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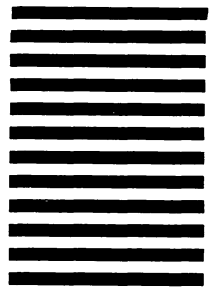
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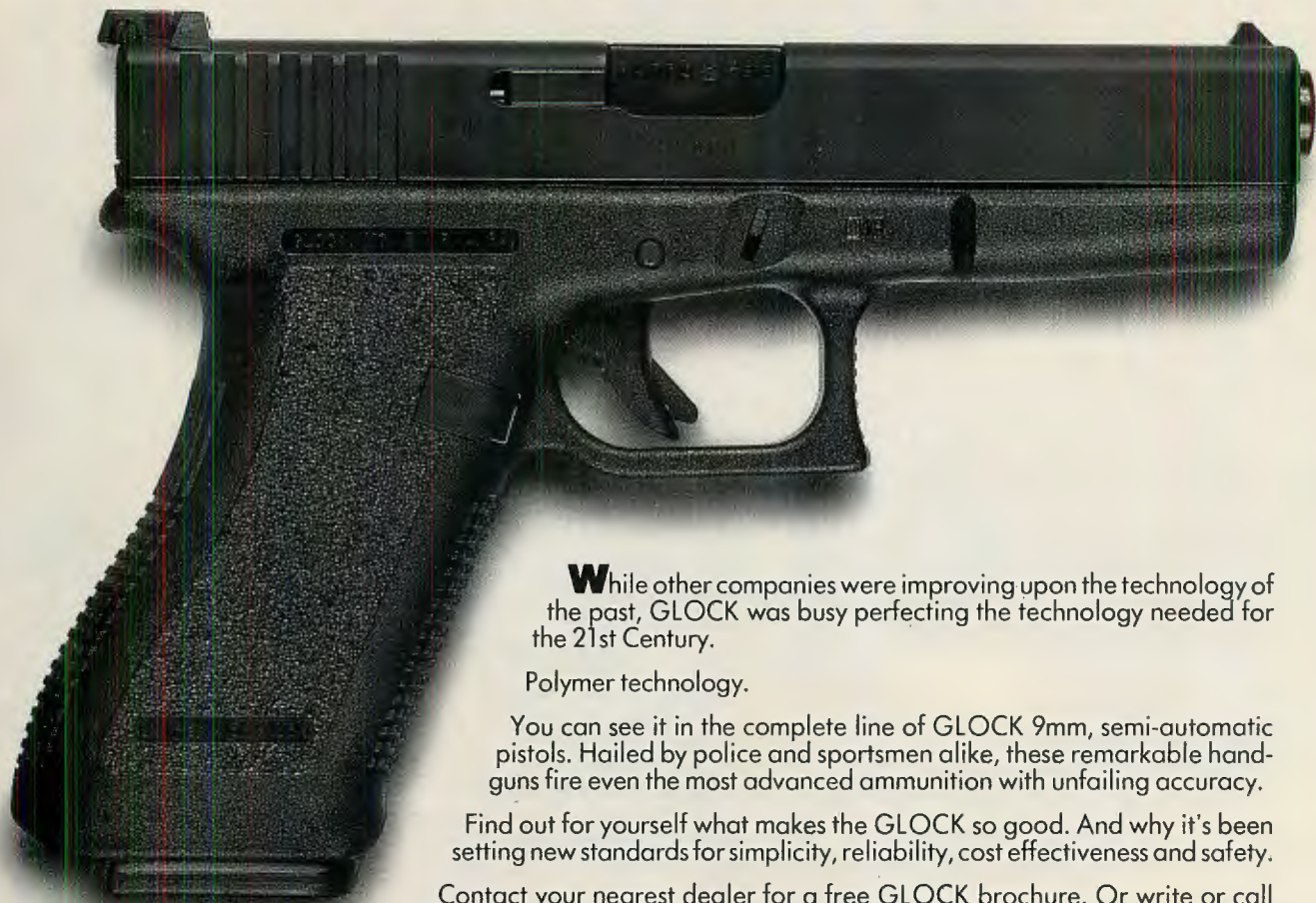
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TAKE-DOWN SNIPER SYSTEM

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Morgan Tanner
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Major Eddie Parks
Though shrouded in secrecy, British SAS units have operated in Northern Ireland — and perhaps beyond! **68**

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COVER

COVER: ARVN soldier during happier times in mid-60s is armed with Thompson SMG. SOF correspondent Tom Marks revisits Saigon and talks candidly with ARVN vets, one who served with him 20 years ago. Even today, some 15 years after the capital was taken by communist forces and renamed Ho Chi Minh City, soldiers who served under the South Vietnamese government are paying a heavy price. "Ho Chi Minh City's Living Dead" starts on page 48. Photo: DoD

INSET: Guatemalan army troops are beginning to hold remote areas of the country previously the domain of guerrillas thanks largely to a group of hotshot pilots who risk life and limb to see that they're adequately supplied. Follow Morgan Tanner and David Bjorkman on a wild chopper ride beginning on page 30. Photo: David Bjorkman



COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

Lessons of Tiananmen Square

THE letter-to-the-editor in the Boulder, Colorado newspaper needed just five words to make the point:

"Well.

"China.

"Unarmed citizenry.

"See?"

The dreary truth, unfortunately, is there are all too many who choose to avert their eyes.

No civilization in history has successfully waged war on its children and survived to tell of it. And that is what makes the butchery in Tiananmen Square so astonishing. What the world saw was a revolution devouring its sons and daughters. That was instructive, and in more ways than one.

The bloody business in Beijing on the night of 4 June and the events that followed have provided the world with a globally televised object lesson as to why the Second Amendment is in the U.S. Constitution.

Chinese by the tens of millions may have demonstrated for democracy throughout May, but when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) finally chose to move, it smashed the pro-democracy movement flat in less than a week.

Several thousand demonstrators were shot dead or, in some cases, literally crushed like insects by PLA armor in the first 24 hours. By the end of the second week, the knock on the door at midnight was being heard throughout the country.

The pro-democracy demonstrations in China were probably the largest peaceful assemblies in the history of the planet, but in the end it was the People's Liberation Army and not the people who decided who would run China. The latter may have had the votes, but the former had the guns.

What the world saw in Tiananmen Square is precisely the reason the founders of the American Republic added a Bill of Rights to the Constitution and put the Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights. The framers had just drafted a Constitution that provided for — among other things — the creation of a national army, and they feared that army might someday be used to impose a tyranny on them. And they knew from the experience at Lexington and Concord fewer than 20 years before that the crucial step in imposing tyranny would be for the government to disarm the people.

The Second Amendment did not just materialize out of thin air. It was created because the founders did not want the government to have a monopoly on the tools of coercive force — and the experience in China shows why.

Gun control advocates cavalierly dismiss the Second Amendment as out of date. The experience in China shows otherwise.

Gun control advocates have made it abundantly clear they value their safety more than their liberty. The experience in China shows that if their view prevails the day will come when we have neither. ☒

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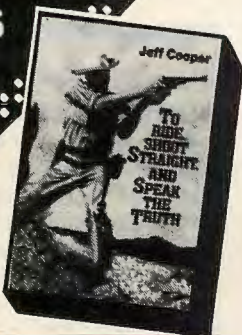


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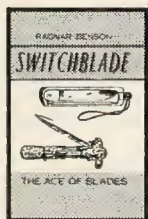
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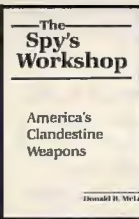
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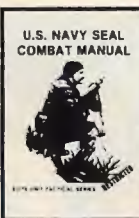
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AND ARAB INTERLOPERS JOIN THE MUJAHIDEEN...

Asiaweek reports an estimated 2,000 non-Afghan foreigners now fight with the mujahideen: fundamentalist Muslims who regard the fight not so much as a liberation of Afghanistan as they do a chance to spread their brand of Islam by the sword. They hail from as far away as Indonesia, the Philippines and northern Africa, although the majority come from Islam's Arab heartlands, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Sudan and Palestine.

The mujahideen have gotten help from many quarters and made good use of most of it, but these foreigners may be wearing out their welcome — even the more fundamentalist Afghan parties are reportedly disquieted by their growing numbers and disregard for local customs. One mujahideen political officer noted, "Their ways contradict the beliefs of most Afghans. This could lead to violent confrontations." One diplomat close to the war observed, "The Afghans are going to react to the Arabs as they would to anyone else."

The Arabs have taken casualties in the fighting around Jalalabad, but their military contribution is not regarded as very substantial. "They don't make any difference to the outcome of a battle," shrugged one Afghan commander. "Militarily, they're just a nuisance."

BULLETIN BOARD



Men at Bethlehem Steel in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania — from the men in the shops to the company president — have designed, built and dedicated an 8-by-16-foot steel memorial to America's veterans. The steelworkers did this largely on their own time and as volunteers, with the company donating materials and a place for permanent display outside the plant's main gate. Paul Coachys, of the plant's veterans committee, noted that "this was a project for veterans — all veterans. The cooperation from throughout the plant — from the president's office to the shops — was instantaneous and sincere." The memorial features familiar scenes from World Wars I and II, Korea and Vietnam, with a special place of honor for American personnel listed as MIA in Vietnam and Korea. Good going, guys. Photo: courtesy Bethlehem Steel Corporation



Robert K. Brown (center, kneeling) and his SOF Live Free or Die, Save the Semi-auto Rifle Trotting Team pose after completing the 11th annual Bolder Boulder 10K Classic "race" on Memorial Day in Boulder, Colorado. Brown averaged three-minute miles, or awfully close, while other staffers and nefarious acquaintances ate his dust three polite steps to the rear. Pictured (from top left to right) are Earl Homer, Lynne Manchester, Alex McColl, Tom Bates, Carrie Karlson, Paul Fanshaw, Deborah Deats, Helena Bates with daughter Julliette, Sue Max, Brown and Craig Nunn. Not pictured is Kathy Allard. Photo: Jeff Bergeon

IT WAS FUN YAT SEN WHILE IT LASTED...

As we go to press each month, there is usually some new instance where the ugly face of communist tyranny has unmasked itself — with such predictable regularity it's really not news anymore. But this month they have really pulled the rag off the bush in China. As we write this they are busy in Tiananmen Square scrubbing up the blood of a thousand Chinese martyrs and broadcasting the news to China that no one was killed.

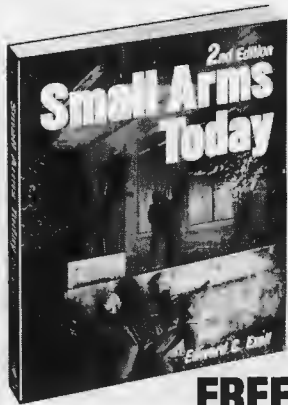
It never happened, folks. What the Western news teams filmed was merely a fantasy. Early on there appeared to be hope for a broadly based democratic movement not only among the people but also within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA's 38th Army had declined an invitation to massacre the protesters in late May, for which some of its officers were subsequently executed. But true to form, protest was allowed to blossom just long enough for its leaders to be identified, and then the protesters were brutally crushed — many of them literally, under the treads of T-55 tanks in Tiananmen Square. The roundup of others who expressed hope for liberty but survived that onslaught is now in progress. Their fate will no doubt be the same as those who, during the Cultural Revolution a few years back, came forward when the government asked, "Gosh, anybody got any complaints?"

Uncle Mao said that political power comes out of the barrel of a gun. So does liberty, when it must be wrested from brutal tyrants. One out of five people on this planet live under communist tyranny in the PRC, and recent events indicate that they would prefer to be free. But numbers of men alone apparently don't count. Only numbers of armed men do.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH...

We're told that, while anchoring the coverage of the massacre in Tiananmen Square for CBS News, Dan Rather at one point asked a correspondent on the scene, "How can the people stand up to the army when they have no guns?"

How indeed.



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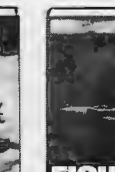
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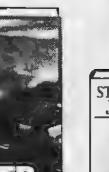
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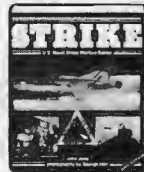
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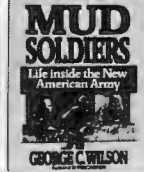
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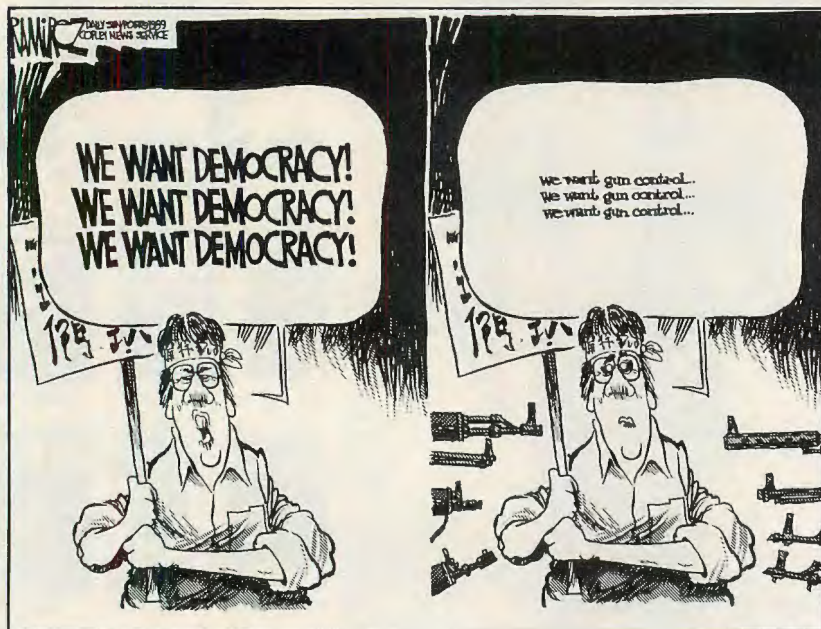
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BARRY SADLER UPDATE...

We've received numerous calls and letters here at SOF from fans and well-wishers around the world, inquiring after Barry. If you'd like to drop Barry a note — and we think he'd appreciate it — here's the address: Barry Sadler, c/o Philip Duer, Esq., 214 3rd Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201. Barry continues to improve and undergo therapy, and we hope he will soon be his old self again.

Barry's "Casca" fans will be glad to hear that Bob Robison, Barry's business manager, says a 24th Casca book by Barry is "in the can" and will be released this fall. His *The French Soldier*, a story of Casca as a World War I French soldier in the trenches, was released this spring.

CHINA MARINES EXPEDITION...

If you are seeking an alternative to the trip you had planned to Beijing, this may be it. Special Veterans Excursions, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 365, South River, NJ 08882, is sponsoring a tour for Marines, former Marines and Marine Corps buffs and their families to Taiwan from 7 to 17 October. For \$2488 you get air fare from and to the United States, ground transport in Taiwan, hotel accommodations, many meals and all official banquets. The tour features special military demonstrations and exercises with

the ROC Marines, scenic and historic junkets, a parade and review of the ROC Marines and a banquet. If you always wanted to be *in* the reviewing stand instead of marching in front of it, here's your chance.

WANTED: ALIVE OR ALIVE...

A U.S. Customs proposal to offer rewards of up to \$5 million for information leading to the capture of indicted drug smugglers such as Pablo Escobar, Manuel Noriega, Jorge Ochoa et al. has created a furor in Washington, although legal precedent does exist for trying drug dealers forcibly brought to the United States. Former chief deputy U.S. attorney in Miami Richard Gregorie stated, "The law says when somebody is brought into a U.S. jurisdiction where he is under indictment, he can be tried and it doesn't matter how he got there," noting that as far as criminal law is concerned, abductions would not prevent a trial as long as the methods used "don't shock the conscience of the court." He said, "You can take them into custody, you can't take a cattle prod to their testicles."

The Customs Service has proposed a major public relations campaign to accompany this program, complete with wanted posters, ads in *People*, *Soldier of Fortune* and a tie-in with the TV show "America's Most Wanted." We think it's a great idea. Bounty

hunters, stay tuned next issue for more details.

HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

Phillip W. W. Herzberg, SFC Dale F. Bruha, USA-Ret., Anonymous in honor of SE Asia POW/MIAs, Private Gregg A. Craft & BAD CO 3rd BN/27th Inf., SGT Brett Fernholz.

Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund contributors:

Loren K. Roberts.

Refugee Relief International:

Project: Team South, Richard K.

Berger.

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

LOOKING FOR...

Former naval advisers, Navy Roadrunners from Nha Re, any personnel who served at Qui Nhon, particularly members of Dewey Rifles or Sea Cobras, or anyone with knowledge of Army PBR force or searchlight post near Qui Nhon Market Time Base (contact Richard Rongstad, 4360 Delta St., No. 404, San Diego, CA 92113). World War II Navy vets stationed at Sampson Naval Training Station near Romulus, NY (contact William R. Russell, President, Sampson WW-2 Navy Veterans, Inc., 39616 Idumea Road, Corryton, TN 37721).

CARL GUSTAV JOINS THE RANGERS...

All three U.S. Army Ranger battalions will be receiving the Swedish-made M-3 Carl Gustav anti-tank system. Weight of the 84mm Carl Gustav has been cut from 35 to 20 pounds through the ingenious use of composite materials and compares very favorably with older weapons such as the Korean War vintage 90mm recoilless. Some 100 systems are to be ordered under a contract worth roughly \$10 million which includes HE, HEAT, smoke, illuminating and practice ammunition. Sweden, Denmark and Canada are also buying the new M-3 system. Ranger units plan to deploy the M-3 as a primary antitank/antipersonnel/bunker-busting weapon. ✕

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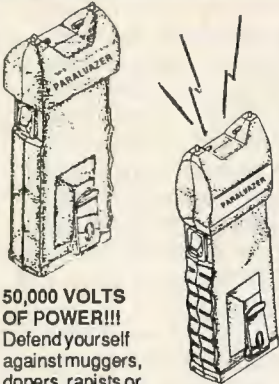
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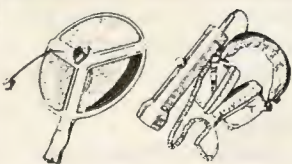
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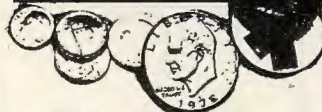
The reagents supplied in this kit will enable you to test for all types of narcotics, barbiturates, amphetamines and dangerous drugs. This kit also includes a color reaction chart that is extremely important when making presumptive tests. Comes with a complete instruction manual and all necessary implements in a sturdy carrying case.
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DOES ANYONE KNOW?...

Sirs:

I hope that your publication can help me discover the circumstances surrounding the death of my friend Bernard P. Lynch.

Bernie was first assigned to Company E, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry but shortly thereafter he was reassigned to Company C. He went to the Republic of Vietnam in 1969 and died there on 9 July 1970.

Thomas J.
Lavoie
2 Seaman
Avenue
New York, New
York 10034

All Vietnam veterans have probably experienced the shock of learning 20 years later that a good friend died at Con Thien, Khe Sanh or Pleiku and wondered just how it happened. Since detailed information is only available from people who were actually there, as a service to SOF's veteran readers SOF will publish letters like the one above. Keep the letters short and concise, but be sure to include a complete address so respondents can write directly to you.

LETTERS

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



FLAK



SOF SHOOTING FROM THE HIP...

Sirs:

Under the heading "SOF Ignored by Mass Media" (FLAK, SOF, June '89) your reader Donald Martinez of Bellflower, California, misrepresents the contents of the 15 February Washington conference on "Afghanistan and the Media," organized by Boston University's Center for Defense Journalism.

Mr. Martinez, having watched the televising by C-SPAN, claims that "not one of the panelists even mentioned SOF's coverage." Soldier of Fortune unfortunately adds the untruth that "to acknowledge SOF's role in covering the war in Afghanistan would be embarrassing."

Not so. One of the leading participants of the conference, David Isby, was introduced as a regular contributor to SOF by me, and special credit was given to your magazine's outstanding contribution to covering the war for Afghanistan.

Don't shoot from the hip, or — better yet — hold your fire.

H. H. Joachim Maitre
Director, Center for Defense Journalism
Boston University

Actually we had two hip shots and a ammo failure on this one. Our reader assumed that C-SPAN had reported the conference accurately — always a bad assumption when you're talking TV — and we assumed our reader was right and didn't call Dave Isby (who works out of Washington not our Boulder office). Still much of what we said about the media's overall performance in Afghanistan and their recognition of our role in covering that area we believe to be true. American journalists are improving their coverage of Afghanistan but it still has a long way to go.

MAKING MINES...

Sirs:

I immensely enjoyed reading "Oops Ops" (SOF April '89). Imagine my surprise and enjoyment at finding a few paragraphs on a "weapon" I had personal involvement with many years ago. Back in 1967 I spent almost seven months working at the Atlantic Research Corp. in Hanover, Massachusetts, a converted fireworks factory. It was, back in those days, manufacturing anti-personnel and anti-intrusion mines such as those mentioned in your article. They were hiring inexperienced people right out of high school, such as myself, and we produced and packaged the mines and their delivery systems.

Our mines were of two distinct shapes and applications, although both were delivered in the same manner and made of the same materials. The anti-intrusion mines were about one-inch square in size and made of cloth in camouflage colors.

These tiny mines were designed to be widely scattered from their helicopter-borne pressurized containers over an area to monitor enemy movements. Once stepped on they exploded causing a noise similar to a M80. They were not designed to cause injury but then again you wouldn't want to hang onto an exploding M80. The anti-personnel mine had a substantially larger explosive charge loaded in a similar cloth bag of triangular shape. This mine was made to inflict casualties and was supposedly able to blow a man's arm or leg off.

I also enjoyed the author's tale of the "pickle" switch. I spent a couple of interesting years (1970-72) with Marine Corps helicopters and know personally of a few humorous (though not at the time) episodes involving external lifts. Thanks for the interesting, amusing and thought-provoking articles you present monthly.

Craig Schluter
E. Wareham, Massachusetts

"Oops Ops" took me back to the five years I spent in the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant. We produced the "mini-mine" and yours is the first reference I have seen to them in open literature, possibly because they killed more Americans than VC and all involved would like to forget them. These devices were made at several plants, but IAAP held out to the bit-

Continued on page 20

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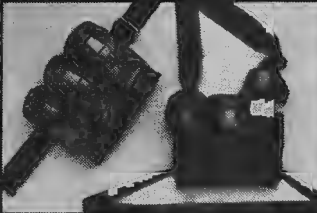
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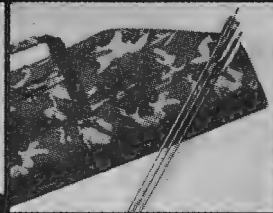
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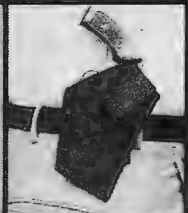
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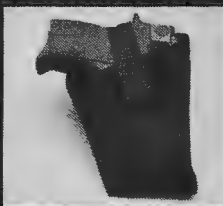
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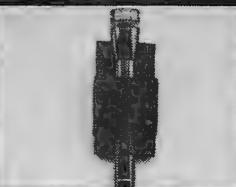
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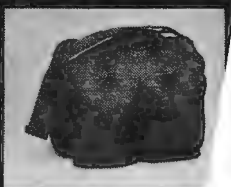
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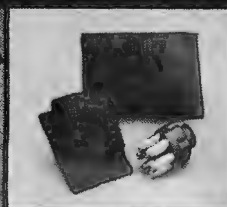
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FROM ASSAULT SYSTEMS



BLACKJACK'S BACK

Reports of Blackjack Knives' demise, it seems, have been greatly exaggerated. Mike Stewart and company are still in business contrary to what you may have read in *Adventure Quartermaster* (SOF, December '88) and other sources. It appears Blackjack pulled up its stakes and moved up the road a bit without letting too many people know.

On the upside, this allows me to again urge you to check out their wares. Blackjack's top-of-the-line Mamba (pictured below right) is now available in its final production version. This 9-inch, cold-rolled tool steel blade was first featured in this column in October '87. It sports one of the sharpest edges I've encountered on a production knife, primarily because of the steel used in its construction and because Stuart individually grinds a Moran-type edge on each Mamba before they're shipped to the customer. Though it will set you back \$149.95, Mamba is worth the price and features a lifetime guarantee against breaking and dulling. Few will require a no-holds-barred combat knife like this, but if you're looking for near-custom quality at an average-guy price, you can't miss with Mamba.

