duncan and his associates.

As the *Pia Vesta* fled Peru for Panama, Sinato transferred ownership of the weapons to Rutland International Co., a Florida phantom firm created by Duncan. Then, shortly before the ship arrived in Balboa and Noriega grabbed the *Pia Vesta* and its hardware, the ship's agent went aboard and delivered a new bill of lading to Captain Christiansen that consigned the cargo to Blandon and the Salvadoran armed forces.

"There was nothing unusual in this," Christiansen said over the telephone when he was being held in a luxury hotel in Panama. "I expected a new destination. It always happens when an arms deal goes sour."

That may be, but the tricky web of paper that began in Rostock included a bill of lading issued by Chartering APS, the firm operating the *Pia Vesta*, dated 29 April, days before the ship sailed, consigning the shipment to the armed forces of El Salvador.

The point of the *Pia Vesta* story is that there is no point to it, only a multitude of images that have confused the beholders in different countries for different reasons that had nothing to do with its strange cargo. The mystery that remains unanswered is whether someone was calling the shots, like a director in a movie, or it was all a random skein of spooky notions inspired by paranoia. ☒

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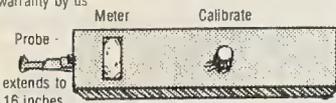
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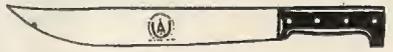
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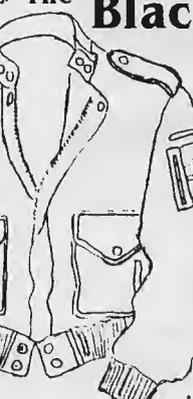
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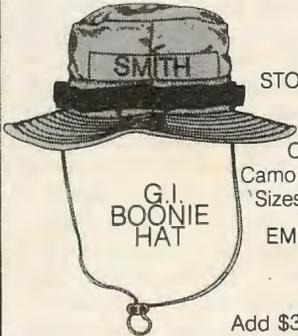
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PARTING SHOT

by T. Arbuckle

Contra Victory Plan

UNITED States officials and contra leaders must not be dismayed by Congress' decision to cut off U.S. military aid to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters, for this vote clears the way for shaping a leaner, more efficient, virtually self-sufficient contra army inside Nicaragua.

Termination of cross-border supply operations will strengthen the contras militarily and politically, not weaken them as some U.S. officials suggest. This apparent paradox arises because U.S. air logistics and Honduran sanctuaries are military and political liabilities which inhibit long-term development of the contras as a viable military and political force.

United States air logistics hamper the contras' ability to establish rural base areas, because they deny the rebels concealment, an essential ingredient of any guerrilla strategy. Resupply flights are visible and audible for miles and easily tracked on Sandinista radar, alerting their forces to the contras' general location and making it simple for reconnaissance teams to pinpoint their camps.

As a result, Sandinista military commanders have frequently been able to launch attacks on rebel bases in Nicaragua and thus prevent the contras from establishing "no go" zones and from seizing the element of surprise in day-to-day patrolling and ambushing operations.

Contra commanders recognize the seriousness of this problem. A primary goal of FDN attacks on Bonanza, Siuna and La Rosita mining encampments in northeast Nicaragua in late 1987 was the destruction of Sandinista radar installations engaged in monitoring resupply flights. The probability that the Sandinistas will soon acquire modern surface-to-air (SAM) missiles, more sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons and radar systems capable of interdicting resupply flights is highly likely (the Arias Plan does not bar the Sandinistas from acquiring these items).

The U.S. air logistics system is also costly in financial and U.S. domestic political terms. Besides the dollar amount in the bill Congress rejected, \$20 million in already appropriated funds was set aside to ensure supply drop aircraft. An additional \$7 million was earmarked for passive air defense equipment to protect these airdrops. Without a continuing accumulation of airdrop running costs, the U.S. might have spent this money on ammunition and other more critical supplies. In this way the administra-

tion could avoid asking Congress for additional funds while the Arias Plan is being implemented.