If Mamba's price proves too tough to swallow, check out Blackjack's offerings in the lower end of the price spectrum. For \$129.95 you can own a Marauder Mk I (pictured below left) which comes in 16- or 9-inch (\$79.95) versions and can be drafted into service as an adequate all-around machete/combatsurvival knife.

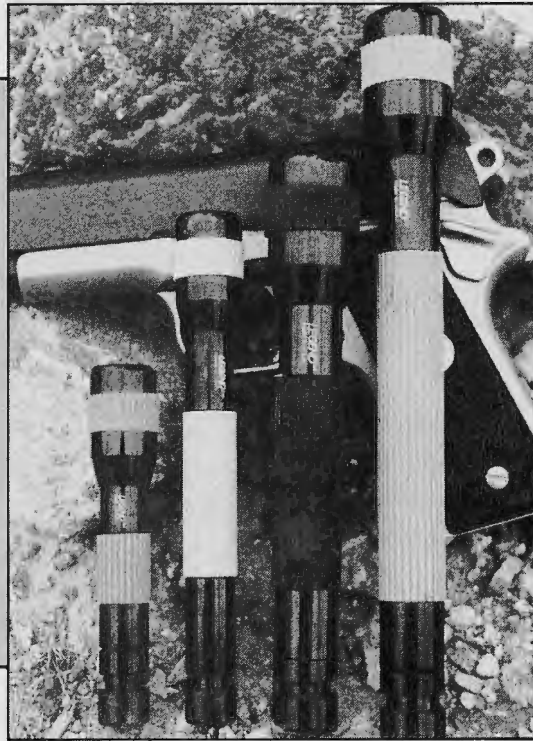


If you're after something more esoteric like a dagger or even just a good folding lockblade, Blackjack can fill the order. I suggest you write or call to get their catalog.

Contact Blackjack Knives c/o Catocin Cutlery, Dept. SOF, 17 South Main, Smithburg, MD 21783; phone (818) 902-9853.

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER

by Tom Slizewski



LIGHTING UP YOUR FOE

Flashlights are an important component in the kit of every professional who earns his living with a firearm. Particularly when you fight in the shadows of the asphalt jungle, target identification and sight acquisition are mandatory criteria. In this scenario, a 90° GI flashlight with its red filter just won't cut the mustard.

Don Keller, an ex-cop, started the trend toward sturdy high-intensity flashlights oriented toward the law-enforcement market with his now-famous Kel-lite. Recently, so-called mini-flashlights have flooded the police/self-defense market. Keller's new Legend series of mini-flashlight is superior in every way to the competition.

Fabricated from aircraft-grade aluminum with an anodized finish, they're fitted with a computer-designed parabolic reflector for maximum candlepower. Beam focus is pre-set and can be adjusted from spot to flood. With the head removed, the high-intensity bulb also serves as an area light. O-rings provide waterproof seals throughout the unit and double O-rings at the head offer sharper beam alignment and precision fit. Rubber sleeves on the head and barrel provide

a secure gripping surface and they are available in eight different colors. There are four models: 1-AAA, 2-AAA, 2-AA and 3-AA (denotes number of batteries and type). Candlepower ranges from 1000 to 3000 and price from \$18.99 to \$22.99.

That's great, but there's nothing so far described that cannot be found on many other mini-flashlights. However consider that the Harries technique of night pistol firing, as taught by Jeff Cooper at Gunsite, employs a modified Weaver position in which the flashlight is controlled by the support hand. An off/on pressure switch is absolutely essential for this, as the light should be turned on for no more than half a second before firing and moving quickly to a new location. Every other mini-flashlight I've examined is turned on or off by rotating the head. This just won't do. All of the Legend series of mini-flashlights have a unique push-button switch at the base of the barrel. Pressing the switch with the thumb and then releasing it will momentarily provide the light required to make your adversary. That alone is worth the price of admission.

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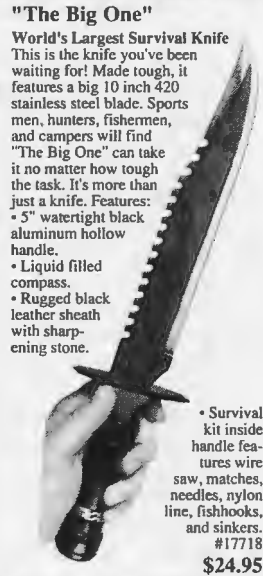
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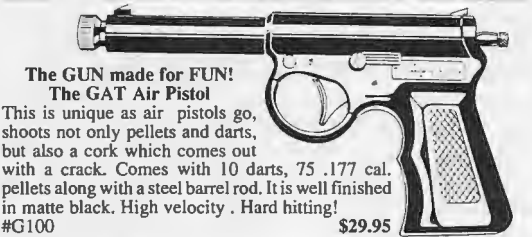
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THE Beaver landed with a bump and the tires made a high-pitched whine on the perforated steel runway as we coasted toward the end of the airfield. I absently noted there was but one runway and the jungle on both sides was covered with a thick layer of red dust. We coasted to a stop and the pilot turned to me and pointed to a lone building to the east of the airstrip.

When I opened the door and stepped down to the steel runway, the heat struck me like hammer. I gathered up my rucksack and weapon and moved away from the aircraft. I turned to wave at the pilot and he gave me a thumbs up sign. I couldn't see his eyes through his tear-shaped aviator's sunglasses, but he was smiling.

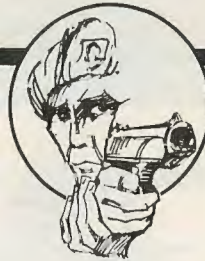
A thick cloud of dust kicked up by the propwash prompted me toward the lone building, as the pilot idled his tiny aircraft toward the far end of the runway. I watched him spin the Beaver around, gun the engine and begin his take-off. He hurtled past me, the engine whining like a mad hornet, banked and headed back south. It was 1000, 23 July 1964, and I was in Dong Ha, South Vietnam.

At 23 I was cocky and completely sure of myself. A week ago I was half-way around the world in the Panama Canal Zone. At my going away party, my buddies and I had talked about this very moment. Back at the Canal Zone, it was easy to talk of kicking behinds and taking names. After all, any good Special Forces troop could lick at least a dozen Viet Cong.

As I walked toward the building, I thought back to Basic Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Jump School and Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and of Medical School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Along with Vietnamese Language School at Monterey, California, I had trained for over two years for this. Yet, when I walked through the open doors and into the dusty waiting room, a lump began to build in my throat.

At six feet, I was head and shoulders above everyone. About a dozen Vietnamese soldiers were sitting on a low bench along the wall of the terminal. My eyes briefly met those of a Vietnamese soldier in dusty sweat-stained camouflage fatigues — he quickly glanced away. In that brief instant, something passed between us. There was something about his eyes.

I glanced down at my own immaculately tailored fatigues, spotless boots, and well-oiled weapon, and a feeling of uneasiness crept up my spine. In Saigon, at my in-country briefing, I had been told I would be replacing a Sergeant McIntire, the Intelligence NCO of ODA 233 (the 12-man A-Team operating in the Phu To District,



I WAS THERE

by Paul L. Penuel

Looking Death in the Eye



"The bones of hapless human beings lie scattered in countless numbers... I stared ever harder into the jungle."

one of the northernmost districts in South Vietnam). All my buddies slapped me on the back, congratulating me. Phu To was a "hot spot," some even called it the "rock pile." I would really be in the thick of it there — things were looking up.

A speaker blaring out shrill Vietnamese startled me back to reality. The Vietnamese soldiers were getting to their feet, slinging on their rucksacks and weapons. God, what a sloppy bunch. Their weapons were filthy and cooking pots hanging from their rucksacks banged together with such a clatter that I almost laughed; they must sound like a herd of water buffalo in the jungle. As I watched them slowly form a line and walk through the front entrance toward a line of dusty trucks, I wondered absent-mindedly why some of them were carrying extra weapons and rucksacks. The soldier who had briefly sought out my eyes was carrying three rifles. Some of my self-assuredness was beginning to slip. As I watched the slowly departing line of soldiers, I couldn't forget his eyes. It was as if he were staring at something, something far away.

I became aware of a soft voice behind me, "Trund Se, you are new adviser for Phu To?" When I turned around there was no one there. My eyes slowly angled downward finally coming to rest on this 4-foot-10-inch

miniature Vietnamese soldier. A chortle welled up in my throat and almost escaped as laughter, but was hauled up short when I met his eyes. Deep pools of dark brown blended the pupils into almost a nonexistence. Though obviously staring straight at me, they seemed to be focused on something behind me. I had to control an urge to look over my shoulder.

Slowly it dawned on me that this boy-size soldier was speaking to me. "Sergeant Duc Hoa, you new man for Phu To?" As I was the only American there, it was more of a statement than a question. I managed to find my tongue long enough to answer that I was, whereupon he told me Sgt. McIntire was outside with the jeep. Quickly, gathering up my ruck and weapon, I followed the tiny soldier outside.

Once again I was struck by the heat, the eight weeks in Panama hadn't completely prepared me for this. It was as though a warm damp towel had been thrown over my body. Thick red dust immediately sought out the dark patches under my arms and between my shoulders. Vietnamese peddlers suddenly sprang from everywhere. Each one had something to sell; an old woman was shoving American Winston cigarettes toward me, I could clearly see the words, "Not To Be Sold — Donated By VFW Post 2080 For The Troops In Vietnam" stamped across the carton. New-issue jungle boots, soft drinks, Australian bush hats, it was all available on the black market.

I pushed my way through the sea of cone-shaped straw hats to the waiting

jeep. Sgt. McIntire was busy unlocking a series of heavy chains wrapped around the steering wheel and secured to a heavy steel loop welded to the floor of the jeep. An unlocked jeep would last only until the owner was out of sight.

I remembered McIntire then. He was in a Special Operations class before me. A big friendly man and physical training nut, he spent a lot of time in the weight room. McIntire was shaking my hand and smiling, at least he seemed to be smiling, he didn't seem to look at me. I told him I remembered him from Fort Bragg; he couldn't place me until I reminded him of an incident in which I fell while running up the bleachers at Gabriel Parade Field, knocking a visiting Iranian bigwig head-over-heels. He remembered me and we laughed.

Sgt. McIntire volunteered to ride back to Phu To and show me around. I could see his packed bag in the back of the jeep and assured him Duc Hoa could get me back. I could tell he was anxious to leave. There was a moment of awkward silence when he took his bags from the jeep and after I threw mine in. There was another moment of awkwardness as he shook my hand again. For the first time, he looked directly at me. He squeezed my hand hard, swung around and gave Duc Hoa a hard slap on the back and was gone.

I'd waited for this moment for over two years, yet in the back of my mind I had a nagging feeling I can't explain. My thoughts were interrupted by Duc Hoa spinning the jeep starter. I barely made the seat before he popped the clutch and was speeding for the gate, completely heedless of the people scrambling to avoid being run down.

Dong Ha was just a dirt airstrip at the intersection of Highways One and Nine. Highway One headed straight north to Hanoi, and Nine headed west to Phu To. The dirt strip quickly faded as we headed west for Phu To. In less than a minute we had reached the Vietnamese-manned road block and as we cleared the last roll of barbed wire, Duc Hoa pulled to the side of the road and took a battered flak vest from under the seat and placed it on the seat beneath him. I didn't have any idea why he was doing this, yet I didn't want to ask. After all, I was there to advise him. Before I could embarrass myself, he said, "land mine." I felt my face getting warm but he pretended not to notice as I took off my vest and placed it on the seat beneath me.

As we pulled back onto the road, he told me everyone called him "Duke." He began to tell me about the area. Until then, I'd been so absorbed in my thoughts I hadn't noticed the dark green beauty of the countryside. Some 35 miles north of Hue, the old capital

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of Vietnam and nearest American presence, this was once the hunting grounds of kings — elephant and tiger being the most sought after prize — all long-since gone.

It was 13 kilometers from Dong Ha to Phu To with nothing in between, no friendly forces, American or Vietnamese, just 13 kilometers of blacktop winding through the jungle. I began to stare hard into the jungle.

We were less than halfway to Phu To when we came to a blown up bridge. Duke downshifted and slowly slipped the jeep into the shallow stream. As we crossed the stream, I could see that the timbers of the bridge were still smoking. The heavy smell of explosives hanging in the air caused my nose to burn. I felt my scalp tighten and my hands begin to sweat. I stared harder into the jungle.

As we cleared the stream and the jeep tires began to hum on the blacktop again, Duke told me that the bridge was blown last night for the fourth time in as many weeks and each time the Popular Force (a Vietnamese reserve unit) guarding it ran at the beginning of the attack. I made a textbook remark about a well dug-in defending force being able to hold off a much larger attacking force, and would have gone on in greater detail had I not noticed his white knuckles on the steering wheel and his nervous glances at the gloomy jungle on both sides of the road.

I began to get that tingling feeling on the back of my neck and I guess that's when I realized just who I was and where I was. All around me lay a jungle whose floor held the rusting bodies of aircraft once capable of supersonic flight; 50-ton tanks now immobile, their guns silent, reduced to so much scrap metal. The bones of hapless human beings lie scattered in countless numbers. I began to feel very small and insignificant. I stared ever harder into the jungle.

At every curve in the road, at the crest of every hill, I exhaled a deep breath that I had sucked into my lungs somewhere, sometime. Every misshapen tree, every rock caused new lines of sweat to break out on my brow. I stared into the jungle.

After what seemed a lifetime, we rounded the last curve, and could see the earthen embankments and concertina wire of the compound. I heard Duke exhale a long sigh of relief as he lifted his foot from the accelerator, allowing the jeep to coast to a stop in front of the command post. For a moment we both just sat there, breathing deeply, then he glanced at me and we both laughed nervously.

I got out of the jeep and walked around to the driver's side to pick up my ruck. I caught a glance of myself in the mirror and saw the eyes staring back at me. Then I understood. ☒

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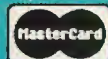
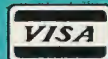


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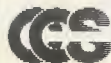


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AS the Land-Rover rounded a corner on the long, dusty road near Fort Victoria, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), my attention froze on a large tree lying across the road. Slamming on the brakes and counter-steering a skid, we came to rest about two meters from the obstacle. Then the ambush was sprung.

"The old tree-across-the-road-followed-by-an-ambush trick," I thought. "Hope they forgot the Claymore! Glad they forgot the land mine!"

Reacting instantly with counterfire is what saved our lives, because it had the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) terrorists already fleeing before we dismounted. Honest to God, it looked like the Olympic 100-meter finals viewed from the south end of the stadium. The after-action silence made it feel like the ambush never happened. After quickly reorganizing, we were happy to find no casualties. Already, only about a minute after the encounter, the enemy was hundreds of meters away — with no sign of slowing down.

Organizing ourselves into a follow-up group took only seconds, and leaving a security group to look after the vehicle, we moved out. But where to? And to do what? How could we possibly catch up with an ambush group that melted so fast into the bush? Tracking, my friends, tracking. Tracking is the skill (some call it an art) of pursuing the enemy by following the signs he leaves behind. For in their haste to flee our counterfire, they left enough clues to allow us to follow them. And follow we did. And not only follow them, but catch up with them, and kill them.

Now, how do you track? How do you read the signs the enemy leaves behind? Sign (or spoor) falls into two main categories: ground spoor and aerial spoor.

Ground Spoor, as the name implies, is sign found on the ground. Examples are footprints, disturbed earth, overturned rocks, etc. Aerial spoor is found above the ground in the form of trampled grass, broken bushes, broken cobwebs, etc. (Maybe your mother wears combat boots, but mother nature doesn't — look for any signs which nature does not make).

Upon locating tracks, we need to study them to learn at least three things:

1. Approximate number in the group.
2. Age of the spoor.
3. Direction of travel.

Determining the number in the group is accomplished as follows:

1. Measure off 30 inches (or the length of one stride) along the tracks between two points.



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

Tracking Techniques for Predator and Prey



You don't have to learn how to follow footprints in the sand, but to an experienced tracker footprints in the sand will tell a lot more than which way the bad guys went. These footprints are along the Nuanetsi River, a region then troubled with guerrillas from Marxist Mozambique. Photo: Al J. Venter

2. Draw two lines at right angles to the tracks at those two points.

3. Count the number of footprints between the lines — this will give you the number of people who have passed through the area.

This technique is very simple, but it only works accurately up to about 10-12 people.

Estimating the age of a footprint is a little harder. Tracks, especially human footprints, lose their sharp edges over time because of wind, rain and sunshine. Wind erodes the prints, rain washes them out and the sun dries

prints that are in mud. It is especially important to consider what the weather was like over the past few days to judge the age of the spoor accurately. Has it rained recently? How much did it rain? Has it been windy?

Age of aerial spoor can be judged by the state and position of trodden vegetation. Long grass, for example, is resilient and will spring back after being walked on. Also, the juice inside the blades will make freshly trodden long grass somewhat damp. If such grass is completely dry when you come upon it, the spoor is obviously not fresh. Unfortunately, only practice and experience will teach you how to judge the age of tracks accurately.

Direction of travel is determined with a compass. However, don't be fooled into thinking that the initial line of travel won't change. It will usually take about two kilometers to accurately determine the true direction.

Now that we have recognized tracks, estimated the number of enemy, know

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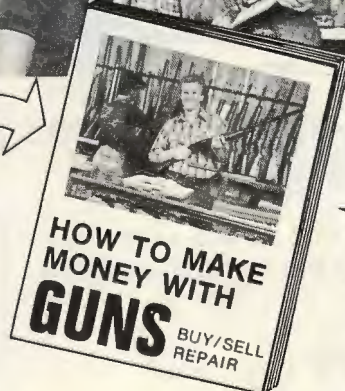
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how much of a head start they have, and know the general direction of travel, we can deal with how to *follow* tracks.

Before moving out, it is important to find an actual footprint or bootprint. We call this "confirmed spoor." Aerial spoor is not confirmed spoor. Ground spoor that is not an actual print of a boot or foot, like overturned rocks, crushed leaves, etc. is not confirmed spoor either. So the rule is to start out on *confirmed* spoor. The tracker must memorize the characteristics of the prints (tread pattern, if any, and size) which he encounters so that he doesn't become confused later if he encounters a different set of tracks.

Track with your head up and look about 10 feet in front of you. New or inexperienced trackers typically look at the ground nearer their feet and tend to miss tracks farther away. This tends to slow the rate of tracking. Remember this: You must track at a faster pace than the enemy is walking if you want to catch up with him.

Do not walk directly on the spoor, but rather to the side, so as not to obliterate it.

It is easier to track into the sun, than with it at your back. This is because the sun casts a shadow on the indentations of the bootprint, making it easier to see. When tracking away from the sun, this shadow cannot be seen so what you do is to track alongside of the spoor and occasionally look over your shoulder, down at the spoor. This gives you the same view as if you were tracking into the sun.

While tracking, the tracker must be constantly alert for booby traps and possible ambush sites. If your tracking is successful, at some point you will be catching up with the enemy, and it's not a good idea to be caught off guard. Possible ambush sites should be cleared before passing near them. Examples are small hills, thick bushes, narrow defiles, etc.

Occasionally, due to the nature of the ground, time of day (tracking at noon casts little or no shadow) or tracker fatigue, the tracks will be lost. Now what?

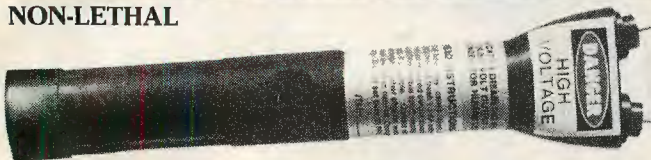
Go to the last confirmed spoor and draw a line behind it, across the tracks. Stand behind the line, take time to survey the landscape in front of you, then ask yourself "Where would I go if I were walking along here?" Look for the logical line of advance, and then go check it out. If you find the spoor again, continue to track. If not, go back to your line and do a 360° circle. It goes like this: Using your last confirmed spoor as your starting point, walk 15 meters forward and walk in a circle around your point looking for tracks. Keep enlarging this circle until tracks are found, then continue tracking.

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available light at the end of the day. In this case, you have to sleep on the spoor and continue in the morning, obviously starting at first light.

The skill of tracking is valuable because a group with the ability to track and read tracks can engage enemy units that they otherwise could not. It only stands to reason, then, that an understanding of this skill will also enable them to better hide their own tracks when on patrol. And that brings us to anti-tracking — how to avoid being the *trackee*.

Though it is virtually impossible to avoid leaving spoor, certain techniques can be employed to minimize detection. The aim is to make the job of the enemy tracker as hard as possible and *maybe* you'll be lucky enough that your anti-tracking techniques will defeat his tracking ability. However, keep in mind there are those who can track you no matter what techniques you employ. In such cases, since you can't outwit the enemy tracker, you can buy yourself some time through deception and a consistently fast rate of march that will keep you one step ahead. Hopefully you will avoid contact until dusk, at which time he will literally have to stop dead in *your* tracks. You, on the other hand, continue to make tracks, but in a night march, slipping farther away in the process.

Let's look at some proven anti-tracking techniques. First, examine the sole of your boot. Vibram soles and jungle boots are a Christmas present to a good tracker. If you have no choice as to your boots, tie a sandbag over them to cover the tread pattern. A smooth sole is naturally harder to track than a cleated one. In Africa we were issued a high-topped, smooth-soled boot called "boots clandestine" and they worked very well.

Second is patrol technique. Try at every opportunity to walk on ground that is hard or rocky, double back, split into groups, change boots, or take them off and walk barefoot for a while. This can throw off, slow down or confuse a tracker, even a good one. One of the best ways to avoid being tracked is to kill the tracker! Sniper fire, a well-placed booby trap, or doing a dogleg and ambushing your own tracks will definitely take the fighting edge off a follow-up group.

Tracking and anti-tracking are skills that are difficult to learn but very much worth the effort. Practice definitely makes for proficiency. At times your patience and perseverance will be tested because you might be on tracks for days only to have them "disappear" into thin air. Learning these skills can breathe a lot of confidence into individual soldiers as it helps them

Continued on page 76

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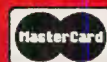
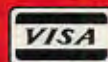
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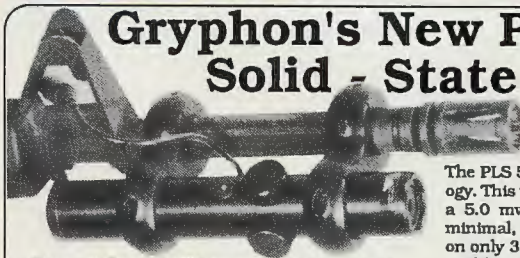
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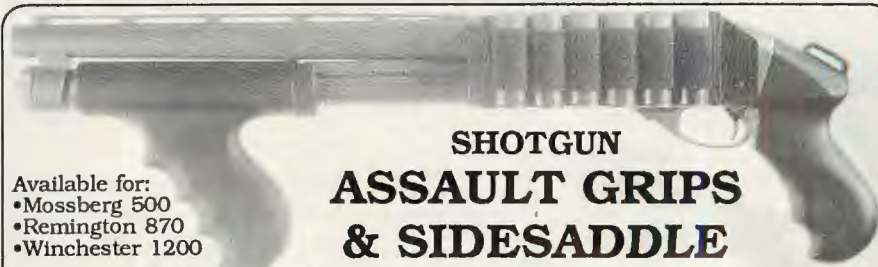
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Continued from page 8

ter end. They were composed of slurry, poured from a beaker into a small cloth bag which was quickly sewn shut on an air-powered sewing machine by some poor unenlightened woman who thought the pay was worth a little risk. The completed mines were tossed into a can full of liquid Freon, with these periodically being emptied into the canister from which the mines were dispensed over the jungle. When the canister was full it was sealed and the pressure checked (there was a gauge on each one for safety's sake) and the canister was then stored until enough were ready to ship to Vietnam.