Similar arguments indicate the necessity for reducing the contras' dependence on Honduran territory. The size of the FDN's Honduran bases, attendant lack of concealment and proximity to the Nicaraguan border, have offered Managua's forces opportunity to strike at contra command, communication and logistics echelons at will. Since 1982, the Sandinistas have launched nearly 400 forays against these camps in Honduras.

The most spectacular Sandinista raid occurred 24-27 March 1986, when an estimated 800 FSLN troops attacked two FDN bases near Mount Capire, Honduras. The Sandinistas successfully surveyed these rebel camps undetected for two weeks prior to this attack, underlining the fact that the Sandinistas can effectively monitor FDN units departing from their Honduran bases and determine these units' precise infiltration routes into Nicaragua. This close monitoring denies the contras the usual guerrilla advantages of surprise and concealment.

In May 1987, the Sandinistas struck contra camps on the Honduran bank of the Coco River. This time the Sandinistas possessed accurate intelligence on FDN locations and were able to utilize Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships and artillery to good effect, forcing the FDN to expend assets defending themselves in Honduras, instead of employing these assets against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas will be able to repeat this scenario at will as long as the FDN maintains their bases in Honduras and does not move into Nicaragua in strength.

Furthermore, the Arias Plan sparks a strong political argument for closure of the FDN's Honduran bases. The Sandinistas have demanded the bases be dismantled before they accede to opposition calls for increased political freedom. Closing the bases would strip the Sandinistas of this excuse, renewing political pressures on them to acquiesce to FDN and internal opposition political demands.

The contras' most effective response to the U.S. military aid cutoff would be to replace their current quasi-guerrilla strategy, and its attendant dependence on U.S. airdrops and bases in Honduras, with a classic guerrilla warfare strategy that requires minimal outside support and eliminates the need for foreign bases.

A classic guerrilla strategy would consist

first of establishing secure FDN base areas in remote, sparsely populated and rugged parts of Nicaragua. This would be achieved by the time-honored guerrilla methods of operating in small groups, politicizing the population on the base areas' periphery by exploiting their anti-government grievances, and initially limiting these groups' military activity to ambushing smaller, weaker Sandinista patrols and attacking isolated outposts. Such actions would force the Sandinistas to employ stronger patrols in order to enter the guerrilla-held "wasteland." These large units would be easier to detect and avoid. Or the contras could choose to ambush these larger patrols, thereby demonstrating their military capabilities and further encouraging popular support.

By gradually increasing the tempo of ambushes and raids, and constantly emphasizing popular grievances such as food shortages, the contras could achieve virtual self-sufficiency within relatively secure bases.

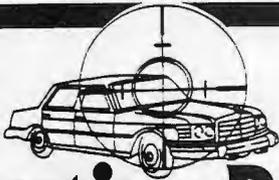
Weapons and ammunition captured from the Sandinistas in these surprise attacks would provide the means to continue fighting, gradually removing the contras present dependence on U.S. military aid. Increased emphasis on politicizing local people would provide food and the minutiae of day-to-day guerrilla existence, as well as assure the necessary intelligence net needed to warn of Sandinista infiltration.

Eventually this combination of military and political activity would enhance contra security to the extent that the FDN's political and military leadership could live in relative safety within Nicaraguan redoubts. This "Contraland" would obviate the need for Honduran sanctuaries. Such contra bases would help establish a nationwide contra political organization, would aid in mobilizing citizens for future offensives into the more populated Nicaraguan rural areas and would eventually threaten the Sandinista-controlled Pacific coast urban centers.

America could minimize its military support for the contras by espousing this pure guerrilla strategy. Washington, instead of supporting a semi-conventional force with a rich infusion of funds, equipment and costly air logistics, could limit its support for a contra guerrilla force to a few key items — Redeye missiles, communications and demolitions equipment, training — and to providing intelligence data and political support.