I have been told that the first time these things were deployed, they blew the tail off the carrying aircraft. They had such a poor record with pilots that many canisters were said to be simply jettisoned over the target area. They killed several people employed at IAAP and destroyed one warehouse. The guy who was quality engineer late in the project was so, shall we say prudent, that he never actually went into the sewing and packing area.

I'm told there were two or three sizes of the things. The smaller would cause minor injuries, mainly being a noise-making and harassment device, while the larger ones would blow a foot off. I only saw the virgin bags several years after the project's termination. They were in the "fixed price store" where anyone could go once a week to buy whatever was available. There were around six to eight pallets of them, two deep and four feet tall each. Guessing 5,000 per cubic foot, that equals a lot of bags. I am guessing they probably held something like 15-20 grams of HE, based on their size. That is definitely enough to blow your hand or foot off; it's about 10 times the amount of HE in a No. 8 blasting cap.

The fake animal droppings were real too, weird as they sound. A friend showed me one a few years back. As I recall there was a telltale switch or connector hole, perhaps 2mm in diameter on one side. Close examination showed that it was obviously not a real dropping, but who in his right mind goes around picking up turds and scrutinizing them? Yessir, with so much ingenuity on our side where did we go wrong?

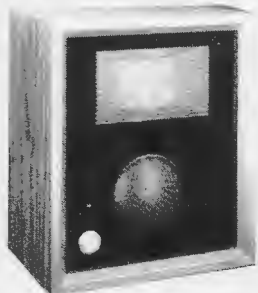
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Continued on page 87

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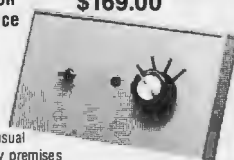
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HOTEL RESERVATIONS: Rooms at the Sahara Hotel are available at \$56.00/night S/D plus 7% tax. The Sahara Reservation Line is 1-800-634-6666 or (702) 737-2111. Cutoff date for room reservations is August 17, 1989. Less expensive rooms are available at the El Rancho Hotel, one block away. Phone 1-800-634-3410 or (702) 796-2222. In all cases you must identify yourself as being with the Soldier of Fortune Convention.

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- Situation Report: Southern Africa Col. Frederick Rindel
- History of Air Commandos BG Heinie Aderholt
- Explosives and Explosive Devices Maj. John Donovan
- Survival Medicine John Peters, M.D.
- Courthouse Terrorism Tom Spencer
- Wound Ballistics: Handgun Bullet Effectiveness Alexander Jason assisted by Peter Kokalis
- The Ineffectiveness of Handheld Automatic Weapons Jeff Cooper
- The History, Development & Deployment of Assault Rifles and Submachine Guns Peter Kokalis
assisted by Ken Hackathorn
- The War in the Phillipines Tom Marks
- Today's Navy SEALs Naval Captains Smith and Jones
- Afghanistan After the Russians David Isby
- Turmoil in Central America David Courson
- The Devil's Bodyguard*, The Life & Times of Duff Matson Allen Pope and Duff Matson

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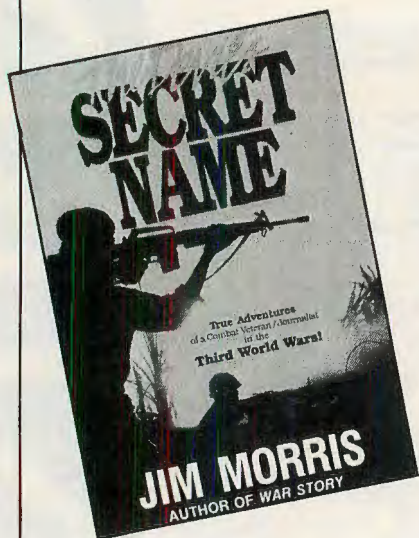
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1989 CONVENTION

THE DEVIL'S SECRET NAME. True Adventures of a Combat Veteran/Journalist in the Third World Wars. By Jim Morris. Darling Books, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 20050, Canton, OH 44701. 1989. Cloth. 304 pages. Indexed. \$18.95. Review by Don McLean.



WRITERS with a point they wish to make will usually lead the reader down an artful path of reason and/or polemics to a conclusion. This path, no matter how smoothly lain before the reader, and no matter how predisposed the reader may be to agreeing with the writer, can often be a boring and colorless — even painful — journey. Not so **The Devil's Secret**

ROLLING THUNDER. By Mark Berent. G.P. Putnam's Sons, Dept. SOF, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. 1989. Fiction. Hardcover. 369 pages. \$19.95. Review by Dana Drenkowski.

IT hits you between the eyes like an AK-47 round: fast, hard and lethal. Berent's **Rolling Thunder** pulls no punches as it describes the war the fighter pilots fought and lived in Vietnam. Berent was a fighter pilot, forward air controller and staff officer during his three tours in that war, earning the Silver Star and two Distinguished Flying Crosses among his numerous other medals. He was unique in getting to see the war from both the grunt's and pilot's perspective and that's clear from his book. He knows the terrain well and he is able to put some light on VC/NVA tactics and procedures from a personal level.

His heroes are a U.S. Army major, a fighter pilot, and a non-flying Air Force

IN REVIEW



Name. Author Morris makes no bones about the fact that he has drawn some definite conclusions from his experiences and observations as a soldier in and reporter of Third World wars, but he presents his case through a series of true, colorful, artfully seasoned war stories that come as close as anything I've read to being a video in paperback form.

Readers will get the feeling they are with Jim Morris as he unravels this series of true vignettes staged in Southeast Asia, South America and the Middle East, and will readily perceive the common pattern Morris detects in the communist-instigated insurgencies and "wars of liberation" on these three continents. Morris was an SF officer in Vietnam, and in 1973 he returned to fight as a free lance on behalf of the Montagnards in Cambodia with whom he had soldiered in Vietnam. These brave people had been essentially abandoned by the United States, and nobody seemed to care.

A decade later, when Morris returned overseas as a reporter for SOF and covered seven wars on three continents, he began to see a predictable pattern to these wars of liberation: the setting was predictable, the Soviet-

inspired insurgency was predictable, the insipid U.S. response was predictable, and the ignorance and apathy of the public at home was predictable, as it resulted from an equally predictable slant and coverage by the U.S. press. Morris brings the reader to the inescapable conclusion that these were one and the same war whether set in the jungles of Cambodia and El Salvador, or on the streets of Beirut. Yet this is not a political treatise. Morris takes the reader with him via colorful, easy-reading detail to experience what the author saw-heard-tasted-smelled-felt, then lets the reader draw his own conclusions from these recurring footprints along his trail of reason.

As a bonus, one vignette captures in a single crystal — for those who have never had the pleasure and wonder what he's *really* like — our publisher and Honorable Leader at SOF, Robert K. Brown.

Highly recommended reading for those who enjoy war chronicles; *must* reading for those desiring insight into how national policies and practices in the USA and USSR translate to life at ground level for those fighting — or fought over — in the Third World Wars.

type whose job in the back seat of a FAC O-1E Bird Dog exposed him to as much danger as the other two men. Berent's own combat experience both in the air and on the ground allows him to describe life under fire better in both areas than anyone else writing about the Vietnam War today. I could smell the sweat, gunpowder and shit, hear the sharp *crack* of incoming rounds, feel the sweat trickle down my back and face — and feel the anger and fear as I relived combat through this book. You'll know when you're halfway through what it's like to "see the elephant" or "hear the eagle scream" as we used to say about combat. I've seen and heard, and know what Berent writes is from the heart.

But Berent brings more than just a good tale of wartime survival and life between battles. His story includes behind-the-scenes activities of certain politicians and generals in Washington as well. Written as fiction, the reader will know immediately what is actual fact taken from Berent's own knowledge of events at decision-making

levels of the U.S. government. He includes explanations in their own words of why and how tactics were decided by men who were playing P.R. scenarios, not war.

For example, Berent relates what is now well known from other historical sources to be true: that when SAM missiles were first seen being moved and emplaced in North Vietnam — the beginnings of a modern, sophisticated air defense system soon to shoot down hundreds of American fighter planes — President Johnson and his cronies refused to allow his generals and admirals permission to strike them *before* they became operational. His unbelievable rationale? That by not hitting the missiles when it was apparent we could do so would send a message to Hanoi not to shoot at our flyers. Casualties among the Soviet technicians, LBJ and SecDef MacNamara reasoned, might make the Soviets expand their role in the war. So the missiles were allowed to go into place un-

Continued on page 80

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CPM-1000 PROFESSIONAL RF BUG DETECTION UNIT Wide band detection up to 2 GHz. Portable and rechargeable. L.E.D. bar graph monitor, silent or active search modes, tone generator, etc. Incorporates 5 most important features into one unit. Great to use alone or with our CMS-3 package. \$2,495. (Ship/Insur. \$25.). Best portable R.F. detection unit on the market.

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TAKE-DOWN



H-S Precision's New Convertible-Caliber, Match-Accurate Magnum

Text & Photos by
Peter G. Kokalis

Type 2 rifle (another reworked Type 99) was adopted which featured a barrel locked in place with a tapered wedge. Accuracy was never more than mediocre.

Prior and subsequent to then, take-down rifles appeared, and often quickly disappeared, in calibers ranging from .22 rim-fire to true magnums, and in turn-bolt, lever-action, semiautomatic, and slide-action configurations. The concept is appealing and has attracted potential users from the military and law enforcement to backpack-

THERE'S nothing new about the concept of a take-down rifle. During World War II, the Japanese developed a take-down rifle for issue to airborne units. Standard-issue Type 99 bolt-action rifles were modified to accommodate a special

barrel with interrupted threads at the chamber end that mated with threads on a sleeve attached to the front end of the receiver. Called the Type 100 (often referred to by collectors as the Type "0"), it proved to be unsuccessful. Eventually, the so-called

SNIPER SYSTEM



H-S Precision's unique and highly accurate multi-caliber, take-down sniper rifle can easily reach out and touch someone at 1,100 meters downrange.

ers. However, take-down systems have always suffered from an inability to hold zero, or repeat the point of aim, after the barrel has been removed and re-installed. This deviation may be acceptable for 50-yard plinking rifles, such as the Marlin Model 39 series, but it just won't do for long range precision sniping.

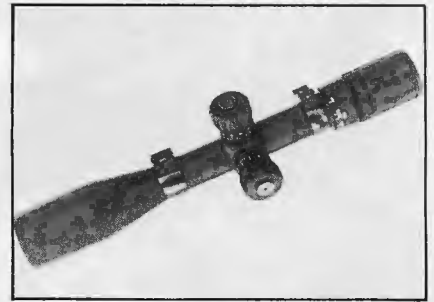
H-S Precision, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 512, Prescott, AZ 86302, phone: 1-800-222-0353) has introduced a multi-

caliber, take-down rifle with the right stuff for those who feel the need to reach out and touch someone 1,000 meters or more down range. With more than 35 years of experience in rifle barrel production and over 20 years experience in plastics and chemicals, their HSP762/300 multi-caliber (7.62x51mm NATO and .300 Winchester Magnum), take-down rifle should meet the Mission Essential Need Statement (MENS) of numerous military and law enforcement organizations, as well as those who are merely enamored with accurate rifles.

At the heart of the HSP762/300 rifle is a unique method of mating the take-down barrels with the receiver. Three sets of interrupted threads at the chamber end of the barrel mate with an equal number of interrupted threads on the front of the action. There's nothing special about that, but what follows is. A receiver bracket, attached to the stock's aluminum bedding block by two large allen-head bolts, interfaces with a matching barrel bracket attached to an aluminum block in the forearm (also by means of two large allen-head bolts). After the barrel and receiver groups have been twisted together, closing a locking lever on the underside of the forearm (reminiscent of the take-down levers on the beavertail forearms of most double-barrel shotguns) moves a steel pin, to which it is attached, through a hole in the barrel bracket into a corresponding hole in the receiver bracket to securely lock the rifle's two major components together. To accommodate for thread wear and provide perfect alignment each time another barrel is slapped onto the action, a collar above the barrel's chamber can be adjusted by a spanner wrench up to a maximum of two thousandths of an inch (that's not enough to affect headspace).

Manufactured from 416-R stainless steel, HSP762/300 barrels are 22¾ inches in length. They are black oxide finished and feature a hardness of Rc 28-32, tensile strength of these match-grade tubes is 130,000 psi minimum with a yield of 115,000 psi minimum. Elongation has been held to 15 percent minimum. There are six deep longitudinal flutes on each barrel which remove 1¼ pounds from the original weight. Contrary to popular belief, fluting of this type has no effect whatever on cooling. This configuration increases stiffness by 26 percent over an unfluted barrel of the same weight. It also reduces low frequency vibrations that can adversely affect the barrel's harmonics. The cut rifled bores have six grooves. The right-hand twist, which is held to ±0.125" from specified, is 1:12" for 7.62x51mm NATO and 1:10" for .300 Winchester Magnum (In general, the rate of twist should increase as the weight of the bullet in a given caliber increases).

To accept .300 Winchester Magnum cartridges (15mm longer than the 7.62x51mm



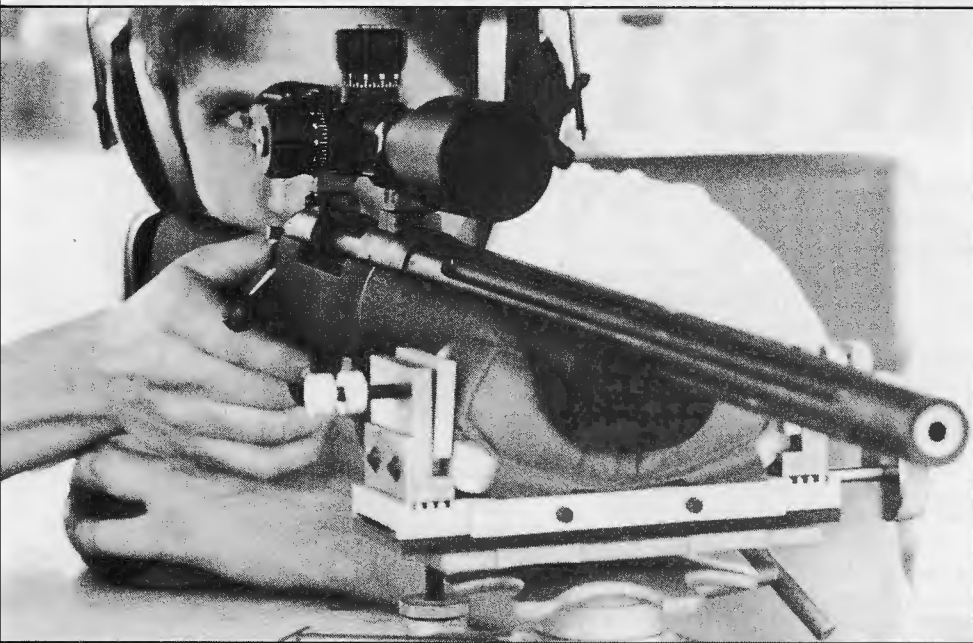
Bausch & Lomb's new Mark I 10X scope was designed specifically for those situations where quick ranging of targets-of-opportunity is required.

NATO case), the well-proven Remington M700 long action has been employed. It has been equipped with Remington's highly regarded 40X trigger mechanism fitted with external adjustments that permit a trigger pull weight up to six pounds maximum. SOF's test specimen was adjusted to a crisp and consistent two-pound pull weight. These actions are noted for their especially fast lock time (the time it takes from completing the trigger pull until the firing pin strikes the primer).

Some have criticized the Remington M700 action because its extractors are supposedly difficult to remove if they break. In my opinion, this is utter nonsense. The U.S. Marine Corps and numerous law enforcement agencies, such as LAPD SWAT, have used Remington M700 actions for decades and never complained about extractor failure. In fact, Remington extractors are considerably stronger than those found on many other turn-bolt designs, including the illustrious Winchester Model 70.

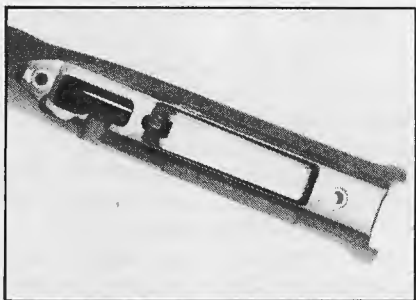
Legitimate criticisms of most turn-bolt sniper rifles are their usually limited magazine capacities and the difficulty of recharging them quickly. HSP762/300 rifles are all equipped with the Kwik Klip conversion manufactured by Trexler Industries, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 4550 Bath Pike, Bethlehem, PA 18017 — phone: 215-974-9800). This unit consists of a precision-cast, anodized aluminum trigger guard and magazine-well and a detachable box magazine. Capacity of the all-steel magazine is four rounds in caliber 7.62x51mm NATO and three rounds in .300 Winchester Magnum. A 10-round magazine is also available. The latter is more than sufficient for the majority of anticipated sniping scenarios and there is, of course, no limit to the number of additional magazines that can be carried on Load Bearing Equipment (LBE). The spring-loaded magazine catch-release is located immediately forward of the trigger guard.

All of this rests in a truly state-of-the-art stock designed by H-S Precision. The Pro-



ABOVE: Bench rest tests of the HSP762/300 demonstrated its sub-MOA accuracy potential in both 7.62x51mm NATO and .300 Winchester Magnum.

LEFT: Using interrupted threads and a unique bracket and locking pin system, barrels can be changed on the HSP762/300 in a matter of seconds with no effect on group size or the point of impact.



Fabricated from a Kevlar/graphite/Fiberglass composite, an aluminum bedding block is molded into the H-S Precision Pro-Series stock to eliminate the more conventional Bisonite bedding process.

Series Sniper stock is the result of more than a year of research and development. Using a unique bedding-block system, the accuracy potential matches that obtained by the laborious epoxy (Bisonite) bedding process. In addition, the Pro-Series Sniper stock offers 100 percent interchangeability. Fabricated from a Kevlar/graphite/Fiberglass composite using epoxy-based proprietary resins to enhance its strength, durability and warp-free characteristics, an aluminum (7075-T6) bedding block is molded into this composition with a polyurethane foam reinforced with Fiberglass. This foam gives the stock its strong, solid feel. The stock is then finished with an epoxy-based high-temperature coating (in either black, black/gray or olive/

black) which is both non-reflective and non-slip. The completely adjustable buttplate assembly is made from high-strength aluminum alloys (anodized according to MilSpec MIL-A-8625 Type D). The length of pull can be adjusted from 12 to 14 inches. While usually fitted with Uncle Mike's ½-inch recoil pad, our test specimen was equipped with a one-inch Pachmayr Decelerator® pad. The underside of the stock is fitted with a stud to accept an Uncle Mike's quick-detachable sling swivel.

The forearm is constructed in the same manner and also contains an aluminum block for added strength and rigidity. It has been attached to the barrel with a flexible adhesive that does not compromise the system's accuracy potential. Two studs on the underside of the forearm accommodate a sling and the Harris bipod.

Whenever possible, heavy sniper rifles should be fired in the prone position from a bipod to maximize the practical accuracy potential and minimize position disclosure. I am not an advocate of the Harris bipod. It has too many bits and pieces and in its standard configuration is not very substantial. However, SOF's test rifle was equipped with the new Harris 1A2 Ultra-light bipod. Shorter and more compact, it's considerably more sturdy than the standard Harris bipod. There is no provision for rotational movement, but the command height can be adjusted from 7 to 9½ inches.

Rifles of this quality deserve only the very finest of optics. The HSP762/300 is normally fitted with a Leupold Ultra M1 or M3

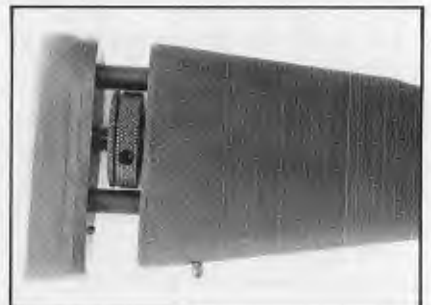
10-power scope. It's an excellent piece of glass, but in my opinion, the new Bausch and Lomb (Dept. SOF, 300 N. Lone Hill Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773 — phone: 714-592-8000) Mark I 10X is superior. Nitrogen-filled, completely fog-proofed and designed specifically for those situations where quick ranging of targets-of-opportunity is required, a three-quarter Mil Dot reticle pattern is featured with eight dots, each 3.5 MOA apart, on both the horizontal and vertical crosshairs. Its second-focal-plane reticle pattern is centered, and as the range or windage drums are altered, the crosshairs do not move in the field of view. Weighing 1.35 pounds, the elevation and windage drums have click values of ¼ MOA. Each full revolution of the drum equals 12 MOA of travel with appropriate numbers at each whole minute. Index marks on the drum shafts indicate every complete revolution of travel. Both drums can pass through 12 revolutions (six to the right and six to the left on the windage drum). The total possible compensation is thus 144 MOA for both windage and elevation.

There are separate focus and parallax adjustments at the ocular end of the scope. Parallax adjustment index lines are marked for 50, 75, 100, 150, and 200 meters and infinity. Parallax shift is negligible. The objective diameter is 40mm and the ocular measures 32mm. At 87 percent, the light transmission is marginally superior to the Leupold 10X-M1 Ultra. Machined from a single piece of thick-wall tubing, the 30mm-diameter scope tube has a black-anodized matte finish. The eye relief is 3.6 inches. Overall length of the scope is 13.75 inches.

The Bausch & Lomb Mark I 10X was interfaced with the HSP762/300 rifle using the superb EAW (Ernst Apel, Dept. SOF, D-8708, Gerbrunn, West Germany) quick-detachable pivot mount. A rear-extended EAW 30mm ring is required to mount the B&L tube onto the Remington M700 long action. Mounts of this type have been used on European hunting and sniping rifles for more than a century. Repeated removal of the scope had no effect on zero.

There are no so-called "emergency" or "back-up" iron sights on the HSP762/300. Ask me if I care. The MilSpec scope and its

The buttplate assembly is made from high-strength aluminum alloys and the length of pull can be adjusted from 12 to 14 inches.



sturdy mount are not any more fragile than numerous other components on the rifle. There seems to be no end of dubious redundancies requested by blue sky rangers who still expect the package to weigh in at under six pounds. Snipers work in teams. Armed with M16A2s, the other team members are supposed to provide the firepower required to extract the entire team from the wet and sticky stuff.

Complete with two barrels, two bolts (coated with molybdenum disulfide to reduce position disclosure), scope and mounts, two magazines, Harris bipod and barrel spanner wrench, the HSP762/300 comes packed in a high-impact, rotationally molded polyethylene case lined with polyurethane foam. This case meets MilSpec requirements and is similar (but much smaller and more compact) to the M24 Sniper Weapon

System (SWS) case. The HSP762/300 case measures only 23x17x9 inches. Each rifle weighs about 12.5 pounds and the entire system in the case weighs about 35 pounds. The price for this rig, with either the Bausch & Lomb or Leupold scopes, is \$4,700. If that startles you, just remember that the U.S. Army is paying \$4,495 for the M24 SWS with only one barrel that can be changed only by an armorer.

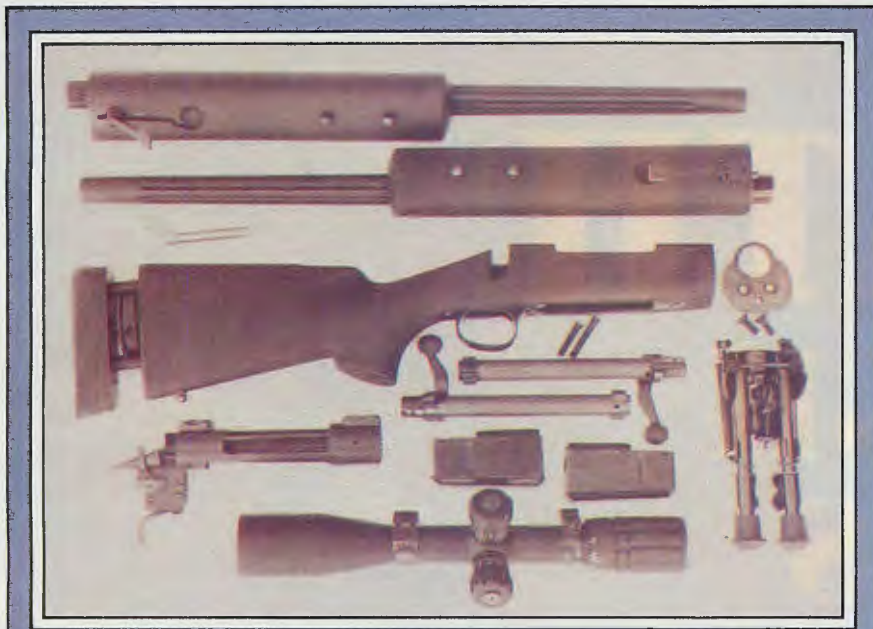
Why should we field a sniping rifle in two calibers, and more specifically, what justification is there for selecting two .30 caliber cartridges like the 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Winchester) and .300 Winchester Magnum (7.62x66B)?

Although it is far too powerful for a selective-fire assault rifle and somewhat less powerful than the World War II-era infantry rifle cartridges it replaced, the 7.62x51mm NATO round remains an excellent choice for General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs) and sniping rifles. Developed as the U.S. T65 cartridge during the 1950 Light Rifle Trials, it provides these latter weapons with an effective range out to about 800 meters.

The performance of U.S. M80 7.62x51mm ball ammunition is characteristic of most non-deforming Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) military projectiles. For the first 6-7 inches of travel through living tissue, the bullet remains point forward, and the wound track is no larger than .30 caliber. At 8-14 inches of penetration, the bullet yaws 180 degrees, after which it passes through the body base-forward with total penetration of about 25 inches. Where bullet yaw is at its maximum, 60 to 120 degrees, a large temporary cavity is produced, and the height of the permanent cavity will increase to 1.16 inches (the length of the 150-grain boat-tail projectile) maximum. As long as the jacket material remains a rather ductile copper alloy, there will be no fragmentation, and increasing the size of the permanent cavity by yaw is all we can expect.

There are some anticipated scenarios where snipers must reach out beyond 800 meters. In those instances, the 7.62x51mm round will not cut the mustard. If shooters can be trained sufficiently to tolerate its increased recoil, the .300 Winchester Magnum could serve admirably and extend the sniper's effective range by another 300 meters — out to a maximum of about 1,100 meters.

Introduced in 1963 purely as a hunting round, the .300 Winchester Magnum cartridge has found favor in recent years with high-power target shooters when loaded with heavy bullets (190 to 200 grains). The case is belted, which is to say that there is a belt, or reinforcing band, around the case body ahead of the extractor groove and on which the case headspaces. (Headspace is that distance from the bolt face to a point in the chamber that prevents further forward movement of the cartridge case as the rifle is fired.) This belt adds strength to the case



HSP762/300 multi-caliber, take-down rifle, disassembled.

HSP762/300 SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:** 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Winchester) and .300 Winchester Magnum (7.62x66B).
- Operation:** Right-hand bolt-action; Remington M700 long action.
- Feed mechanism:** Detachable box type; 3- (.300 Winchester Magnum, 4- (7.62x51mm NATO) and 10-round capacities.
- Barrels:** Stainless steel. Fluted exterior. Take-down system locked by interrupted threads; interfaced with receiver by matching bracket plates; alignment adjustable and retained by locking pin. Six-groove cut rifled bores with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches for 7.62x51mm NATO and one turn in ten inches for .300 Winchester Magnum.
- Barrel length:** 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inches.
- Sights:** Optical only. Either Bausch & Lomb Mark I 10X or Leupold Ultra M1/M3 10X.
- Finish:** Black oxide except for bolt group which has molybdenum disulfide finish.
- Stock:** Pro-Series; fabricated from Kevlar/graphite/Fiberglas composite with aluminum bedding block. Length of pull adjustable from 12 to 14 inches.
- Price:** \$4,700; complete with two barrels, two bolts, scope and mounts, two magazines, Harris bipod, barrel spanner wrench and MilSpec high-impact, rotationally molded polyethylene case.
- Manufacturer:** H-S Precision, Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 512, Prescott, AZ 86302. Phone: 1-800-222-0353.
- T&E summary:** Unique take-down feature provides compactness and multi-caliber capability. Exceptional sub-MOA accuracy potential. Reliable M700 long action. Excellent scopes and mounts. Heavy. Expensive.

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SOF COIN OPS

DEATH IN HIGH PLACES

**Guatemalan Chopper
Crew Runs Guerrilla
Gauntlet**

by Morgan Tanner

Photos by David Bjorkman

BACK TO GUATEMALA

Morgan Tanner, a 10-year veteran correspondent for the Colorado-based National News Service, regularly covers the war zones of Central America for SOF. Tanner recently returned to Guatemala after a detour to report on the gang/crack connection threatening cities across the United States (see "Crack in America" and "Crack in the Heartland," SOF, June and July '89.)



AS we wait for the Bell 412 helicopter to lift off the Guatemalan air force base tarmac, I'm reminded of someone's definition of a chopper: a million spare parts flying in formation.

"We fly subject to how the weather and the parts are holding up," says Captain Julio Cesar Santamarina, one of Guatemala's first chopper pilots.

Guatemala City's air force base is one of the very few places in the country where helicopter pilots lifting off the ribbons of tarmac that run between the base and the drab matchbox that is the commercial terminal must watch out only for incoming jetliners, not for the 7.62 and 5.56 rounds that accompany most landings in Guatemala. In the thin sun of this early March morning even the giant, in-bound Aero-Nica(ragua) plane isn't a threat as it touches the runway.

However, the Guatemalan air force's (FAG) only operable Bell 412 helicopter doesn't seem to be going anywhere soon. At 0930, it's nearly two hours after the 412's designated departure time, and the cammie-painted, decade-old, twin-engine chopper sits silent while its crew performs open heart surgery on it.

The forward troops in the Red Zone [area of major fighting] of northern Quiche need the beans that the chopper is supposed to deliver today, and the mission depends on the crew's ability to play Mr. Fix-It. Except in the worst emergencies, the altitude of the mountain camps north of Nebaj is too steep for FAG's Hueys, and the other 412s and 212s are in the sick bay behind us, neatly

LEFT: To counter the guerrillas' new, improved methods of downing a chopper, the 412s were outfitted with these lightweight ASPID rockets from Argentina. It took the army nearly a year to fit them to the choppers, however, since the mounts had to be fabricated in Guatemala (the U.S. doesn't supply Guatemala with lethal aid), and the electrical connectors were hard to find.

ABOVE: Although chopper crews primarily provide supply and search and rescue support for the infantry, they also stand in for artillery support as necessary. Here personnel from Military Zone 20 look for EGP guerrillas from the Bell 412 along the road from Nebaj to Chajul in the Ixil Triangle, Department of Quiche. Especially in mountainous northern Guatemala, chopper crews are a necessary lifeline for the infantry.



Pilot Erwin Sagastume ("Top Gun" in "Winning Hearts and Mayans" SOF, November '88) flies at tree level on a hot medevac. Moments later his chopper took 14 7.62mm rounds, four of them hitting Jody Duncan. The others disabled his chopper and forced him to land in Playa Grande.

lined up in the gray hangars where they await the organ transplants that will put them into action: new compressors, transmissions, rotors. Two new blue-and-white Sikorskis on the tarmac are reserved for presidential use only.

"Little things like missing altimeters and fuel gauges are negligible," Santamarina says. "We fly without them. But sometimes..."

His shoulders rise in a helpless shrug. The pilot paces the tarmac in his OD jumpsuit, tight-lipped and silent. He swings his boot at a pebble.

"The decision to fly is always the

pilot's," says Captain Juan Carlos Espinoza, a chopper instructor with more than 5,000 hours flying time. "He stands between two seas. He wants to save lives, but if anything happens to his craft, people say he was stupid to fly."



ABOVE: Chopper unloads critical supplies between firefights in Bicalama; at 9,000 feet the nearest help is a three-hour trek away. Bicalama is one of three CPR-controlled villages the army considers strategic to the EGP (the others being Sumal and Amachel).

In Guatemala's rugged, isolated terrain, chopper crews are the lifeline of food and medicine to the infantry. This is especially true since late 1988, when the army — with its Kaibil Balam offensive — gained territory in the northern mountains of Quiche for the first time in a decade.

"The problem is that all pilots serve in the army for two years, and we have great sympathy for our troops," says Espinoza. "This makes us take chances."

A few more minutes of impromptu mechanics, and the co-pilot climbs into the Bell 412 and starts its engines. The pilot gets in and the crew chief, tall and thin in his loose cammies, with a hooked nose that hints at a Mayan heritage, motions us into the chopper. His name is Rodila, he shouts, but the rest of his introduction is yanked into oblivion by the churning wind of the blades. Someone runs up with two extra flak jackets, borrowed for us from off-duty pilots. We put them on the canvas seat Rodila motions to and sit on them.

For starters, the 412 lifts a few feet off the ground and hovers over a strip of coarse, dry grass beside the tarmac. The pilots check the gauges, and Rodila cocks his head to listen to the engines. A few shouted words, and suddenly gravity takes a holiday as the chopper rises vertically and the earth falls away.

The craft is empty except for a wooden crate of 7.62x51mm ammo sitting in the center. At the opposite door, a gunner sits next to his FN MAG, and Rodila places a steel plate on the box of ammo and sits down. On the floor lies his OD flak jacket.

"They shoot at us every time," he shouts over the roar of the engines.

As the 412 rises, he makes a sign common to soldiers and taxi drivers in this Catholic country: he touches his forehead, shoulders and heart, and kisses his fingers in a final gesture of hope and faith. Rodila (his moniker is short for Roberto Diaz) studied to be a priest once, long before he joined the

GUATEMALA



Helmet and flight bag of pilot Erwin Sagastume (Penguin).

air force. Now he has 19 years in the service and, at 45, he says that he's old for this kind of work.

Gaining altitude, the chopper glides past the balconies of the swank skyscraper hotel, the El Dorado, and over the neat stucco homes in Zones 9 and 10 north of the airport. A man on the roof of a highrise is mowing a patch of grass, and beyond that lies the walled home and grounds of the Minister of Defense.

The affluence of Guatemala's well-to-do gives way to the tin-roofed shacks of a shantytown and some aging office buildings turned a soot gray by the city's dense pollution. Suddenly the chopper rolls and plunges like a roller coaster at the amusement park. The chopper pilots commonly buzz the buildings where their wives or girlfriends work, leaving them with a secret message in the whirl of the sky-mixer's blades.

The chopper pilots could fly this route to the Red Zone north of Nebaj in their sleep. This Red Zone is one of four in Guatemala. Captain Erwin Sagastume took us on this route last year, four days before his chopper took 14 incoming 7.62 rounds, four of which blew away the bone in Air Commando Association's Jody Duncan's left leg. The year before that, we took this route with Capt. Santamarina. On that mission his was the forward gunship that was sent into the mountains to mark a band of guerrillas with smoke bombs for follow-up by the A-37 bombers. The flight to Nebaj takes about 40 minutes by chopper or six hours hard driving by Jeep.

Below the chopper, on the city's northern border, deep canyons dissect the land and are the reason Guatemala City occupies its present location. After the first two capitals were destroyed by flood and earthquake, the capital was located near the canyons in the hope that they would absorb the shock of earthquakes like pleats in a giant accordion. Beyond the city to the north lies a high, fertile plain that flanks the country's central highlands. The Pan American highway is a thread of asphalt before it swerves west, and the chopper follows an ancient road of dirt and cobblestone that ascends the mountain passes.

"People think Guatemala is flat and hot, but it has three distinct flying zones," says Espinoza.

"It is like you wrinkled up a handkerchief and dropped it on the table," explains Santamarina.

The Pacific coastal lowlands in the south are mostly flatland ranches and farms that offer plenty of room for forced landings. The north, near the border of Mexico, is a humid, virgin jungle with 120-foot trees where a chopper can crash and still be 50 or 100 feet off the ground. The third zone, the "Fire Belt" or central highlands, has 34 volcanoes, some as high as 12,000 feet, with trees as dense as hairs on a husky.

"The pilots are trained for every terrain and know how to adjust the altitude charts," says Espinoza. "In 1977, after the big earthquake, the U.S. sent Chinooks and UH-1Hs to help, but the pilots destroyed them because they didn't know our conditions."

Guatemalan chopper pilots spend two to three years as co-pilots before they are put in command of a craft. According to Espinoza, chopper flight instructors have 5,000 hours flying time.

"Experience is our life insurance," he says. "Instructors in Salvador have maybe 400 hours. To them, I say 'Good luck.' Not even the U.S. has as much experience as we have in fighting guerrillas — even with Vietnam."

After nearly 30 minutes flying time,



Bell 412 chopper circles to land in LZ at Amachel, a forward army base on top of a mountain in the Red Zone in northern Quiche. Amachel is one of three critical Committee of Popular Resistance areas that the army classifies as important in wresting control of the area from the Guatemalan Army of the Poor guerrillas.

Rodila gets up from his steel seat on the ammo box and points ahead to a notch in the mountains. He pulls on his flak jacket.

"From those peaks, they can shoot straight into the chopper," he shouts.

The heartbeat of the chopper rumbles up the canyons like mechanical thunder, giving the guerrillas plenty of time to climb the mountains before the chopper flies past. I remember the phrase SYA, Save Your Ass, and opt for protecting my chest instead. I pull on the borrowed armor. As the craft nears the mountain pass, Rodila braces his

hands against the door and leans out, scanning the ground for guerrilla activity. His sharp eyes search the ground for movement like a hawk looking for a mouse.

Guatemala's Bell 212s and 412s are "N mode," built for civilian use in peaceful conditions. Because of Guatemala's 30-year fight against the guerrilla insurgents, the choppers' windshields have been bullet-proofed, along with the pilot's and co-pilot's seats, but the crew members were sitting ducks until an American individual donated flak jackets and helmets to them. The pilots and co-pilots wear chest plates that stop 7.62 rounds. As the crew chief, Rodila wears chest and back plates that weigh nearly 50 pounds.

"But that's less than a 5.56 round weighs," he jokes.

In the late 1970s, when the Air Force got its first Hueys, the guerrillas ran when they heard the dull thud of the blades. But times have changed, says Captain Rudy Pozuelos, a chopper pilot with nearly 4,000 hours flying time. He was the last Guatemalan pilot to receive chopper training at Ft. Rucker in 1977 when U.S. military aid to Guatemala was cut, and the first to return for instructor training in 1985.

"In the beginning, the guerrillas knew the chopper was coming in to support the infantry, and they hid," he says. "Then they began to apply information learned in Vietnam. They discovered how vulnerable a chopper is — more vulnerable than dangerous, and they developed tactics against us. They stopped running and started shooting."

The Kaibil Balam offensive put a major dent in the strength and number of Guatemalan Army of the Poor (EGP) guerrillas of the northern mountains when it fractured the 19th of January and 31st of January companies. The army estimates that there are fewer than 500 armed guerrillas in Guatemala. In March 1989, the country's Red Zones of active fighting were in the mountains near Chimultenango (60 kilometers north of the capital), on the volcano Acatanango (near Fuego), in Solala near Lake Atitlan, in the mountains north of Nebaj, and in the Playa Grande near Mexico.

"We believe they are more or less in groups of 10 or 20," said Santamarina. "At this point, they have very little support from the FMLN, Cuba, Mexico and Nicaragua."

But it takes only a couple of men to destroy a chopper and decimate its crew. Most of the rounds taken on board the choppers are 7.62 from FN MAGs, FN FALs or M60s and 5.56 from M16s or Galils. The chopper pilot killed most recently died on 7 July 1988. He was flying a 412 when a 7.62 round passed through the corner of his seat, entered his arm, and twisted through his chest. Only one day before his death, the crew chief of that same craft was critically wounded when guerrillas shot at the chopper as it was coming into the LZ. A round entered his abdomen below his flak jacket.

"The guerrillas have learned how to set up a fire curtain," said Pozuelos. "They all stand in a line and continuously shoot up

RIGHT: Soldier in Amachel, with 5.56mm Galil, waits with family of refugees that asked army for help and protection. It is not uncommon for the chopper crews to transport refugees and guerrillas, and these will be flown to Nebaj for medical attention and processing for resettlement. The flight takes 10 minutes and saves a 10-day walk through rugged mountains infested with guerrilla patrols.

BELOW: Soldier with M79 grenade launcher near Chimaltenango.



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ABOVE: Chopper pilot Carlos Garcia experienced a real hair-raiser when a 5.56mm round entered the back of his helmet and exited over his forehead, barely missing his skull.

into the chopper with 7.62 FALs or FN MAGs, aiming from the cockpit back on full auto."

Because the choppers are at their most vulnerable at the low speeds and low altitudes near the LZ, the pilots try to spiral over their own troops as they land. To counter this protective measure, Pozuelos says the guerrillas have been taught to measure the distance and flying speed of the craft using sticks placed in certain increments.

The pilots' reaction to this was to fly two ships together — one as protection. Also, the choppers' armaments were improved. The old M60s, which continuously jammed, were replaced with FN MAGs. And Pozuelos helped equip some of the choppers with ASPID rockets from Argentina. These lightweight (100 pound) rockets, which are also sometimes called *mamboreta*, hold seven one-meter long rounds. It took several months to install them while the air force searched for the right electrical connections and manufactured the mounts to hold them. These parts weren't available from the U.S. because they are considered "lethal," according to Pozuelos.

"When we are under fire, our first thought is to fix their position and fire back," he says. "If there's time, we ask for fixed wing support."

Once through the pass, the chopper overflies the Indian town of Nebaj and instead spirals into the gravel LZ of Actzumbal, a tiny settlement a few kilometers north. Below us on the ground, some two dozen Indian men dressed in their traditional white pants and shirts are helping soldiers raise a tree trunk painted white and sporting an orange sock on top. They stop as the chopper lands, squinting their eyes shut and turning their backs against the wind-blown rocks that hurtle against them like tiny, stinging missiles. They hunch over, presenting their backs to the chopper, and cov-



ABOVE: Before the 412 chopper leaves Actzumbal, its crew aborts the day's mission due to engine problems, and the chopper limps back to Guatemala City for repairs. The flight altitude was nearly 12,000 feet to give more time in case of a crash landing. An Air Force A-37 Dragonfly bomber accompanied the chopper on its return flight, to provide cover in the event it went down and pinpoint the spot for a rescue.



Soldiers load captured EGP guerrillas (in blue shirts) into chopper for flight to the army base in Nebaj for interrogation.

er their necks with their bare, brown hands.

On the ground, the pilot leaves the engine running. Ideally, the choppers are down for less than 30 seconds in these rudimentary LZs, and when the worst of the dust blows past, the grunts double-time it into an underground storehouse, and scurry back out with big, white sacks on their shoulder. The cloth bags each contain hundreds of cans of bean paste, the salvation of the forward troops. The soldiers dump them into the chopper until Rodila shouts "enough," and the chopper lifts off in a swift vertical lift to clear the mountains.

"Amachel," Rodila shouts, indicating the primitive, isolated settlement that is our

first destination in a series of forward camps in the Red Zone, including Caba, Sumal and Sumalito.

When we were here last, a year ago, Amachel had only just been wrested from the control of the guerrilla faction known as the EPG, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Ten days hard hike from Nebaj, the troops in Amachel rely on the chopper for food, ammo and medicine.

"We can carry anything, and also fight and rescue," says Rodila. "The chopper is the weapon of the pilots."

In less than 10 minutes, Amachel is beneath us, a labyrinth of slit trenches and a few stick huts — a couple with roofs of corrugated tin that was carted in on mules. It has the outposts and bunkers of a forward camp. Like chalk marks on a jail cell wall, empty bean paste cans mark the time the infantry troops have occupied Amachel. The shiny tin skeletons creep along the borders of the paths and have marched about half-way around the perimeter of the LZ. Before the chopper even sets down, Rodila kicks the first bags of beans out the door.

As the soldiers hurry to unload the rest of the bags, the captain in charge says that the most recent assault on Amachel was only six days ago. He guesses there are less than 200 guerrillas in the area.

"Almost every day, the guerrillas fire at us," he says.

In Amachel the chopper presents a large target for guerrilla fire, but today its arrival doesn't draw fire. Probably because of our presence, an A-37 Dragonfly bomber arrived early and softened the perimeter to suppress fire prior to our landing.

The captain stands at the pilot's window, and points to two groups of people, three EGP guerrillas guarded by soldiers and a ragged Indian family that presented itself in Amachel asking the army for amnesty and protection. Since the late 1970s, the EGP guerrillas have intimidated the rural Indians into growing and scavenging food for them.

But when the army began to occupy territory in the northern mountains for the first time ever in September 1988, over 2,000 Indians either escaped the guerrillas' control or saw the wisdom in switching sides. With hardly enough food and water for his troops and the path to Nebaj too dangerous to walk, the captain wants to send the prisoners and refugees to Nebaj on the chopper.

At this altitude, and as the spring sun warms the thin air, the chopper can't carry a full load. It is quickly decided that the three guerrillas will go first, and they are pushed aboard the chopper for the 10-minute ride to the army base in Nebaj.

"Even our supply missions aren't routine," Rodila comments.

He stands in the door, watching the terrain below until the pilot frantically points at one of the guerrillas. Rodila's jaw drops in alarm as he turns and finds one of the men untied.

"He could easily have pushed me out," he says afterward.

The chopper touches down in Nebaj for only the few seconds it takes to turn over the prisoners and then heads back to Amachel

for the refugees. Again, the group must be split because there are too many to go in one load. The soldiers help two women and five or six thin, wide-eyed children into the flying machine that lifts them out of their primitive lives — devoid of electricity or even vehicles — and into the space age. Rodila hopes the frightened children won't vomit on his boots. He hands each of them a lemon-flavored piece of candy.

But as the chopper struggles to rise off the LZ, it is apparent that something is wrong. One engine is losing power, and the crew members talk excitedly before they decide against landing in Nebaj. The town sits inside of a ring of high mountains like grounds in a teacup, and the chopper might not be able to get back up. Instead, they decide to return to Actzumbal. As the dust from the landing settles, the soldiers run toward the chopper with their sacks of bean paste, but Rodila orders them away. The women and children are hastily put off. We notice a shrill whine in the roar of the engines.

"We have engine trouble," Rodila shouts. "Do you want to stay here? We'll pick you up tomorrow."

We know the meaning of "tomorrow" in this country hampered by bad flying weather, the emergencies of guerrilla warfare, and only a couple of usable choppers. In Mananaland, tomorrow might mean three days or a week. We decide to take our chances in the ailing chopper.

As the craft is forced high enough to clear the mountains, the faulty engine screams in ear-splitting protest. The pilots coax the machine to nearly 12,000 feet — an altitude that will save fuel, increase the true speed, and avoid some of the turbulence from the mountain winds. With only one engine at full power, the chopper can't take another emergency — such as incoming rounds.

"At this height, we'll have more time to try and find a place to land if we have to," Rodila hollers.

But as far as I can see, the world below is covered with trees — towering pines on the vertical sides of the mountains and tangles of willows on the vertical sides of canyons. As a precaution, the A-37 bomber accompanies the sickly 412 back toward the base,

Continued on page 76

GUATEMALA'S BATTLE-WEARY HELICOPTER FLEET

People arriving at Guatemala's International airport can nearly inventory the country's fleet of aging, battle-weary helicopters from the windows of their Mexicana, Taca or Continental flights. Opposite the concrete, in a bunkerlike terminal sits the Guatemalan Air Force (FAG), which is housed in an ornate, blue complex that was once the main airport. On FAG's runways — mixed in among the workhorse Aravas and C-47s, the A-37 and Pilotos bombers — stand a fleet of choppers in various states of repair: Sikorskis, Bell 412s, 212s, and LongRangers, and UH-1H Hueys. We stand next to a Bell 412 being fixed for a mission by its crew.

"We are in state of calamity," Capt. Julio Santamarina says of the helicopters. "This is the first time since we got choppers that so many are inoperable and we don't have enough to go in and rescue wounded soldiers and civilians."

He lists the country's able choppers on his fingers: the ailing 412 in front of us, a 212, and five UH-1Hs. There are three Sikorski S-76As, two for presidential use and a red-crossed ambulance. FAG has seven inoperable Bell 206 LongRangers and four inoperable 412s, all lacking spare parts.