This low-profile approach of much less, but more effective, contra military aid might stand a better chance of bipartisan U.S. congressional support than previous administration contra military aid proposals, when and if Sandinista intransigence at the negotiating table impels a resumption of U.S. military aid to the contras.

Reader response to this and other Parting Shot columns is welcome. Letters should be addressed to FLAK Parting Shot, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. ☒



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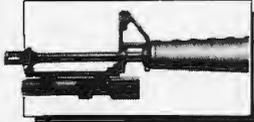
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- 1 year factory warranty

Reg. \$495. Only \$399.

Dealers call! Mounts available for most firearms. \$45. ea.



ULTRA BUG II



The size of a quarter, it is so sensitive it can pick up sounds 20' away and transmit them to any FM radio receiver (even the one in your car) up to several blocks away! Ultra II uses a four stage circuit and quality components to achieve maximum performance. Uses 9 volt battery. Simple final assembly required. Intended for testing and experimentation; illegal to use for surveillance.

Reg. \$195.

Special \$149.

Lithium 9 Volt Batteries \$15 ea.

(Lasts 2-3 times longer)

BODY MICROPHONE AND TRANSMITTER Sends a clear crystal controlled signal to a receiver up to 1,000' away

Features:

- Small — 2½" x 2½" x 1"
- Latest surface mount technology
- 10 hrs. on one 9 volt battery
- Miniature microphone picks up sounds from 10-15'
- Of FCC approved design
- Crystal controlled for maximum range

Small size makes it very comfortable to wear without noticeable bulk. Uses include: speaking or entertaining, monitoring rooms or buildings for sounds of break-ins, or children playing.

Entertainers, lecturers, law enforcement and others pay \$900-\$1,300. for a unit with this level of performance. Because this unit is made exclusively for us we are able to offer it direct for a limited time for only \$499. (Ship/Ins. \$7.)

Special receiver for maximum performance \$269. (Ship/Ins. \$7.) A standard programmable scanner could be used, but will be of lower quality.



WAREHOUSE WATCHMAN

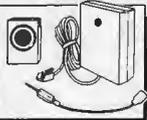
Now you can listen for break-ins from several blocks away

Protect your home or business! The Warehouse Watchman never sleeps. It is always listening for sounds and transmitting them to you. Just plug it in (never needs batteries) and listen with crystal controlled clarity from up to several blocks away. Also works as a standard multi plug adaptor so space isn't wasted. Impossible to find elsewhere. \$475 ea. 3 or more \$449 ea. Requires standard scanner or our special receiver \$269.



INFINITE EAR

Listen into your home or business from any phone in the world!



This unique device permits ONLY YOU to hear every sound in the building it is placed into. The Infinite Ear plugs into any modular phone jack or can be attached anywhere along the phone line. Simple to use, just dial the phone number and use the special

pocket size, coded tone generator (included). Now you can listen into your premises for as long as you like. Great peace of mind when you are away! The Infinite Ear with attachments and complete instructions. Reg. \$389. Special only \$249 ea.

NEW NON-LETHAL WEAPON! Knocks an attacker flat from 20' away!



Propelled by compressed gas, it launches a 5 ounce, lead filled bag that strikes an attacker at speeds up to 100 miles per hour! Think of the impact! Its rifled bore spins

the "lead pancake" to insure accuracy. Reloadable, it can protect you again and again, while keeping your distance. Made of high impact, lightweight plastic, it will protect you for years. Now the best news! It is classified as not a firearm and can be sold to anyone over the age of 21! Keep one at home and take one with you when you travel.

Prowler Fowler II (Improved design) Retail \$169.

Special \$139.

(Ship/Ins. \$7.)

EXECUTIVE MINI FOILER

New! Exclusive Item

Operates the same as the Prowler Fowler except with a shorter range, effective from 10-15' and utilizes a two ounce stun bag at the same high speeds.

Small and lightweight, it will fit into a briefcase. Carry it with you when walking, jogging or hiking. Keep it around home or take it camping. Quickly reloadable, the Foiler is non-lethal, self defense that you can count on! Entirely machined from aircraft aluminum.