"The UH-1H 111s are still flying," he says. "I don't know how."

Guatemala is in the process of buying six 10-year-old, reconditioned Bell 212s, but they will need modification to their compressors and skids before they can be put into service. And according to

Santamarina, one 412 is in Israel, with a bullet in its transmission support, where it's undergoing IRAN (Inspect and Replace As Necessary) for a cost of \$1.2 million.

"On 80 percent of our missions, the choppers take bullets on board," he says. "It is very difficult to keep up with the maintenance."

Guatemala lost its military aid from the United States in 1977, and it was reinstated by Ronald Reagan in 1984. Although it is now in the Military Assistance Program (MAP) and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, the parts are slow to trickle in.

"MAP and FMS are good programs for an air force with a good working stock," says Captain Juan Carlos Espinoza. "But we have used all our stock, so we fly until the failure of the aircraft."

According to DOD spokesman Major Mike Steppe, MAP funds to Guatemala air force programs were allocated as \$1.5 million in 1987, \$2.9 million in 1988, and \$2 million in 1989. But the helicopter parts have been slow to trickle down through the MAP program, mainly because most of Guatemala's choppers are civilian craft, rather than military. Since Fiscal Year 1986, Guatemala's parts have been supplied through a contract between the U.S. army and Bell.

"The majority of the parts (ordered) are non-standard and non-stocked within the DOD logistics system and must be procured individually as they are ordered," says Steppe. "They're not something they can pull off the shelf and ship. They are ordered through normal procurement."

According to Espinoza, a request

takes a minimum of 90 days, while major items like transmissions and blades for the Bell 412 which had been requested 18 months earlier still had not arrived in-country in March. Grease, oil, seals and pins are purchased on the normal market. The lack of parts means reduced opportunity for pilot training.

"Our training is the combat area," says Thor, the squadron's flight commander.

In 1988, 97 percent of flying time was for tactical support to the infantry, with three percent for training. Everything that can be built in Guatemala is, but parts for the aging aircraft go faster than they can be replaced.

"One of our first problems was learning what to ask for," explains General Anacleto Maza, Guatemala's Military Attache to the U.S. "We were new to this procedure, logistics is a very complicated problem, and were delayed for that reason."

The \$2 million allocated to the air force in 1989 comes from the total of \$9 million in military aid, money that must cover civic action, truck and bus maintenance, ambulances, medical equipment, tools, communication systems and updating the country's boot factory.

"Now we have computer programs and trained officers to handle requisitions," adds Maza. "We are in a good position now to handle more money."

But the lack of adequate equipment hasn't dampened the spirits of the men who maintain and fly the choppers.

"In our souls, we decide to fight, not run," says Santamarina. "We will never make the mistake the Somoza army made and run away from our country."

ANGOLA'S FORGOTTEN FRONT

SOF Correspondent Joins UNITA in Africa's Hottest Bush War

Text & Photos by Jim Hooper

During the last Cuban offensive against Dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (Portuguese acronym for National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola), it was South African involvement on the side of UNITA that focused world attention on the fighting around Cuito Cuanavale. Yet, the "Cuito front" was only part of the overall story. Equally important battles were being fought far to the north along the Benguela railway line. Here, UNITA guerrilla and semi-conventional forces successfully held superior Cuban and Soviet-adviced Angolan forces in check. Although UNITA was initially forced to abandon the strategically

and politically important towns of Munhango and Cangonga to the Cubans, three months later the positions were retaken.

This year the Cubans have again used their superiority in tanks, planes, and helicopter gunships to capture the same towns in preparation for a major thrust into the Texas-sized area of Angola controlled by UNITA. In spite of world pressure for a Cuban withdrawal, Fidel Castro's generals are preparing for their biggest effort yet in their 13-year war in Angola. American writer and photojournalist Jim Hooper recently returned from this forgotten front and filed this report.

IT was 11 days after leaving UNITA's headquarters in Jamba that we crossed the rusting, twisted remains of the Benguela railway line. We drove past the crumbling, once-beautiful Portuguese colonial town of Munhango. Ahead, a wide swath of grass burned between two forested ridgelines.

"Russian 122mm rockets," my escort officer, Captain Martin Chituku said, explaining the cause of the fire.

We passed through the smoke and entered the tree line. Minutes later we were climbing off the captured Soviet Ural truck at UNITA's forward command post for the Cuemba front. Under the trees, conical, thatched roofs sat on the shadowed, mossy

ground. Under each was a foxhole. I was led to one and shown the log and clay-topped bunker connected to it by a narrow trench.

"That's yours," said Chituku. "Use it if they start shelling us. It will save your life."

I stowed my rucksack and returned above ground. The UNITA soldiers were staring silently upward through the thick trees. At first I attached no significance to the sound until someone murmured, "MiGs."

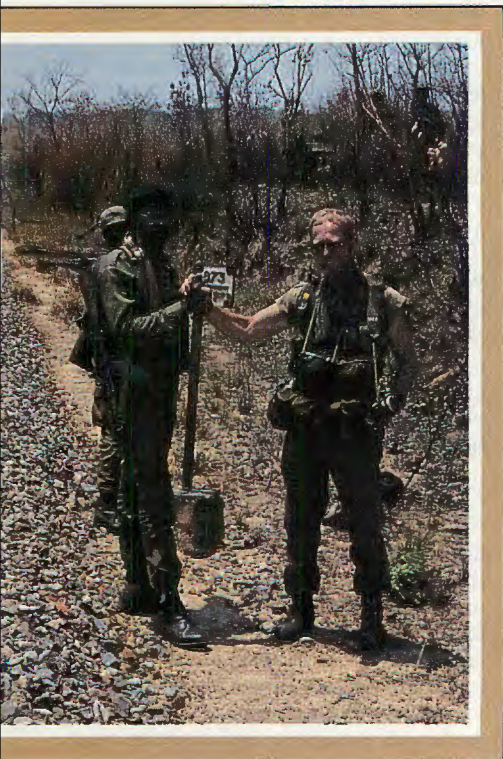
The roar of jet engines pushing Cuban-piloted fighter-bombers high above the range of UNITA's U.S.-supplied Stinger missiles became chillingly ominous — they were looking for us. Moments later we heard the deep rumble of exploding bombs



A WRITER & HIS BODYGUARD

Jim Hooper, an American photojournalist living in Great Britain, has recently spent over two years in southern Africa covering bush wars and special units. On his latest outing he visited several of Angola's combat zones, accompanied by a 15-man UNITA bodyguard. "Angola's Forgotten Front" is the first of three articles covering this war-torn country that will be featured in upcoming issues of SOF. Hooper's last feature article, "Stalking SWAPO," appeared in SOF, April '87. He's also written for *Raids*, *International Defense Review*, *Defense*, *Armed Forces* and *Jane's Defense Weekly*. His first book, *Koivet!*, was published in South Africa last year and should be available in the U.S. shortly.

Author with his escort officer on the Benguela railway line. Less than two miles behind them was the FAPLA 3rd Brigade with six Soviet advisers.



in the direction of Munhango.

"Maybe you brought us luck today," said Colonel Mbunji, the sector commander, "They were not even close that time."

The colonel, a tiny, almost bird-like man with a head dominated by sad, tired eyes, briefed me on the tactical situation.

"North of us three enemy brigades are advancing on Munhango. We are engaging them with ambushes and mortar fire. A fourth brigade which is attempting to resupply them is now three miles west of us. We are engaging them as well."

Boarding a small German Unimog truck, we drove a mile westward, dismounted and continued on foot alongside a column of grimly determined soldiers. Each carried a heavy 120mm mortar bomb balanced across his head. Our party eventually turned off the trail. The column of men and mortar bombs continued, disappearing into the trees in the direction of the gunfire.

Where we stopped more soldiers were digging defensive positions into the sandy, red clay. Along the line were mottled Land-Rovers carrying captured Soviet anti-tank weapons and heavy machine guns. Behind us two captured Soviet tanks, barrels point-

This Soviet-manufactured Mi-8/17 helicopter was destroyed on the ground at Munhango when UNITA recaptured the town.

ing toward the advancing Cubans, squatted under piles of leafy camouflage.

Could the colonel and his men stop the enemy, I asked? He shrugged and smiled thinly, half-closed eyes revealing his exhaustion. "Even with all their tanks and MiGs and helicopters we have been fighting the Cubans for 13 years. Every year we capture a little more land, every year they take some of it back for a while. We never stand if the enemy *is too strong*. Our tactics are to hit them, then withdraw into the bush. They recaptured Munhango last year, but their supply lines were *long and difficult*. In the end, our guerrilla forces cut those lines and our artillery prevented their resupply helicopters from landing. Three months later we attacked and captured Munhango again. Munhango has changed hands *many times* in this war, many, many times."

My request to move forward to the fighting was dismissed with a shake of the head. The bush was too thick for me to get pictures and the risk of capture too great. And since



the colonel expected his position to come under heavy artillery fire the next day, I would have to leave early in the morning.

Before dawn the smell of coarse Angolan tobacco wafted strong in the cold, misty air. As we made ready to board our truck, Colonel Mbutji's staff shook our hands and wished us a safe journey. "Be careful about the MiGs," one officer said, "They are not very accurate from 20,000 feet, but it is the misses you have to worry about." They all laughed at what was obviously an inside joke.

Shortly after sunup we stopped on the outskirts of Munhango. A young lieutenant, nervous with the responsibility of a journalist on his hands, greeted us. As he led me through the shell-marked town I was constantly reminded to stay on the path directly behind him. "Many mines," he kept repeating. "Many mines." Even my personal bodyguard of 15 UNITA special forces soldiers who normally fanned out protectively around me, kept in careful single file.

As we reached the railway station, a graveyard of rusting steam locomotives, the morning calm was broken by the roar of MiGs passing high overhead. There was a pause and then the sounds of exploding bombs in the next valley.

I was following the lieutenant across the dirt airstrip next to the railway line when the rolling rumble of artillery reached us. We stopped and stared silently in the direction of the Cuemba front.

"D-30's," said Chituku from experience, naming the Soviet-made 122mm howitzer. "They've started shelling Colonel Mbutji's positions."

I photographed the remains of Soviet helicopters destroyed when UNITA retook Munhango in December 1987, and we returned to the truck. As we pulled away from the silent ghost town and continued east, we could still hear the sound of Soviet artillery shells falling behind us. Less than 48 hours later Munhango would again be in Cuban hands.

We moved two days south before receiving authorization by radio from Jamba to move back up toward the Benguela front — this time to the forward command post four miles south of Cangonga which had fallen to a Soviet-advised FAPLA brigade. There Martin told me I would meet General Arlindo "Ben-Ben" Para, UNITA's chief of staff. We stopped that night in the deeply ravined, heavily forested terrain and curled up inside our ponchos under a cold drizzle. Early the next morning an officer appeared and gave us two guides, young boys who scampered like goats up and down the hills with us following.

When we arrived at the FCP (Forward Command Post) an hour later, General "Ben" was speaking on a radio. Someone explained that an under-strength FAPLA battalion had come out of Cangonga that morning on a reconnaissance of the area. One UNITA company was following them; three other companies were trying to maneuver ahead of the enemy to set an ambush, but the FAPLA unit was moving so erratically it was impossible to predict their route. Also, there had been shots

exchanged when the point elements of the pursuing company had been spotted by the trail element of the enemy battalion. In this way the FAPLA commander had been alerted that the presence of his unit was known to UNITA.

I sat on a log bench and watched. One officer monitoring another radio tuned to the Cuban air force frequency reported helicopters in-bound to Cangonga and General Ben immediately ordered pre-registered mortar fire on the base to prevent their landing. On the radio we heard the pilots saying they could not land because of the mortar fire. A FAPLA officer inside the base yelled that they needed the ammunition the choppers were carrying; they also had wounded who needed to get out. Impossible, answered the pilots, turned off and headed back to the airfield at Luso, 50 miles away.

By mid-afternoon General Ben was becoming exasperated with the tactical situation. The problem, he explained, was that there was too great a chance of two of his companies making accidental contact with each other and starting a firefight, each thinking the other was the enemy (both sides black, similar uniforms, identical weapons). Finally, he directed the one company following the FAPLA battalion to stop, then, one by one, had the other three companies fire a predetermined number of shots so they could locate each other. After that, he ordered each to pull back to the FCP, leaving the first company in place.

That night General Ben questioned the three company commanders closely, then turned to me. "Tomorrow I think we'll have them," he said with a wide-toothed smile. "Maybe even tonight if they start moving. They've stopped about a kilometer from us. With this full moon they may try to get back into Cangonga. If they come this way we have them. I've deployed our men — and your special forces friends — between us and them. If anything starts tonight, just stay in your foxhole," he grinned at me.

The FAPLA unit, operating in unfamiliar terrain, remained in their position that night and started moving at first light. By 0900 the first brief contact occurred. Thirty minutes later a second, more solid, contact was made, the sounds of automatic weapons fire reaching us easily. "OK," said General Ben, "things were a little confused for a while, but now it's quite clear. They're trying to withdraw, but we have our people to the south and east of them."

"General," I asked, "may I go down there before it's all over?"

He replied, "No," with a quick shake of his head.

With that, the firefight intensified as a mortar duel started — 82s on one side, 81s on the other. Standing on the north side of the ridgeline where the FCP was located, I could see where the fighting was happening less than a kilometer to the east. Across a narrow valley, smoke from mortar rounds and burning undergrowth rose above the forest. It was obvious that from the Cangonga base north of us the FAPLA brigade



TOP: UNITA guerrilla crosses through burning undergrowth set on fire during firefight.

ABOVE: End of the road for FAPLA soldier killed during firefight near Cangonga.

commander and his six Soviet advisers could see and hear the contact as well. At that point one of the staff officers called us back to the CP. Helicopters were again in-bound to Cangonga with supplies and to pick up wounded. Again the general ordered mortar fire but for some reason lost radio contact with his 120mm mortars. Swearing in Portuguese, he picked up another radio and spoke into it. From below our positions there were two enormous bangs as rockets from a captured 107mm B-12 multiple launcher were fired.

As on the day before, the Cuban pilots reported they couldn't get in. They broke away and orbited a couple of miles north of the base. Finally, one of the Mi-8's got inside the base, kicked out supplies and lifted off, leaving the wounded there as a FAPLA officer swore at him over the radio. Then the voice of a MiG pilot came on the

air, advising the choppers that his flight had just taken off from Luso and were in-bound at 10,000 feet. The threat of Stingers, however, made them think better of the situation and by the time they arrived over us they had climbed to 20,000, from which altitude their bombs were scattered harmlessly and inaccurately a mile away.

By this time, the FAPLA force had broken contact and were running back toward Cangonga, though not before they had gotten a fix on the B-12s which had chased the Mi-8s away.

An hour later I was working *my way* down the steep, heavily wooded slope with a full company as an escort. As we reached the bottom I noticed the already-vacant positions of the two B-12s. Re-entering the treeline, we turned east where a second company was already positioned as a flanking group for my protection. We came out of the trees again, down a steep, grassy slope, jumped across a narrow, clear stream, then *climbed hard* up the opposite slope and into the trees again. When we reached the contact area thick smoke still hung heavily among the scarred trees. A carpet of dead leaves burned, the flames spreading slowly outward. Saplings had



Patrol crosses Lungue-Bungo River in northern Moxico Province of Angola. This bridge, constructed of hardwood timbers by UNITA combat engineers, is sturdy enough to support armor.

been cut down by automatic weapon fire and mortar shrapnel. Larger trees showed bright scars where the bark had been blown off by high velocity metal.

"Even the trees suffer in the struggle for Angola," murmured Martin from behind me. Graves were already being dug for two bodies in dirty, tattered FAPLA uniforms. Two lightly wounded UNITA soldiers were being bandaged by a medic. As usual, I marvelled at how much ordnance could be expended for so few casualties. I snapped off a few photos and we retraced our steps, reaching the FCP just before dark.

As we sipped weak tea, General Ben asked if there was anything I'd like to see in particular. I explained that I wanted to reach the Benguela railway line as close to Cangonga as possible. There was a pause as he glanced at his staff sitting on log benches around the fire.

"Yes," he said, "I can arrange that. But you crossed the Benguela at Munhango. Why do you want to see it again?"

"That was two days before the Cubans and FAPLA reoccupied Munhango and Cangonga," I explained. "They are saying they control the entire line. I want to see if they're right."

"OK," he nodded, "We'll get you up there tomorrow. Be ready for some hard, fast moving, maybe three hours there and three back. Actually, you could reach it in less than an hour if we took you directly there. But the rules of guerrilla war are that you never move in a straight line, you stay off trails, keep in the bush, and never come back on the same path you use going in. Of course, you'll still be in easy range of the mortars and D-30s at Cangonga."

Next morning we moved out, and again I had a full company as escort, plus my personal bodyguard of 15 who seemed to take it as a direct insult that I needed more protection than they could provide. As we moved through the thick bush and forest, elements

of a second company, already prepositioned to provide additional security, appeared at regular intervals. Occasionally our long snaking column would halt as our point men moved forward to make contact with these positions.

We were 30 minutes away from the forward command post when there was the sound of a D-30 firing from Cangonga. A few seconds later we heard the round explode far behind us. Spotting rounds. A minute went by before half a dozen D-30s began a five minute barrage. Unknown to us at the time, the grid reference the FAPLA battalion commander took back with him had been very accurate; as we were moving toward the railway line, the FCP was taking a serious hammering. All the rounds were anti-personnel. Tree bursts showered the position with razor-sharp shrapnel. The stories we heard on our return six hours later were hilarious; people diving three at a time headfirst into one-man foxholes. Fortunately the only injury was a minor leg wound. The only thing we knew was that we were not the target.

The closer we came to the railway, the more cautious the men around me became. Five hundred meters from our goal we were stopped by a wiry lieutenant colonel who stepped out of the forest. He spoke quietly with Martin and the company commander. Martin turned to me and said in a whisper, "From here no talking until we reach the railway." As we started moving again I began seeing freshly dug positions on either side of us. UNITA soldiers with AKs, RPD light machine guns and RPGs at the ready crouched in them and stared into the bush. It suddenly struck me that my casual request the night before to see the railway line had necessitated a serious logistical exercise for these officers and men, all of whom were obviously under strict orders to see that I didn't get hurt. This was not a simple and disorganized African guerrilla army.

When we appeared at the edge of the bank above the railway I could see more soldiers crouched in the bush on the other side. Chituku explained that we were only a mile and a half from the FAPLA 3rd Brigade at Cangonga. An officer appeared, looked carefully left and right, then crossed over to us. He briefed Martin and the lieutenant colonel before Martin nodded at me and pointed toward the tracks. "Walk only where he walks," Martin said, pointing at the officer who had come across the tracks. "We've placed a lot of mines along here in the last 13 years."

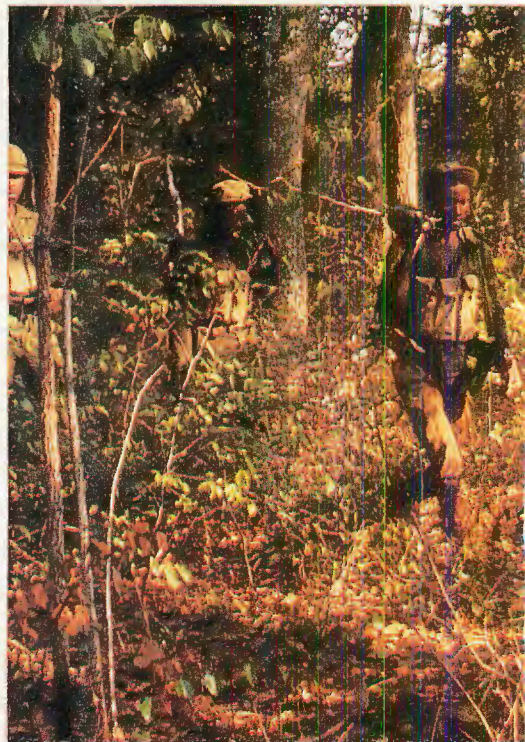
"Does he know where they are?" I asked.

"No one knows anymore," he answered, "so just walk where he walks."

"Shit!" I thought.

As soon as I got my photos, we began our return march, taking a route 100 meters south of the one we had used coming out.

Portaging 120mm mortar rounds, UNITA guerrillas run toward fighting near Cuemba.





We had covered half of the return trip when we stopped to take a break. The radioman established commo with the FCP and quickly waved the lieutenant colonel to the radio. I saw him speak into the handset and look quickly at Martin, waving him over. At a hand signal we were all immediately back on our feet and moving again, the word whispered from one man to another — no talking.

Another FAPLA battalion had moved out of Cangonga under cover of the artillery barrage and found our very fresh trail. They immediately dug in and set up an ambush. They radioed Cangonga (their communications were intercepted by the FCP) that a UNITA force of at least battalion size was in the area and were told to remain in ambush position until we came back that way. The simple dictum of guerrilla warfare of never taking the same route twice had moved us a lucky 100 meters south.

Our force turned south to move farther away from the ambush position. Fifteen minutes later we heard the sudden crackling of AK fire behind us. One of the security elements had made contact with a small FAPLA reconnaissance team from the

UNITA forces now employ this Soviet-made T-55 tank after capturing it in perfect condition.

ambush force. My escort officer shoved me forward and we began running. My personal bodyguard of 15 UNITA special forces surrounded me with a cordon sanitaire as others stopped to set up a blocking group. My protestations that I wanted to stay for photographs were ignored as we moved as quickly as possible through the thick bush. Soon, we heard the first WHU-WHUMP of a mortar bomb exploding 300 or 400 meters behind us. The firing reached a crescendo then became sporadic and finally stopped completely. The reconnaissance team had withdrawn.

When we returned to the forward command post we learned that FAPLA reported that they had made contact with a small UNITA patrol and lost two men killed. They believed our main force had not yet returned and were somewhere north of the Benguela railway line. Two days later they were still waiting for us in the ambush position. We were pleased to let them remain there. ✕

ROCKET



Business end of a 12-tube 107mm Type 63 multiple rocket launcher, with rockets visible in tubes. Type 63s have since been augmented by more powerful 122mm Sakr system. Photo: Sayd Ehsanullah

WARRIORS

Muj Missilemen Torch Reds for Fun and Prophet

by David Isby

THERE are some problems that yield to fair words and reason, others to strong and skillful litigating. A few require high explosive. The Communist regime in Afghanistan is one of the latter.

Rocket fire is more blessed to give than receive. It is edifying to watch the Afghan resistance give a demonstration of why this is the case with one of their multiple rocket launchers. The rockets are lifted out of their

ROCKET MAN

David Isby, one of the world's foremost experts on Soviet weapons and tactics, has kept a close eye on the war in Afghanistan since it began. Here he discusses two of the weapons systems that helped turn the tide against the Red Army.

wooden, olive green packing crates, which will later serve as firewood or building material. Rolled gently onto a tarpaulin, each rocket is cleaned and fuzed, three Afghans handling each in turn with more smartness than I thought possible. Each readied round is shouldered by two Afghans and gently carried with a sure and rhythmic tread over the rocks to the launcher's firing position. The rockets are seated in the tubes

and contacts are attached; a sharp, metallic click announces, in turn, that each is ready to fire.

Mountstuart Elphinstone, the first British official to visit the Afghans, wrote in 1815:

"To sum up the characters of the Afghans in a few words: their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious, and prudent; and they are less disposed than the nations in their neighborhood to falsehood, intrigue, and deceit."

Brezhnev evidently hadn't heard of this before he ordered the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. (In 1988, Soviet Afghanistan experts were writing articles saying they warned him, but the brain-dead old bastard probably wouldn't listen). He seemed to think the sight of Soviet tanks would restore the situation in a few months. What he found was the largest national rising of the 20th century. A decade later, not only was Brezhnev dead, but his successors were trying to undo much of his legacy, including the war in Afghanistan.

Afghans are really nice people, just never get them mad at you. One of the requirements of *Pushtwali* — the code of the Pathans, the men who were loading the rocket launcher — is *badal* (revenge). This means each blow given must be returned, preferably harder and at a better target. To the men loading the launcher the rockets are more than high explosives; they are installment payments on the owed *badal*.

The Afghans may not be great with organizational skills. Politically and diplomatically they suffer from deep divisions and bitter backbiting. But they are good at handling weapons, whether the long percussion *jizail* of their grandfathers or high technology tools of death of the 20th century. The British found this out the hard way in 1880, when Afghans armed with repeating rifles and breech-loading artillery, the high technology of their day, inflicted a humiliating defeat on Queen Victoria's Army at Maiwand.

Each rocket is now seated in its tube, their gray nosecones obscured by the olive drab metal of the launcher. The launcher's chipped paint testifies to its hard use, but secure contacts and lubricating oil are evidence of proper maintenance as well. The mujahideen wait in the deepening twilight of the dying autumn day. Normally, there would be a forward observer with a radio to pass corrections to the firing position, but today the rocket launcher is already ranged in. Its firing wires run to cover, and the backblast area is cleared.

In response to an inaudible command, the first rocket explodes from its launch tube, followed at about four second intervals by the other eleven, each making a roaring whoosh and spewing flame from the tube as it fires. Each successive rocket kicks up more dust, until the launcher itself is hidden under a dust cloud that is eerily illuminated from within by the last blast of the 48-



TOP: Two of the weapons which together have shaped the course of the war in Afghanistan, the Stinger SAM (held by mujahideen foreground) and the Sakr multiple-rocket launcher. Photo: Elizabeth T. Ashe

ABOVE: Mainstay of Afghanistan's rocket war, the 12-barrel, 107mm Type 63 multiple rocket launcher, is a simple but robust and effective system. It represents old technology, however, and is much less sophisticated than the Sakr. Photo: Elizabeth T. Ashe

second barrage.

Outgunning your enemy is fun. The mujahideen setting off the 107mm rockets feared no counter-battery fire, because the enemy artillery had been pulled out of their sector, back to a threatened airfield. The Afghans feared no airstrikes, because the Hind gunships, the Frogfoot fighter-bombers, and all the other hateful little spawn of the Soviet war machine were gone, scared off by the Afghans' Stinger SAMs. Finished. No More. *Napoo*, as any British soldier of the Great War would have said. *Napoo* Hinds, *Napoo* artillery and, in 1989, *Napoo* Soviets.

The Afghan resistance's arms in this end-game have contributed a great deal to the victory. The mujahideen have come a long way from the brave but unpracticed men

with bolt-action rifles of a decade ago. Rockets have become a vital element of the war in Afghanistan, and the new Egyptian-made 122mm Sakr multiple rocket launchers have added a new dimension to the rocket war.

Resistance rockets: The rocket war in Afghanistan started in earnest when the mujahideen received the People's Republic of China's favorite export, the Type 63 107mm rocket. All too familiar to many Americans who were on the receiving end of them in Vietnam, Type 63s started trickling in during the early years of the war, and they became numerically and tactically significant by 1985. They are fired from what the mujahideen have nicknamed the "BM-12", a 107mm 12-barrel multiple rocket launcher. Variants of the launcher with fewer barrels are also used, as well as a single tube launcher. Frequently, however, the 107mm is used without launchers at all; it is simply propped up on a stick or placed on rocks. Accuracy, never precise with these weapons, which are intended to strike area rather than point targets, greatly decreases when used in this manner. But to the mujahideen this often seems a relatively minor drawback.

The Soviet-designed M-1937 82mm mortar has also been one of the main heavy weapons of the resistance, and Soviet, Chinese and Egyptian made versions remain in widespread

use. However, rockets have advantages for guerrilla warfare; the North Vietnamese demonstrated this throughout Southeast Asia. With rockets you do not need a weapon the size of a howitzer to deliver high explosive several kilometers away. Rockets are relatively simple to use — one trained gunner to sight them and another to run the forward observation post is considered full manning in many Afghan groups — and they require only minimal maintenance. While inaccurate, the level of training of most of their users precludes achieving the superior accuracy tube artillery would permit in any event.

The large-scale introduction of the 107mm rocket into the war took place as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the collection of Karl Marx's bad bargains that passes for the local Communist Party, was preparing to celebrate its 20th anniversary in January 1985. Many foreign delegations had been invited. The mujahideen volunteered to enliven the proceedings by staging the fireworks display. Intense barrages of 107mm rockets spoiled the party. Humiliated, Soviet and Kabul regime forces devoted substantial time and manpower to expanding and solidifying the Kabul perimeter at a time when the Communists were trying to achieve a military victory in the countryside. Everything tied down defending Kabul was unavailable for taking the war to the mujahideen.

As Gorbachev made his unsuccessful effort to secure a military victory in 1985-86, the Soviets found increasing numbers of rockets (along with landmines and anti-tank weapons) in the hands of the free Afghans. The 107mm rocket in particular was used in considerable numbers on the battlefield. For instance, a total of 2,500 107mm rockets and RPG-7 rounds were fired at Khost airfield during the Communist offensive against Zhawar in 1986.

And soon the 122mm rocket, another Vietnam-era favorite, was also announcing its presence to the Soviets. The 122mm rocket can be launched either from a single-barrel tube, as was the practice of the North Vietnamese, or fired without a mount like the 107mm.

The supply of the 122mm to the Afghan resistance, therefore, found many skilled and combat-experienced users waiting for an even bigger punch. Soviet, Egyptian, and Chinese-made versions of this rocket began showing up in 1983-84 in limited numbers. In 1986-87, more were made available.

The mujahideen used them to crack open ammunition bunkers that had been hardened against the 107mm rocket but not its bigger brother. To celebrate the Fourth of July, 1986, Panjsheri Central Forces under command of Mahmoud Khan put a salvo of 122mm rockets into the bomb dump at Bagram airbase, with spectacular results. But even that was surpassed the next year, when Abdul Haq used 122mm rockets to detonate the Kabul regime's SAM storage site at Qargha. It was the closest imitation of a tactical nuclear device seen in Afghanistan



Mujahideen 12-barrel 107mm Type 63 multiple rocket launcher sited on the bank of a dry-wash (immediately to right of smoke cloud) lets fly with a round. Type 63 has been a mainstay of the rocket war in Afghanistan. Photo: Charlie Schnabel

until 10 August 1988, when the Panjsheri struck again. Another Panjsheri commander, Mohibullah Khan, needed just eight 107mm rockets to detonate the main ammunition dump at the Soviets' largest logistics base in Afghanistan: Kalgay, near Pul-e-Khumri, on the Salang Highway north of Kabul. Enough ammunition to supply the Kabul regime for over a year exploded.

Encounters with Sakr: I first encountered a Sakr in October 1988. It was set up alongside a road. It was being examined by mujahideen for purposes unknown, as it was certainly well out of range of any possible target. I identified it to Akbar, my English-speaking escort from the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), sitting behind me in the Jeep.

"It's Sakr!"

"Yes, we have one too, near Kandahar. This belongs to Hekmatyar."

There had been some bad feeling locally between NIFA and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hezb-i-Islami*, and Akbar declined to stop and try and explain that the big *ferengee* with the camera just wanted to take some pictures and ask a few questions. A Stinger team was also moving along the road at the time, presenting a picture of two weapons

systems that had together helped change the face of war in Afghanistan and persuaded the Soviets to try and achieve their policy goals by less costly means.

"It is made in Egypt. The name means *baz* (falcon) in Arabic." Akbar seemed surprised that such an apparent piece of advanced hardware should originate in a third world nation, but the Afghans remained appreciative. I asked where it was going, but no one knew.

There were five Sakr launchers forward, near Kandahar, one belonging to NIFA, another to Gulbuddin, one to Khalis's party, one to Sayeff's party, and one to Jamiat-i-Islami. The Jamiat one was the most active. The Kandahar-area Jamiat commander, Mullah Nakib Akhund, has been working with the Jamiat logistics chief, Tahir Mayar, a graduate of India's Dehra Dun military academy and an ex-Afghan Army officer, to use it more effectively and keep it supplied with ammunition in a concerted effort against the regime's last remaining major asset in the area: Kandahar airport.

Tahir was picked to run the operation. In one week in October 1988, after Tahir set up an observation post on the heights of the Spin Ghar (White Mountains) to correct fire, the Jamiat Sakr launcher put 130 rounds into the airport, hitting the buildings, disrupting flight operations (but unfortunately not catching any aircraft on the ground; the mujahideen were never able to get the timing quite right) and cratering the runways. Only a counterattack by Jowjzani militiamen, trained in the Soviet Union, forced the Afghans out of their observation



TOP RIGHT: Four tube 122mm Sakr launcher used by mujahideen in Nangarhar Province. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

ABOVE RIGHT: Mujahideen load 122mm rockets into four-tube Sakr launcher. The 122mm have provided the Afghan resistance with considerable extra punch. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

RIGHT: A 122mm Sakr rocket is launched toward communist positions in Nangarhar Province. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

posts and prevented the destruction of the airfield.

The basic Sakr system uses a quadruple box-like launcher on a light mount, capable of being fitted to 4x4 jeeps or pick-up trucks or even broken down into mule-sized loads. While the Egyptians themselves use the Sakr Soviet-style, in massed batteries and battalions, they came up with the light launcher for use by the Afghans and by their own airborne forces. The Sakr is Egyptian designed; they started by reverse-engineering the copies of Soviet 122mm rockets they were already producing (and supplying to the mujahideen, among others).

Sakr comes in two flavors, Sakr-20 and Sakr-30, the number referring to its range in kilometers. Bigger than the Soviet-designed 122mm rockets, longer ranged and with more of an impact, they are not interoperable with launchers for Soviet-designed rounds, although the Sakr-30 is intended to be interoperable. All types of 122mm rock-



ets can be fired from the Sakr's quadruple launcher, however. The Sakr-20 has a 20km range, is 3.25m long and weighs 67kg, including a 21kg warhead of either unitary HE or 29 anti-personnel submunitions. Each is reckoned to be as powerful as an 81mm mortar shell. The less common Sakr-30 gets its 30km range by being shorter (2.58m) and lighter (56.5kg including a 17.5kg warhead) than the Sakr-20.

The increase in punch the Sakr provides can

be seen by comparison with other Afghan rockets. The 107mm has a maximum range of 8.5km and weighs 18.8kg including a 6.33kg warhead. The Soviet-designed 122mm has an 11km range, weighing 45.8kg including a 19.8kg warhead. The Sakr has obvious advantages in weight and power, but its bigger, heavier rockets compound Afghan logistics problems.

Starting in late 1987 and continuing throughout 1988, the Sakr made an impact on



The four firing tubes of a Sakr launcher being positioned on tripod, the light legs of which are visible in photo. The whole assembly can be moved by mule or jeep. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

the ground war in Afghanistan. With the Soviets and their quisling allies less able to rely on air movement after the introduction of the Stinger SAM starting in September 1986, the use of improved ground weapons became more important. In the words of Engineer Sayid Naim Majrooh, chief of the Afghan Information Centre in Peshawar and one of the most perceptive Afghan observers of the war, "122mm rockets are very useful. Sakr-20 and Sakr-30 are handed over to mujahideen fighting in major centers. Results of 122s are very good."

Those Sakrs that had been delivered by late 1988 have all apparently been deployed south of the Hindu Kush. There have been no reports of Sakrs being used in the north, or by Ahmad Shah Massoud. Indeed, over the course of the war, the mujahideen in the north have received fewer rockets than those in the south, reflecting difficulties in transportation as well as priorities in aid distribution.

The Sakr in Combat: By 1988, more reports started to come in of the Sakr's effectiveness. Ramatullah Safi, a former colonel in the Royal Afghan Army and well-known resistance figure, has used both Sakr-20 and Sakr-30 around Gardez and in Logar province in 1988. The size of the Sakr *would have* made its use difficult in previous years, but Safi reports that with more mujahideen vehicles moving freely inside *Afghanistan*, and roads open to mujahideen trucks from the border to as far as Kabul province, they could move in the big rocket launchers *and* an adequate supply of ammunition, not just with pick-up trucks but with large cargo carriers. Safi identified the Sakr, as of September 1988, as the most effective new weapon in use by the Afghan resistance.

Rahim Wardak, Peshawar-based senior NIFA military commander, has also used Sakr in combat. In September 1988, Rahim carried out one of the biggest Sakr fire missions of the war against Kabul regime positions near Jalalabad, firing 101 rockets in three hours through one quadruple launcher. This required the use of three 15-man

loading crews, each working 30-minute shifts, so fatiguing were the big rockets to haul and fire. Rahim was impressed by the Sakr's penetrating power, reporting it could blow holes in roads and fortifications with much greater effect than Soviet-designed 122mm rockets. This penetration allowed it to crack bunkers hardened to withstand the earlier rockets. He reports, however, that if fired without a launch tube, as the Afghans have routinely done with their 107mm rockets, the Sakr becomes highly inaccurate, and will even turn 180 degrees in flight! The Sakr also has a substantial acoustic and flash signature on launching. Rahim says he would not have conducted his marathon three-hour rocket attack had he thought there had been a serious danger of counter-battery fire.

"Dr. Death" is the nickname of Dr. Shah Rukh Gran, M.D. A medical doctor since before the war, he has emerged as one of NIFA's main combat commanders in Kabul province. His forces are relatively small, yet proficient, and he has developed a close working relationship with Hadji Abdul Haq, the Kabul province commander of Younis Khalis' Hezb-i-Islami. Ramatullah Safi describes Haq as "golden... a first class mind in a good fighting man." (The divisions between the Afghan political leadership are usually put aside by the fighting men.)

Dr. Gran received a Sakr in early 1988, unfortunately without proper training. But Gran plunged himself into the study of artillery procedures and tactics, tutored by Safi, and former Afghan army artillery officers were attached to his group to use the Sakr and help direct fire.

One of their biggest Sakr successes was scored in a concerted and well-organized rocket campaign against installations around Kabul in 1988. Abdul Haq had organized a *shura* (assembly) of the different resistance commanders operating around Kabul to coordinate operations. A Sakr attack on Kabul International Airport on 26 August caught not only a number of transport aircraft on the ground, but a squadron of Soviet Su-25 *Frogfoot* fighter-bombers, forward-deployed from bases in the Soviet Union, as they were re-arming. Dr. Gran's contribution to the effort was launching 70 Sakr rounds into the airport over a four-hour period, with a forward observer correcting fire. Eight Soviet aircraft were destroyed and much damage done to airport facilities.

Dud Rounds: But there remain many

problems with the mujahideen's rocket war: technical, tactical, and political. Egyptian-made ammunition in general has had quality control problems, especially in recent years. The Afghans are especially suspicious of Egyptian mortar shells. British journalist Peter Jouvenal reports that one 82mm mortar crew in Kandahar province, in October 1988, discarded much of its Egyptian-made ammunition and fired the remainder not by dropping it down the muzzle by hand, but rather by hooking the tail fins of each round under the lip of the muzzle, looping a string around the round's nose, and pulling it down the barrel from cover. This reduced the rate of fire to several minutes per shell.

Peter also saw Sakrs suffering from reliability problems. The Jamiat Sakr in the Kandahar area that had performed so well attacking the airfield could, in a later action, only manage three rounds in one hour, with only one launch tube of its four working due to electrical corrosion. Other Sakr firing positions were littered with large numbers of the big rockets, some still wrapped in their protective plastic, that had to be discarded after they had been painstakingly hauled up.

One problem with the Sakr is that the external contacts on the rear end of the firing tubes may develop corrosion problems after extended use, especially if there has not been proper cleaning. Unfortunately, despite the experience of a decade of war, this sort of preventive maintenance often is simply not provided.

Lapses in tactical thinking also result in mujahideen casualties in the rocket war. The balky Jamiat Sakr had its fire supplemented by a single-barrel 107mm launcher. But after 45 minutes firing from the same position (and the crew neglecting to dig foxholes), the third round of incoming counter-battery fire scored a direct hit, wiping out both the rocket launcher and its crew. The mujahideen tend to use the same rocket position for lengthy periods of time. This is fine if the enemy has no counter-battery capability, now that the chance of airstrikes being used have been limited by the Stingers, but it is deadly when effective counter-battery fire is available to Afghan government forces.

Hadji Abdul Haq is conscious of the tactical and political limitations of the rocket war. "The 122mm rocket makes things easy, of course," he says. "You do not have to watch a lot." He is also critical of the use of rockets without launchers around Kabul. "They are mostly used in free flight, without launchers, poor accuracy. At long range, free-flight makes mistake."

Abdul Haq has also witnessed the Kabul regime forces themselves deliberately rocketing residential areas of Kabul. In 1988, trying to increase the resentment of the mujahideen, "when we fire five missiles (sic) on military targets, they (the Soviets and Kabul regime) fire 20 at civilians."

But while Abdul Haq realizes the importance of rocket attacks to keep military pres-

RIGHT: Mujahideen train on four-tube 122mm Sakr system. Electrical wires visible on outside of the tubes are part of the ignition system, which suffers from reliability problems. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

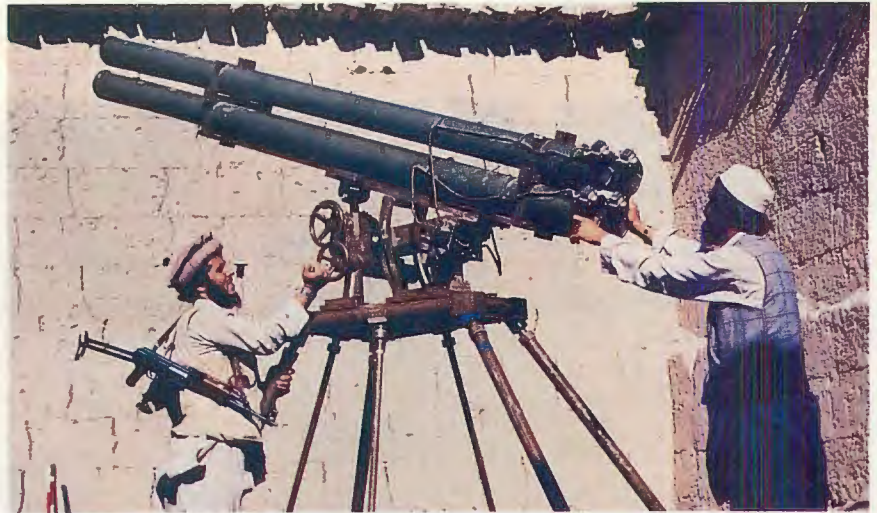
BELOW RIGHT: A 122mm Sakr round moves on traditional Afghan transport in Nangahar Province. Photo: Afghan Media Resource Center

sure on Kabul (while at the same time working to bring about the collapse of the regime from the inside), he realizes that there are some Afghan resistance groups that just do not care where their rockets go and do not possess the technical skills to aim them at military installations, a task made more difficult by the Kabul regime practice of putting its military and government establishments in residential areas. He discounts the reports that the Pakistanis were urging resistance rocket attacks on residential areas in Kabul, in retaliation for the Communists' long-term campaign of terror explosions in Pakistani cities, and supplying rockets and advisers only to those groups that would carry out those attacks.

Even so, such indiscriminate attacks have hampered Abdul Haq's long-standing efforts to maintain networks of supporters inside Kabul, including many inside the government. He has circulated leaflets explaining the nature and purpose of the rocket attacks and assuring the city's residents that they are attempting to avoid civilian targets — unlike the regime, which adds to deliberate rocket attacks with misdirected counter-battery fire. But by late 1988, Abdul Haq reported he was going to stop rocket attacks against Kabul, although it is uncertain whether this is due to the perception that these attacks are counter-productive or whether he is not being resupplied with rockets.

But the rocket war, in general, has also had its cost in the evolution of the resistance throughout Pashto-speaking Afghanistan, where the rockets have been the most plentiful. Large numbers of rockets have, too often, been used by the mujahideen in place of well-executed guerrilla tactics. In modern war, the two key elements of all tactics are fire and movement. Exposed movement without fire is usually suicidal. Fire, even if intense, without movement is usually indecisive. Because firing off rockets by itself will not win battles, it must be part of a larger military or, better yet, military-political strategy in which rocket attacks are used to ratchet up the pressure on the regime and its supporters.

The availability of large numbers of rockets has enabled the mujahideen to slow enemy movement and inflict casualties in ways that would have been impossible with shorter-ranged weapons that were all that was available in the opening years of the war. During the Soviet drive to relieve Khost in December 1987, once the mujahideen saw that trying to block the Soviets would have resulted in losing many men for no real gain, they retired to the flanks of the



road and fired rockets at the Soviet column as it struggled to advance while clearing large numbers of land mines.

But, too often, rockets have been fired off at well-defended positions without much more effect than making the mujahideen feel good. Peter Jouvenal and Tony Davis, veteran reporter for *Asiaweek*, watched in June 1988 as the mujahideen fired off 1,000 107mm and 122mm rockets (a Sakr launcher was available but not used) not into Jalalabad, but into a small militia and army outpost. It was taken, with 10 Kabul regime KIA, but this is not the way to win a battle, let alone a war. The effort was prodigious, but the results were not commensurate.

The Afghan resistance is no more immune than anyone else to falling into the easy trap of measuring efforts and expenditure of resources, rather than results, to justify their actions. It is a good thing to outgun one's enemy. The Afghan resistance in Kandahar province in late 1988, for example, frequently had more and better hardware than their regime opponents. But as is often the case in modern warfare, material superiority often does not reinforce tactical innovation and improvement, but takes the place of it. One reason the Afghans north of the Hindu Kush have used their rockets more effectively than those to the south is that they have had fewer rockets, so they have had to think of how to employ them most effectively.

In itself, the Sakr has certainly not been decisive. Its use has been a microcosm of the Afghan war effort, demonstrating that the Afghan resistance has transformed itself from heroic but poorly armed guerrillas to effective users of modern weaponry (of which the Stinger SAM and Milan ATGM are other examples). It has shown the importance of the flow of aid, contributing to such spectacular mujahideen battlefield successes as the explosions at Qargha and Kabul airport. Yet it also shows the negative elements.

The Sakrs are often not used to their full potential. Battlefield tactics in Pashto-speaking Afghanistan too often remain ineffective. There can be no question of mujahideen bravery, but overrunning 200-man garrisons surrounded by minefields has proven beyond the reach of most Pathans, unlike their Tadjik comrades north of the Hindu Kush. The use of Sakrs in place of attacks is a continuing problem. The rocket war against Kabul and Jalalabad underlines that the political dimension of the war effort — so vital in a war of national liberation — has not always been resolved well.

That having been said, the fact remains that the Afghans have not had to be the best guerrillas in the world. They have not had to be efficient. They simply have had to throw the Soviets out of their country and, using their Sakrs and many other weapons, they have done just that. ✕



**HO
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MINH CITY'S

LIVING DEAD

**Abandoned ARVN Vets:
Outcasts in a Troubled Land**

by Tom Marks

LEFT: South Vietnam's monument to its armed forces in 1974 (top) was reduced immediately to a base in 1975 and today is an expedient soccer field for Saigon street kids. Location is downtown next to the old Caravelle Hotel, just opposite the National Legislature, now a theater. Photos: Tom Marks

ABOVE: Vietnamese Commander Le Noc Hien (left) and Kampuchea's Defense Minister Soy Reo arrive at airport for departure of Vietnamese command staff. Photo: Ben Barber

RETURN TO VIETNAM

Tom Marks is a frequent contributor to *Soldier of Fortune*, filing reports from India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. He is a West Point graduate and former infantry officer who lives and works in Hawaii when he is not on assignment.



“THERE was no pretense at re-education,” Nguyen (not his real name) said. “What could they teach us? Their motive in keeping us was revenge, only revenge.”

Briefly, his eyes flashed. The body was still thin, the hair black, the English fluent. But then he withdrew behind his mask. Seven years in the camps had taught him not to display too much.

It had taken me 14 years to find him. Now I wasn't sure what I had. I had “known” him for nearly 20 years, but we had last seen each other before the camps. When we had fought the good fight together, we had been true believers. I stayed with him once in the Highlands when we were lieutenants, then lost track of him in the swirl which saw the South fall.

What comes out after one has been thrown into Hell? Where the world is turned upside down while the body endures the unbearable. Jesus, seven years of Beast Barracks and Ranger School all thrown into one. For keeps. With the Reds running the show and slaughtering the fresh meat.