Regularly \$139.

Limited introductory offer \$99.

Gas Cartridges pk of 5 \$9.95 Extra Stun Bag assembly, \$29.95 (Ship/Ins. \$5.)



AUDIO TELESCOPE

High quality long range listening device

What makes this unit different from all the other "ears"? Everything! The 16" aluminum parabolic provides almost twice the surface area of other units. A professional quality microphone and amplifier, combined with other first rate components, obtain maximum performance. While no unit available today will "hear a whisper at a 100 yards" in a noisy environment, we do know that the Audio Telescope will consistently out-perform cheap plastic units. Complete with headphones and instructions. Can be hooked up to a recorder. Hand held or fits camera tripod (not included).

Audio Telescope \$349.



(Ship/Ins. \$10.)

TRANSTEC

Don't be trapped by hidden "bugs"

Transtec fits into your pocket and silently vibrates when it detects an R.F. transmitter (bug) in your presence, from up to 20' away! It warns you but doesn't tip off anyone else! When it gives a warning signal, Transtec can now be used with its special antenna attachment to verify that an actual "bug" is present (not an innocent signal) and then can be used to "sweep" and locate it.

Transtec \$695.



EVALUATOR

New microprocessor checks for phone taps



Evaluator is based on new technology, never before available. Other "tap detectors" are only simple voltage meters, and they just won't pick up real taps. The Evaluator takes a fingerprint of the voltage,

resistance and capacitance of your individual phone line, stores it in memory, and then performs a check every minute, 24 hours a day and warns you with a flashing LED readout if conditions change.

Easy to use, sets up in minutes and monitors your line for "taps" or any other abnormal changes. \$695.

Must be installed on a "clean" line. See our CM-3 complete countermeasure package \$2,495.

Note: California, along with most other states, has expanded its wiretapping laws to allow local and state agencies to tap phones. This may compromise your privacy!

SENSOR ALERT

Protect valuables from "walking away!"

If you have ever worried about your luggage being stolen, or that your children could wander away and be lost, hurt or kidnapped, Sensor Alert is for you! Just attach the little transmitter to the package or child and keep the miniature receiver with you. If the transmitter leaves the Sensor Alert's zone (approximately 20-50'), the receiver will warn you by beeping.

Only \$39.95 ea. (Ship \$3.) 3 for \$99.



HOT NEW PRODUCTS

VOICE CHANGER, works over any phone, pocket size. \$398. (Ship \$7.)

TELEPHONE SCRAMBLERS, portable, fits any phone.

Minimum of 2 required. \$299. ea. (Ship \$10.)

STARLIGHT RIFLE SCOPE, second generation tube. \$3,500.

COMPLETE COUNTERMEASURES SYSTEM, for home or office. \$2,495. (Ship \$24.50)

FRISK "EM", hand held, metal weapons detector. \$39. (Ship \$3.50)

ESM EMOTIONAL STRESS MONITOR, a truth detector. \$2,495.

ELECTRIC PAPER SHREDDER, fits any wastepaper basket, insures privacy. \$199. (Ship \$9.)

ELECTRONIC TRACKING DEVICES, from \$1,995.

BULLETPROOF VEST, 22 layers of Kevlar, stops .357 magnum and 9 mm. \$249. (Ship \$10.)

TELEPHONE TAPE RECORDER, starter switch and long play (8 hours), voice activated recorder. Set \$149. (Ship \$7.50)

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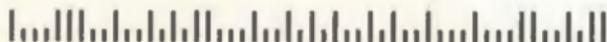
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Don't trust this moment to anything but an **HK**

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There's no question...you need the Benelli 12 ga. Super 90 shotgun!

The Super 90's rotating Montefeltro bolt system makes it the fastest firing shotgun you can buy. Its free carrier and external shell release produce fast ammo changes, making it the ideal choice of any special operation team.

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For speed, durability and unsurpassed firepower, select the Benelli Super 90 from H&K!

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