“I cannot imagine that I am talking to you.” He gripped my arm repeatedly, as if one good gust and I would be gone upon whatever magic carpet had brought me to him. “I just . . .”

Yeah, I thought, I just . . . Shitty man, real shitty. Only a small fry when Saigon went down, he had a father who was a midlevel official. “Re-education” was the fate for both. The father came home in three years from a camp near Hanoi. Nguyen spent seven years in the wilds of the Cambodian borderlands.

“Our days never varied — hard work, always hard work. One-third died. Many reasons: disease, starvation, snakebite. Many simply missed their families too much and gave too much thought to what their lives were before.”

Thoughts of lives that no longer existed. We all, Americans as well as Vietnamese, got nailed by that one. Couldn't we just go backwards and pick it all up again? Do it right this time? In Vietnam the emphatic “no” was driven home with an exclamation point.

In the aftermath of the fall, a curtain descended upon South Vietnam. To the world the communists were behaving reasonably. Still, we used the word “reasonable” *only* because the Khmer Rouge next door were insane. While Pol Pot and his minions slaughtered millions, the Vietnamese communists first did a systematic social survey of the entire population, then started feeding those they deemed human garbage into their own *Gulag*. How many thousands died remains an ugly secret. Most estimates say no less than

Saigon pedicab driver who said he was an ARVN veteran. A colleague found individuals as high as general officer doing such work. Communists have systematically kept most of those associated with the former regime from earning a decent living. Photo: Tom Marks





ABOVE: Soviet-built PT-76 light amphibious tank races towards a hillside objective during Cambodian Army training exercise staged for foreign correspondents. As tanks blasted their way across rice paddies, followed by foliage-covered infantry, one reporter quipped, "I thought the U.S. proved in Vietnam that this kind of warfare doesn't work." Photo: Ben Barber

RIGHT: Traffic of sorts, mostly bicycle, has begun to reappear in the streets. Photo: Tom Marks

50,000. Looking at many survivors, it's hard to tell who got the better end of the deal, those who perished or those who came back.

When they were drained, they were let loose. They'd learned the game. Reality is what you make of it. Cling to the past and die.

Nguyen was living proof of that. The slightest shift of mood during a conversation sent up his protective shield. The prose gymnastics were a marvel to behold. And if all else failed, he switched languages.

They'd let him loose because they'd killed him. We trained him to fit into our world; they retrained him to fit into theirs. Invasion of the Bodysnatchers, and you're the star. Like drowning in a cesspool. When



the shit swamped the boat, we pulled in the lifeguards. Left the survivors to deal with the sharks. Sorry 'bout that.

It's becoming something of a specialty of ours, that leavin' stuff. Old Ironsides hasn't sailed lately. Bunker Hill? Never happen. The Alamo? Negotiate; republic be damned. Bodies of those trying to escape still float up on the beach at Vung Tau, and we can't even take in the debris. They rot in camps all over Southeast Asia.

Years ago a Viet gunboat captain made his way across Cambodia after eight years in the camps, only to be captured by the Viet-hating Khmer Rouge. Tortured again. Escaped one more time and made it to a camp in Thailand. U.S. counterpart found him. Had to physically threaten a few folks to finally bust him out of there. One lucky dude. The other million on the ODP (Orderly Departure Program) list can't make the hike.

"I have been on the ODP list for more than three years," Nguyen reflects, "but nothing ever happens. Sometimes I think the U.S. only has the list to give us hope.

"Twice I have tried for the boats. But they want three ounces of gold per person (about U.S. \$1,350). Where can we get that sort of money?"

I promise to do what I can but warn him that the ODP is mired in bureaucracy. He allows himself just the faintest smile. "I

know you will do whatever you can. I believe anything is possible. Anything. Look at us now. I never dreamed we could meet again.

"You know, I wrote about my life while I was in the camps. I got hold of things. But then they found out about my manuscript, and I had to burn it. I thought of you then. If only I could have gotten you my words. I was determined not to die in vain. Others



This Cambodian militiaman in Takaev Province had only six bullets in the magazine of his U.S.-made M16 rifle. Militia members say they lack weapons and ammunition. Photo: Ben Barber

loaded with troops, red flags flying and machine gunners squinting down barrels, moved down Cambodia's narrow roads. At the Mekong, tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery, to include the substantial 130mm long-range artillery pieces, were loaded on barges for the journey back to Vietnam. About 13,000 troops left as I watched. After a week spent examining various areas of Cambodia, colleagues and I were struck by the absence of Vietnamese garrisons. They were actually gone — and in their place was uncertainty.

"I'm afraid the Khmer Rouge will return. I want the Vietnamese to stay," says Chan Thay, 20, a woman selling cloth in a market. Her parents and six of her brothers and sisters died under Pol Pot's terrifying rule, 1975-78.

Echoes Hoy Rim, 54, cradling twin nephews, "I still need the Vietnamese to be here." Her husband and four

had to know what we were going through."

Yep, Nguyen still believed. Damn, they had mangled him, but he was still in there. Dumb fuck, I thought, you actually think back in the World they give a shit? We fought the good fight for them, but you and I are all there is, baby. You think they give a rip whether we've been chewed up and spit out? Never happen.

We talked a bit more as the monsoon rains poured down on the stump where once stood the memorial to South Vietnam's armed forces. In one of their first acts, the North Vietnamese had destroyed it and as many vestiges of the old regime as they could lay hands upon. Shops were confiscated, streets renamed, and more than 150,000 sent off for "re-education." Yet 14 years after communist tanks smashed through the main gates of the Presidential Palace, Vietnam was again host to American footsteps — at least mine.

Once on the ground, it had been fairly easy to find Nguyen. The Vietnamese emigre community has some amazing sources. With their help, I at least knew where to look.

Years before I had thought him dead. No answers reached me in response to smuggled messages. His family sent no word. Then, out of the blue, a response.

The scrawled note was actually an apolo-

LEAVING CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh — As the commanding generals of Vietnam's "volunteer" army in Cambodia flew home in July 1988 amidst well-organized pomp and ceremony, they announced for the first time Vietnam's losses since fighting with the Khmer Rouge began in 1977: 55,000 dead and an equal number wounded.

These casualties were revealed by Major General Le Khaphieu, Deputy Commander of the Vietnamese Army forces in the country, in response to my question at a news conference held when the general arrived back in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon. The general further observed that 30,000 of these troops were killed in the 1977-78 border war which led to Vietnam's Christmas 1978 invasion. The remainder died in subsequent fighting with guerrillas seeking to drive the Vietnamese from Cambodia.

It is these guerrilla forces, particularly the estimated 35,000 Khmer Rouge, which make the Vietnamese departure a mixed blessing. While not overjoyed at the presence of 125,000 foreign troops, the Cambodian man on the street is most fearful that the Khmer Rouge may prove a match for the Phnom Penh forces attempting to fill the vacuum.

For the Vietnamese forces do, in fact, appear to be leaving. The return of the military command which I witnessed is part of the withdrawal of 50,000 troops this year. For weeks buses and trucks

brothers, she explains, were taken away for "re-education" one night under Pol Pot. They never returned.

Vietnam's 1978 invasion put an end to the nightmarish terror of the Khmer Rouge "killing fields" in which as many as 2,000,000 people died, a third of the population. Yet because of the subsequent Vietnamese occupation, most of the world isolated Vietnam and continued to back a coalition of opposition guerrilla groups (see "In the Jaws of the Tiger," SOF, July 1989). This coalition, of which the Khmer Rouge is the most formidable element, now threatens the countryside.

Infiltration by Khmer Rouge guerrillas in bands of up to 100 men worry many. Already hospitals just 50 kilometers from the capital are daily receiving victims with legs blown off by Chinese-supplied plastic landmines planted by the insurgents. "Our biggest problem is the wounded," says a surgeon in Kompong Speu hospital. "One man can carry 200-300 of these plastic mines. We get 10 to 15 amputees each month."

To insure the security of the people, the Vietnamese leave behind local militia, the backbone of government efforts to prevent a rerun of the Pol Pot genocide. Thus far they have given a good account of themselves. Whether this will remain the case is the question which burns in the minds of a people haunted by the past's mass murder.

— Ben Barber

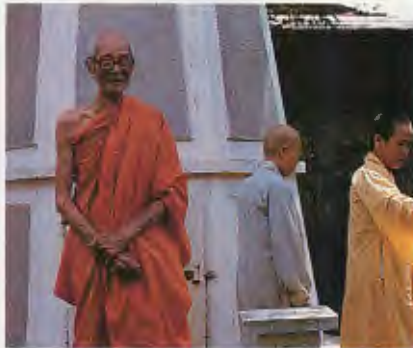


ABOVE: Saigon crowd gathers round a policeman doling out tickets for license violations: lower levels of the bureaucracy continue to thwart the intent of reformers in the Vietnamese government. Since the fall of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) in 1975, virtually all policemen have come from the north. Photo: Tom Marks

gy for his being unable to answer my queries! They had put him away, he explained, in his crisp Airborne English, so he had been forced to be discourteous and not respond.

“I ask you to forgive me, but as I suppose you can imagine, these past years have been hard for me.”

Seven fuckin’ years of hard time. At times like that, it’s all one can do to remain patient with bureaucrats, to listen to their tedious excuses. There are nearly a million names on the ODP list, virtually all of them in some way, shape, or form connected with the U.S. war effort. Having given us their trust, many have been abused in ways perhaps only our own returning POW’s can articulate. Even so, we allow only a trickle



ABOVE: The monastery I found tucked away down a back lane. Most of the nuns were widows of ARVN soldiers. The age of the abbot shows how long it has been since new blood entered the place. In the years following “liberation,” the authorities did their best — outside areas visible to foreigners — to clamp down hard on religion. They remain in conflict with the Catholic church. The grip of authority, however, has loosened considerably. Photo: Tom Marks



Russian women shop in Saigon: despite their continued dominant presence in Vietnam, the Russians find their role challenged as the Vietnamese turn to the West for their economic needs. Photo: Tom Marks

to escape, taking roughly 20,000 per year. It doesn’t take a mathematical genius to figure out what is going to be the end result — a whole lot of folks who never see America.

“Good, I hope they rot, the whole lot of them,” responded a retired American hard-charging general officer when I spoke of the Vietnamese plight. His implication was clear: they didn’t fight for their freedom when they had the chance; now let them stew in their own juices.



ABOVE: Militia training in village on east bank of Mekong River inside the “Red Line” of defense (i.e. the line from which rockets can strike the capital city). Militia members told us they lacked ammunition and that weapons are kept locked in an armory — not kept at home by the men. Photo: Ben Barber

Ironically, I had called the general — a legendary name — after my return to confirm the identity of a shadowy figure who approached me one night on a Saigon street corner. Ten years he had been with American intelligence, he said, one of our best, the general could confirm. “Please, get me out.”

Yes, it was true, the general said. Good man, good man. His tone made clear his corollary: one of the few who were. Maybe. But ironically, many of those of whom we thought most highly, the junior officers, suffered worst at the hands of the communist victors. As the glue which held the whole mess together, they seem to have served far longer terms than their superiors.

I questioned a former senior South Vietnamese government official about this. He himself had spent only a year under house arrest at a time when innumerable small fry were doing seven or eight years. Now he was a big wheel again, even being sent to



the West to represent the government. The small fry still floundered.

"Why?" I asked. "Because I was strictly a technician," he answered. "We didn't dabble in politics."

I must have looked incredulous, for the subject was changed. In other words, I thought, the victors felt the little guys were less likely to adjust to "new realities," as the Marxists termed it. I had heard the argument before.

There were a great many people who had trouble adjusting to "victory," but none more so than the victors themselves. They won the war but lost the peace, as the saying goes. So they want us back. True, we screwed up the war royally and scorched half the country, but we're still the richest nation on earth. For their part, it has turned out to be a good bit easier to run a war than a country. In charge, the communists reduced Vietnam to a state where it ranks as one of the poorest countries on earth. Hence, they are asking America for aid, trade, and whatever.

There's a practical side to this request: virtually everything modern in the country is American. The country even runs on 110 volt electricity while everyone else in the region runs on 220 volts. More philosophically, though, the Vietnamese seem to feel they can deal with us. Better the devil you know . . .

It all made sense in a weird sort of way. When the communists took over, they engaged in the systematic, by-the-book construction of a communist state. Bureaucracy followed its Marxist-Leninist rules, and, in the process, more than a few people died in "re-education camps" and "new economic zones." The blueprint said certain individuals had to be punished; that the economy had to be restructured; that the comrades from Moscow had to be rewarded for their aid to the revolution by being given bases; and on and on.

Like a poorly produced play, it was all downhill after opening night. As the quality of life deteriorated, thousands poured out by boat. Even today, the hemorrhage has become so great and such a perceived burden on neighboring states that they go to extraordinary lengths to keep the Vietnamese out. Pirates from Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines are allowed to murder, rape and pillage at will. But still they come, *only* to be locked up in miserable refugee camps for an indefinite period. Hong Kong has even started to hustle newly arrived refugees back to Vietnam, defining them as economic refugees not *political*, not seeing the irony of their own reasons for being in Hong Kong.

The bottom line is that the economy of Vietnam became a shambles. Ultimately,



Saigon residents stand in line to purchase rationed gasoline: failure of communism to deliver a decent standard of living lies behind the decision to open up the economy. Photo: Tom Marks

per capita income reached a point where it was only marginally higher than that of Ethiopia.

It was this reality which brought the Vietnamese Politburo to its senses. As the ship began to sink, the Party veterans who had led the decades-long fight against first the French, then the Americans, were nudged into retirement. In their place came "reformers," those committed to doing something about the desperate economic straits in which Vietnam found itself. In December 1986, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh boldly announced the beginning of a *doi moi* (economic renovation or reform) program. Vietnam was thrown open to foreign investment, and feelers were put out to the United States seeking a reconciliation.

Washington has responded slowly to the opportunity presented. The two countries have no diplomatic relations; and since the 1978 Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the United States has led a fairly successful campaign to isolate Hanoi politically and economically. Within the United States itself, the failure of the Vietnamese in the past to be more forthcoming in resolving the issue of some 2,400 American MIAs (servicemen missing-in-action) has kept American popular and legislative opinion overwhelmingly hostile.

Aware of these obstacles, Vietnam has taken steps to clear them. Meetings on the MIA issue have become more frequent, as have quiet visits to Hanoi by U.S. representatives. Additionally, Vietnam has committed itself to a full withdrawal from Cambodia by 1990. According to reliable sources, a majority of the 125,000 Vietnamese troops in that country have begun to depart (see sidebar on page 51, "Leaving Cambodia").

All of this has made life a bit easier for the average Vietnamese citizen, though marginally so.

"Now, if you leave the government alone, it will leave you alone," analyzes Nguyen. "Before it was different."

This is another of the many ironies which shape Vietnamese life. It is precisely people such as Nguyen, with their technical skills and command of Western languages, who are needed for economic reform. Though there is no certain estimate, the number of South Vietnamese armed forces veterans must number not less than 5 million. (Already by 1973 the South Vietnamese military counted 1.1 million personnel.) But the government has not reached out to them; not even minimal steps have been taken to heal the wounds of civil war. Instead, South Vietnamese veterans are actively discriminated against. In the United States it did take years for our own Civil War wounds to heal. It will take longer for the communists to see their way through to such a reckoning. For they are burdened by their ideological baggage which brands the vanquished as members of an inferior species of bourgeois man, fit only to be eradicated.

We talked a bit more; then Nguyen ex-

These Muslim Chams wave Vietnamese flags at airport departure ceremony for the Vietnamese generals. Chams were slated for extinction by the Khmer Rouge, who wanted to destroy their religion and their non-Khmer culture. About half were killed. Photo: Ben Barber



Cambodian Buddhist monks at airport departure ceremony. Of 50,000 monks in 1970, only 1,000 remained in 1979 when the Khmer Rouge were driven out by Vietnamese troops. About 25,000 were killed and the rest forced to marry or leave. Thousands simply disappeared. Photo: Ben Barber

cused himself, saying he had to go. No doubt his booming business giving English lessons required his attention. After all, he was pulling in the meager sum of about \$2 a month. I slipped him an envelope that amounted to several years' wages and felt like shit for doing it — but even more of a shit for not having more to pass on.

Not even hope.

I watched him walk off alone down the street, then sat for awhile longer and stared out at what had once been Saigon. Now it was Ho Chi Minh City. Yet it was still Saigon. The fag at the Air France office offered to upgrade me to First Class if I would do him "a favor;" the girl with the alluring smile on the bicycle — the one you hoped would, just this once, turn out to be a real student — ruined the conversation by laying down her price; and in the main market urchins offered to do every lewd act in

the book for a few "P" — except that instead of "P" you now use *dong*, as apt a term as ever existed — visit Vietnam and get fucked.

Yep, it was still Saigon. Hadn't even gotten my ruck unpacked before the crooked customs official was there to ask for help in making a deal. He needed a courier for \$80,000 worth of Swiss watches. Not bad for a man whose official salary was three U.S. dollars per month.

I left the cafe and wandered into a monastery hidden at the end of a winding lane. Though the communists were still at war with the powerful Catholic Church and had worked hard to crush the Buddhists — how could they overlook the role played by the bonzes in South Vietnam's numerous political crises? — the regime had been forced to allow a modicum of religious freedom, if only to keep the lid on. The inhabitants of this particular monastery were few, old (becoming a novice bonze is not a career enhancing move in the new Vietnam) or women, the widows of ARVN soldiers who have nowhere else to go.

Ngo Van Thom also has nowhere else to go. He looked at me with sightless eyes as we talked in a pathetic hovel near the monastery. I discovered him after leaving the monastery when the rain broke briefly, only to get driven toward shelter by the monsoons again. As he spoke, he tried to hide the stumps which had once been his hands. All circles come round. They called Saigon Ho Chi Minh City now that the "liberation" had taken place. But liberation never came for Thom.

He was 18, a low-ranking driver, when he switched on the ignition of his truck in 1973. He'd already been in ARVN nearly a year under general mobilization. War was everywhere. Yet he had dreams, hopes. He had a girl. He had parents. . . Now he has the parents. The booby trap blast which ripped through the vehicle took his sight and his ability to touch. His dreams vanished, as did the girl. Young women don't long to be stroked by stumps.

In the dim light of the single room, Thom's parents sat by the family altar and talked. Nearly 70, they had come to Saigon from Long An. Father had a flower shop. When the communists came in 1975, they seized it. He became an employee. In 1985 he was told he was "too old" and fired. The family exists on the 1,300 dong a second son earns in 14-hour days at an ice factory. On the black market, the dong trades at nearly 5,000 to the dollar.

"I worry about my son so much it makes me sick," Muoi, the old man says. "Who will take care of him when we are gone? We live day to day with no future. Every night I pray to God to make this country better. There are so many families like us now."

"May I use your name?" I ask the father, expecting a polite demurral. No one wants to call attention to themselves.

"Yes," comes the reply, spoken quietly. "You may use my name. I am too old. They cannot hurt me." ✕

BRING 'EM BACK ALIVE



The pawn and the winner in this chess match, Lauren, safely back home.

Private Delta Force Goes Where USG Fears to Tread

by Neil C. Livingstone

Photos courtesy Corporate Training Unlimited

IN a world of pale imitations and phonies, they're the "real thing." If there were a corporate "Equalizer," they'd be it. Corporate Training Unlimited (CTU) is their name, rescues are their game.

During the past two years, this little-known North Carolina firm has rescued more Americans from Arab countries than the entire U.S. government during the last five decades. Unlike dozens of companies that purport to carry out "extraordinary services," such as G. Gordon Liddy's now defunct "Hurricane Force," CTU is not a public relations gimmick or figment of someone's imagination. Incorporated in North Carolina on 15 January 1987 by Don Feeney, a former Delta Force commando, and Dave Chatellier, a former Air Force special operator who worked the dark side of the house for more than 20 years, CTU provides specialized executive protection and security training to corporations and government agencies. They also carry out one-of-a-kind high-risk missions that no one else will touch. For those with the money, or right on their side, they are a Court of Last Resort.

CTU is headquartered in a large yellow barn-like building on a busy highway not far from Fort Bragg. There is an industrial-size coffee pot inside the front door, and on any given day a steady stream of cammie-clad Special Forces types from Bragg will stop by to shoot the breeze and down a quick cup of steaming coffee. The first floor is divided into offices, and there are classrooms upstairs. Most of the firm's training, however, is done in the field. CTU maintains a first-class shooting range outside of town and

uses an old airstrip for teaching aggressive/evasive driving skills. Occasionally they also lease the high-banked NASCAR oval at Rockingham for training purposes.

The company's brochure contains few specifics and no pictures. "Our staff is comprised entirely of Delta Force and Special Operations qualified personnel, each with many years experience in this field," states the brochure. "These personnel have passed a rigorous screening and selective process, participating in years of specialized training and have proven themselves under fire." The brochure contains a disclaimer stating that the firm is not connected in any way with the U.S. government.

To someone passing by, from the outside CTU looks more like an insurance agency than a center of international intrigue, and that's just the way the firm's two owners like it. Prior to getting into the rescue business, the company maintained an extremely low profile, going about its work quietly and competently. In 1988, even CTU's attorney had to admit to a local reporter that, "To tell you the truth, I don't know what they do."

But that has all changed.

Lady in Distress

Shortly before Christmas 1987, Feeney and Chatellier traveled to Dallas and met with an attractive blonde woman in her early thirties in a motel room near the airport. Her name was Cathy Mahone. The meeting had been arranged by a highly decorated former prisoner of war in Vietnam who was acquainted with both CTU and a friend of Cathy's. Through tightly clenched teeth, barely containing her rage, Cathy told

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Feeney and Chatellier that she was at the end of her rope. She had tried everything and nothing had worked. They were her last hope.

Cathy's only child, seven-year-old Barbara "Lauren" Bayan, had been "kidnapped" by her estranged husband, Mohammed Ali Bayan, and spirited out of the country to his native Jordan. Although she had been granted custody of Lauren by a Texas court after her divorce from Ali, Cathy's claim to Lauren was not recognized by Jordan which — like all Arab countries — recognizes a father's rights as superior to the mother's, regardless of the circumstances or the fitness of the father as a parent.

She came straight to the point. She wanted to know if Feeney and Chatellier would mount a rescue mission to Jordan and rescue Lauren from her father. Cathy made it clear that while she was far from wealthy, she would spend every last dollar she had to recover her daughter. She had approximately \$50,000 in the bank, she told them. Would they do it for \$50,000?

ROAD TO KING H. BRIDGE (JORDAN VALLEY)



As Chatellier later recalled, "Her story was a real heart-breaker." However, he and Feeney had calculated that such a mission was probably worth at least \$250,000 in terms of the risk involved. "We had a figure in our minds considerably higher than \$50,000," said Chatellier. They adjourned the meeting and told Cathy that they would have to sleep on it. They would let her know in the morning.

Feeney and Chatellier discussed the potential mission late into the night. There were, they decided, many problems. Even if they were able to locate the girl and snatch her, there was the problem of getting her back across the border to a friendly country. Although Feeney had previously provided, as a member of the Delta Force, security to the U.S. ambassador in Beirut, and CTU had been one of the security consultants to "Rambo III," which had been filmed in Israel, none of the CTU operators was familiar with Jordan. Nevertheless, both Feeney and Chatellier, as fathers, were deeply touched by Cathy's plight. Moreover, Chatellier, like Cathy, was a born-again Christian. "I was very moved," he recalled, "when Cathy told us about her entire church praying with her for God's help in getting her daughter back."

In the end, Feeney and Chatellier decided to help Cathy, for a fraction of what they *knew* the mission was worth. "I felt like the daughter did not deserve to be with a dirtbag like her daddy," says Chatellier. "We're talking about a *car-thief*, a deceiver, a guy that stole money, stole a car, ripped-off all these credit card agencies, plus a kidnapper. He had no use for that girl whatsoever. He knew he was taking her back to a life that she was totally unaccustomed to. He knew he was taking her back into a world where she would no longer be an equal person, but a secondary citizen. Arabs treat their dogs better than they treat their women over there."

They told Cathy their decision the following morning and returned immediately to Fayetteville to pull the operation together.

The Search for Lauren

Feeney and Chatellier worked throughout the Christmas holidays, taking time out only

Jarash E & E route, showing route to King Hussein bridge in Jordan Valley.

to attend church and be with their families on Christmas day. After a good deal of consideration, they decided on a four-man rescue team:

Don Feeney. Small, lean as a shoestring, with more guts than you can hang on a fence, Feeney has so much energy that he seems to ricochet off the walls even when he's sitting still. The product of a broken home in Brooklyn, Feeney joined the Army at the age of 17, one step ahead of the law. The sixth man to join the Army's anti-terrorist Delta Force, he had previously served with the 5th Special Forces Group, the 1st Ranger Battalion, and the 82nd Airborne. As a member of Delta, he was a veteran of Grenada and the abortive mission to rescue American hostages in Iran that ended in tragedy at Desert One. He had also been assigned to the U.S. ambassador's protection detail in Beirut.

Dave Chatellier. With the build of a dumptruck and not an ounce of fat on his stocky frame, Dave Chatellier looks like the kind of guy that would chew the sights off a gun barrel. In reality, he is a gentle and soft-spoken Cajun from Texas, who served as a "wires and pliers" specialist with both the U.S. Army and the Air Force. He did tours in both Vietnam and Europe, but most of his assignments were so sensitive that he still can't talk about them.

J.D. Roberts. Half American Indian and half Scottish, James Daniel "J.D." Roberts is a decorated Vietnam combat veteran who, like Feeney, was a U.S. Army Ranger and served with the 5th Special Forces Group before joining Delta. One of the nation's top experts in winter warfare, Roberts spent a good deal of time in both Colorado and Alaska. By contrast to the imperturbable Chatellier, Roberts wears his emotions on his sleeve. He describes himself as the kind of person that can be moved to tears "while watching the flag raised or a movie like *Bambi*." But, he adds, "I'll smash your face if you try to make fun of me." A natural combat leader, he carried a toma-

hawk on the Iran rescue mission.

Jim Hatfield. The bearded Hatfield, a former Ranger and Special Forces veteran, is married to one of Chatellier's daughters. Unlike most of the other CTU men, Hatfield says, "Nobody ever shot at me."

The first thing they had to do was to locate Lauren, who was apparently living with Ali's relatives in Jarash, a city about 25 miles north of the Jordanian capital of Amman. Chatellier, it was decided, would fly from Cyprus to Amman, rent a car, and drive up to Jarash. If anyone asked what he was doing in Jordan, Chatellier would tell them he was scouting possible locations for the upcoming film "Iron Eagle II."

It was up to Chatellier to discover the address of the Bayan family home. The only thing he had to go on was a photograph of Cathy and Ali taken on the roof. The Temple of Zeus and the city's famous Roman ruins were visible in the background. "With this photograph, I was sure that I could identify the house," recalls Chatellier. "It seemed like a piece of cake."

However, once in Jarash, Chatellier discovered that the city had changed a good deal since Cathy's only visit nearly a decade earlier. Moreover, there were no street names and the houses were not numbered. From the Temple of Zeus, he took pictures of the city and tried to pick out the house, but all of the houses looked the same. Some were also obscured by new construction. He tried triangulation to pinpoint the location of the house, but without success. To add to his woes, the weather was cold, overcast, with intermittent snow and drizzle.

After several days of futile effort, Feeney and Roberts joined Chatellier and they changed their focus from locating the Bayan house to finding out which school Lauren was attending, and then working their way backwards to the house. "We violated a lot of principles of covert operations," says Roberts. "We spent too much time in the target area. We went everywhere together, like a soccer team. Dave (Chatellier) tried to be covert and sneaky, but when you're over six feet tall and built like a small mountain, it's hard to do, especially in a town where everybody hits you chest high."

Even with the reinforcements they couldn't locate the school or the house.

Although two weeks had passed, they weren't about to give up. Chatellier was positive he had glimpsed a young girl with bright blue eyes — part of a group of children being led through the marketplace by an adult — on his second day in Jarash. Although he had lost her in the crowd, Chatellier was convinced that they were close. All they needed was a break.

It was time to ask for Cathy's help. She was waiting on Cyprus with Jim Hatfield. Feeney asked her to call Ali, pretending she was still in the United States. "Grovel, beg, cry," Feeney told her. "I don't care what you have to do. Just find out where Lauren's going to school."

Cathy placed the call, and soon got Ali on the line. He assured her that Lauren was OK.

"What do you mean, 'she's OK'?" Cathy exploded. "She doesn't even speak Arabic."

Ali took the bait. He informed Cathy that Lauren was enrolled in a new private school in Jarash, where she was learning to speak Arabic and doing just fine.

As soon as she concluded her conversation with Ali, Cathy called the CTU men, who were staying at the Holiday Inn in Amman. Armed with the new information, they rapidly located the new school the following day and learned that all of the students were transported to and from school in a little orange school bus. They took up a position near the side of the road and waited for the bus to pass. Finally, the bus chugged into view and there, sitting in the front seat, looking through the window was Lauren. Although elated, they knew that the most difficult part of the mission was yet to come.

After tailing the bus the next day, they summoned Cathy to Amman and made plans to "grab" Lauren from the bus when it stopped on the outskirts of town to pick up two students. They also explored the options for spicing Lauren out of the country. Although Cathy had brought to Amman a new U.S. passport in Lauren's name, it had no entry stamp since Lauren had passed through immigration with her father, using her Jordanian passport. This meant that they could not leave by plane from Amman. Similarly they could not travel north or east, since neither Syria nor Iraq was likely to provide them a safe haven or sympathetic treatment if they were discovered. Saudi Arabia, too, was out of the question. That left only Israel. But how to get there was the problem, in view of Middle East tensions. They explored the route to the Jordanian port of Aqabah in the south, but found that the city was swarming with troops. Even though the Israeli port city of Elat was only two kilometers away, it might as well have been two thousand kilometers. It was unlikely they would find anyone willing to rent them a boat, and while Chatellier knew he could swim the distance to Elat with the child on his back, there was just too much military activity in the area to do so without placing Lauren in jeopardy. By process of elimination they were left with only one avenue of escape: the Allenby Bridge, which spans the Jordan River between Israel. Meanwhile, Feeney asked Frank Baker, the assistant regional security officer (RSO) at the U.S. embassy in Amman, to recommend someone who could serve as his "guide" in Jordan. He did so without telling Baker his real mission, and was introduced to a former Jordanian air force officer by the name of Adil Abdilhafiz Abdilrahman Abbadi. Abbadi frequently served as a guide and expeditor for visiting Americans. With Abbadi's help, Feeney was able to secure exit passes via the Allenby Bridge from the Ministry of the Interior for himself, Roberts, Cathy, and Lauren. Abbadi had no idea he was helping "kidnappers" — he was essentially an unfortunate pawn in this chess game — and when the game was over



Attempts at triangulating location of house using ruins as reference point were to no avail.

this innocent and his family were jailed by Jordanian police for being part of a plot he was totally unaware of at the time.

They decided that it would be necessary for Cathy to accompany them on the "snatch" in order to take charge of Lauren, who was bound to be confused by the abduction, and make certain that she was calm by the time they reached the border. Fearful of being charged with being terrorists or mercenaries if something went wrong, they elected not to carry weapons and only to use violence as a last resort. Chatellier gave some thought to creating a diversion in downtown Jarash that would tie up the authorities until they had grabbed Lauren and gotten away. "My first thought was, the best [diversion] in the world is to blow Ali's car — a stolen Honda — in downtown Jarash," Chatellier recalls. "The problem is that there is no way to blow an automobile without blowing what's around it, too. So we were possibly talking a major fire and killing several people, and that was something we simply couldn't consider." The only viable alternative, it was decided, was to use two cars and for Chatellier to "run interference" behind the first car on the road between Jarash and the border. Chatellier would then have to escape from Jordan by whatever means he could.

The Operation

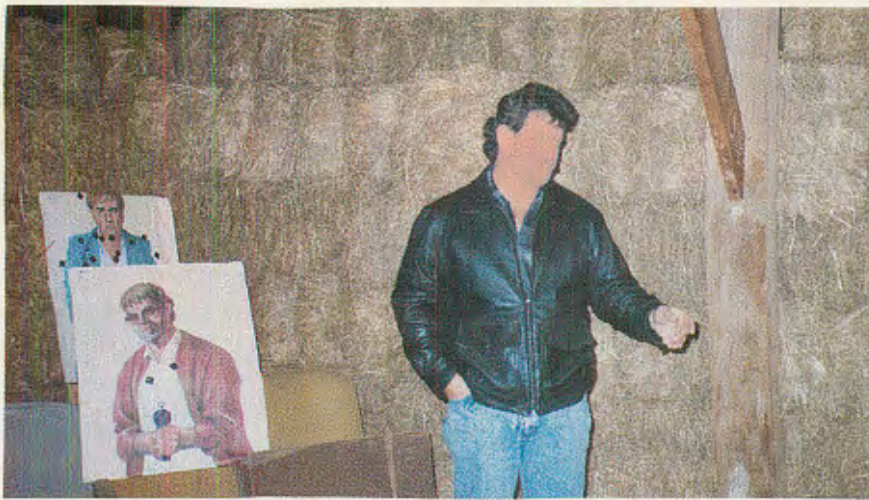
January 28, 1988, dawned gray and overcast. Chatellier, Roberts, and Cathy parked beside the road near the isolated farmhouse on the outskirts of Jarash in a red Nissan rental car. It was cold and the tension mounted with each passing minute as they waited for the school bus to lumber into view. It was late, and the longer they waited the more convinced they became that their operation had been compromised.

Suddenly, a white Nissan roared up the hill with Feeney at the wheel, about two minutes ahead of the school bus, which was faintly visible in the distance. Feeney

screamed to a halt in front of the red Nissan, and Roberts and Cathy jumped inside. Then he sped off. Chatellier turned around and drove down the road, past the school bus. Then he made a U-turn and fell in behind it.

The school bus turned into the road leading to the farmhouse and, as it did so, Feeney — in the white car — pulled in behind it, blocking its exit. Chatellier, meanwhile, had stopped a short distance away, out of sight. Feeney and Roberts casually dismantled their car, and Feeney sauntered to the driver's window, knocked on it politely and asked the driver if he spoke English. With the driver's attention on Feeney, Roberts kicked open the door and they rushed up the steps into the school bus. The startled driver stood up but Roberts pushed him back down into the seat, ordering him to "sit down and be quiet." As Cathy ran down the aisle and grabbed Lauren, Roberts and Feeney frantically sought the dash-mounted key release, then jerked the keys out of the ignition, showed them to the driver, and tossed them out the door into some high grass. He shoved an envelope into the driver's hands containing a thick wad of what appeared to be U.S. banknotes but which were, in reality, newspaper clippings. On the outside of the envelope, in Arabic, were instructions which said, "Take this directly to Mr. Ali Bayan. Give it only to him." Inside, along with the newspaper clippings, was a note from Cathy to Ali: "You took my daughter. Now I have her back. Your brother and wife *are safe in the United States*, for now. Don't come after us and don't give me any trouble. Remember, the *eyes of Texas* are upon you."

For the first few moments, the female chaperone aboard the school bus remained in her seat in stunned silence. But as Cathy and the commandos left the bus with Lauren, the chaperon found her courage and scrambled down the steps after them. She grabbed Cathy's sweater, nearly jerking her off her feet. Feeney swung around to help, but as he did so he caught a glimpse of something that nearly made his heart stop. "I'm ready to throw this woman in the bushes," he remembers, "when I see a taxicab coming up the



J.D. Roberts in the "Shooting House" at their Fayetteville training facility.

road with six guys in it."

Two of the men leaned out the windows to investigate the commotion beside the road, and Feeney said to himself, "We are in for a fight." He put his hand heavily on the chaperone's shoulder, pinning her against the car and forcing her to release her grip on Cathy. "This is Mama," he said to her softly, indicating Cathy. "She is taking her baby home."

"Mama?"

"Yes, Mama."

The chaperone relaxed and the car full of men passed by and sped down the road. Feeney shoved the chaperone in the direction of the school bus, then jumped behind the wheel. The others were already inside. He threw the car into reverse and swung out into the main road. Seconds later, out of sight, Feeney and his party switched cars with Chatellier and struck out at high speed for the Israeli border, more than an hour away.

Escape

It took them an hour and 16 minutes to reach the Allenby Bridge. The overcast had burned away and the sun had come out, raising their spirits. As they pulled into the parking lot near the terminal building, they were greeted by Abbadi, unaware of what they had just done, who assured them that everything was in order. He led them over to a battered old bus that would take them across the bridge. After a delay while they waited for the frail and aged driver, they finally got under way. Roberts took up a position near the front door, while Feeney sat in the back with Cathy and Lauren, who was whimpering quietly. The bus slowly inched its way toward the bridge, pulling a cloud of smoke behind it. Roberts scanned the border defenses. Far ahead of them, on the west bank of the river, was a huge blue-and-white flag emblazoned with a Star of David.

The bus lurched to a halt. Roberts traded looks with Feeney as a Jordanian military officer approached. They communicated silently through a knowledge of each other born of years of experience. If there was trouble, Roberts would overpower the officer, jump off the bus, and take care of three soldiers manning a nearby guard position.

He could see that none of them, fortunately, had magazines in their assault rifles. Feeney, for his part, would rush to the front of the bus, toss the driver out, and strike out across the narrow bridge.

The Jordanian officer climbed aboard the bus, looked them over, then collected their bridge passes. Without examining the passes, he waved the bus on and ambled back to the shade of the guardhouse. The bus chugged slowly over the span until it was halted by an Israeli officer on the other side.

"Welcome to Israel," he greeted them in a thick Cockney accent.

"I'm really glad to be here," Roberts blurted, a little too enthusiastically.

The Israeli studied him with a puzzled look on his face and then shrugged.

Once inside the Israeli terminal, they were met by their Israeli contact, a former special operations veteran. While he and Feeney took care of their documents, Cathy collapsed on a bench and burst into tears of joy, smothering Lauren with hugs and kisses.

Chatellier, meanwhile, was being pulled over on the road to the Allenby Bridge by the Jordanian police. They clustered around the red Nissan, screaming at him in Arabic, as he munched on a Snickers candy bar and played stupid. He had not pulled completely off the two-lane road, thus blocking all of the traffic behind him. Two more carloads of police, hanging out the windows like Keystone cops, arrived, boxing him in from behind and alongside. It was a scene of total confusion as they swarmed over his car and examined his documents. After more than 20 minutes, one of their car radios barked something about "Alia," the Royal Jordanian Airline. A policeman threw Chatellier's documents at him and they all piled back into their squad cars and tore off in the opposite direction, toward Amman.

Chatellier chuckled to himself. The day before he had booked bogus airline reservations in Cathy's and Lauren's names on Alia. Obviously they just discovered them.

He continued on to the Allenby Bridge, passing through a half-dozen roadblocks.

He met up with Abbadi outside the terminal and they drove the two rental cars back to Amman. A short time later, Chatellier got the last seat on the only flight allowed to leave Jordan after the borders of the country were completely sealed in a vain effort to apprehend the "kidnappers."

When Feeney reached New York's Kennedy International Airport, he placed a call to a friend in Washington. Remembering the heartbreak of the Iran hostage rescue mission, his first words were, "We finally won one."

Reaction

Despite their desire to keep the story under wraps, Feeney and Chatellier were resigned to the fact that it would eventually become public. The network of mothers in the same predicament numbers well over 3,000. They speak regularly with one another. Word would soon get out that Cathy had recovered her daughter.

In March 1988, the story broke — in lurid headlines — across the nation. "Rambo Raiders Save Tot," trumpeted the front page of the *New York Post*. "Mom Hires Real-Life A-Team to Rescue Her Little Girl in the Mideast," extolled another. Overnight the once-anonymous company became a national sensation. Movie rights were quickly sold, and friends ribbed the two commandos that Danny DeVito would play Chatellier in the movie version and Pee Wee Herman would be cast as Feeney. The most important product of the publicity, however, was that CTU was flooded with requests from desperate people all over the country who wanted to retain their services. Feeney and Chatellier were amazed at the number of people around the nation who had relatives being held against their will in foreign countries.

But if the American public was thrilled by the derring-do of CTU, the State Department was less than enthusiastic. It issued an official apology to Jordan, expressing "regret" over the incident. Frank Baker, the young security officer from the U.S. embassy in Amman that had unwittingly provided them with assistance was notified that his employment would be terminated. The innocent pawn Abbadi is still in a Jordanian jail, although his wife and children have been released.

What the State Department has steadfastly refused to do is meaningfully address the problem of American children "held hostage." Whether it likes it or not, the Department's inaction is an open invitation to desperate parents and firms like CTU to take the law into their own hands. The easiest way to shut down private sector rescue operations is for the U.S. Government to provide real help to the parents of the missing children.

As long as the U.S. government fails to take action, Feeney and Chatellier say, they'll carry on, whatever the cost.

Abused Mother

In Lansing, Michigan, Jeffrey Swint read the story of Lauren's rescue in the press with more than passing interest. His 25-year-old

red-headed sister Lauri was in trouble and the family was at wits end over what to do about it.

Lauri, the only college-educated member of the family, had met and married a Tunisian by the name of Fuad Ghidaoui when they were studying at Michigan State University. Her parents had opposed the marriage, but over time grew to accept it, especially after the young couple gave them a lovely dark-eyed granddaughter named Leila. When Fuad's government grant expired, however, he had returned to Tunisia with Lauri and Leila in tow.

Once in Tunisia, he had become a tyrant, physically abusing Lauri and keeping her under virtual lock-and-key in their Tunis apartment, even denying her food. Fuad openly flaunted his relationships with other women. Even though their marriage was finished, he forced himself on Lauri and soon she was pregnant again. Finally, he told Lauri he would consent to a divorce, so long as she left their daughter with him. He said that Leila would be raised by relatives in Libya. If Lauri attempted to leave the country with Leila, Fuad vowed to kill them both, adding that he would then slip into the U.S. and kidnap her sister's son as compensation. Lauri refused to give up Leila, and she and one of her friends managed to get a message to her parents in Lansing, Michigan.

Bill Swint had worked for General Motors for more than 20 years, rising to general supervisor on the production line. His wife, Barbara, had also worked on the line at GM, until a work-related injury forced her to take a less-demanding position at the plant. They were a classic two-income working-class family that had managed, through hard work and diligence, to raise three kids, buy a home, and put away a little money for retirement. When they learned of Lauri's situation they were devastated. They contacted their congressman and the State Department without result.

Meanwhile, after a serious fight with Fuad, Lauri fled the apartment with Leila and took refuge with a friend in Tunis. She called her parents in Lansing and described the situation. Fuad had their passports, she explained, and there would soon be a custody hearing in a Tunisian court to decide Leila's fate. Because women enjoyed so few rights in Tunisian society, she was convinced that the court would take Leila away from her and give Fuad custody, despite the fact that he had no intention of raising the girl himself.

While Bill flew to Tunis to check out his daughter's situation first-hand, Lauri's sister Valerie ("Val") Swint Holley — relying on the article her brother Jeff had seen — placed a call to CTU in Fayetteville. It was a quiet Thursday afternoon. Feeney's wife, Judy, took the call from Val, listened to her story, and promised to get back to her a short time later. She then tracked down Feeney and Chatallier and briefed them on the Swint's problem. Over the next three days, Feeney, Chatellier, and Judy spoke to



Dave Chatellier relaxes over a cup of tea.

the Swints on numerous occasions, and on Monday they flew to New York to meet with Barbara face-to-face. Because time was short, they told Barbara to bring \$35,000 with her, in the event that they reached an agreement to rescue Lauri. The money would serve as a down payment on the \$80,000 Feeney and Chatellier calculated the rescue would cost.

After meeting with Barbara, the team from CTU, which included Feeney, Chatellier, Judy and two contract operators, decided to take the case. They made telephone contact with Bill who, by now, was with Lauri in Tunis. In guarded language, he confirmed the gravity of his daughter's situation. Bill was instructed to rendezvous with them in Rome and, accompanied by Barbara, they left on the first available flight to the Italian capital. After receiving a full briefing from Bill in Rome, they decided to travel to Sicily, which lies less than a hundred miles from Tunisia. While Judy and Lauri's parents remained behind in Palermo, Feeney, Chatellier, and the two operators began collecting intelligence. They spoke with fishermen, smugglers, and pilots and soon concluded that the best way to exfiltrate Lauri from Tunisia was by boat. They also decided that the tiny Italian island of Pantelleria, about half way between Sicily and Tunisia, would serve as their staging point.

After examining a number of boats, they hired a 14-foot high-speed craft, which was readied for a dash across the Strait of Sicily and back again. Leaving the boat with the other two operators, Feeney and Chatellier flew to Tunis, where — in mid-afternoon — they rented a four-door Toyota and went looking for Lauri's hideout. It took them some time, but they finally located the address. Then they scouted the Tunisian coast for a landing site near the town of Qelibia, settling on a deserted beach with

two large castles that could serve as landmarks. As darkness descended, they went to a hotel, had a hearty meal, and turned in.

They rose at first light and continued their reconnaissance, checking out army installations, police checkpoints, and a nearby naval base. Satisfied finally that all was in order, they called Lauri. With money provided by her father, she had taken refuge with a Tunisian family. They instructed her to leave the family's apartment at precisely 1500 on the pretense of taking Leila on a picnic with a friend. Upon reaching the street, she was to turn left and Feeney would be waiting for her nearby. Feeney also called the two operators back on Pantelleria to arrange for a 1700 pickup on the beach near Qelibia.

At precisely 1500 Lauri emerged from the apartment building with Leila in her arms. As she turned left and started walking down the street, Feeney stepped out of the shadows, took her arm, and pulled her around the corner. Chatellier arrived moments later in the Toyota. Feeney took the wheel and they left for Qelibia, taking care to avoid checkpoints and military facilities. Feeney was so preoccupied with spotting checkpoints that he ran a red light, and was stopped by a policeman. Posing as confused tourists, they "sweet-talked" their way out of the potentially dangerous situation without arousing the officer's suspicions.

They arrived at the beach shortly after 1700, but the boat was not there. Instead, there were three sheep herders and what Feeney described as "every sheep in Tunisia." An hour passed and still no boat. Feeney was on the verge of throwing in the towel and trying again the following day when, at 1820 hours, the boat appeared. As the sheep herders watched, they scrambled out into the water and climbed aboard. Feeney, however, stayed behind and took up a position near a Tunisian naval base a short distance away, and scanned it for any sign of unusual activity. Sensing no sign of trouble, he returned to the hotel and called Pantelleria to see if the boat had arrived on schedule.

It hadn't. The trip normally takes about three hours — it can take about an hour in the type of boat they rented — but because of heavy seas it was after midnight before the boat reached Pantelleria. Cold, hungry, and seasick, but nonetheless elated by the success of the operation, they passed the night in a small hotel. The following day, Lauri was reunited with her grateful family at the Rome airport.

To date, CTU has received over \$60,000 of their fee, nearly all of which has gone to pay expenses. According to Feeney, "We did not do it for the money, but we might eventually make a profit." Then, looking into the future, Feeney smiled and added, "After all, there are another 3,000 kidnapped children to go."

CTU Today

Since rescuing Lauri and Leila, CTU has

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SOF RHODESIA

DAY OF THE HORNET

Fire Force Deadly Swarm Draws Last Blood

by Hornet One

Over the years SOF has reported on various aspects of the Rhodesian war, concentrating mainly on the "grunt" side of operations. This article, told by an experienced aviator, presents the air force side of Fire Force.

“WHAAA, WHAAA, WHAAA.” The harsh scream of the callout siren shattered the everyday sounds of the Forward Airfield (FAF), alerting soldiers, pilots and aircrew to the fact that an operation was about to be mounted. All combat personnel reacted; soldiers of One Commando, the Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI), who had been lying next to their pre-

assigned helicopters, checked their weapons and applied black camouflage cream to their faces, arms and legs; paratroopers, positioned next to the aging C-47 Dakota, checked their parachutes and strapped them on; helicopter technicians, who doubled as gunners, removed engine covers and checked over their machines; other air force technicians ran to the Cessna 337 (Lynx) light ground-attack aircraft and lifted the bombs, which lay in cradles beneath the wings, into position. They plugged in the electrical connectors for the rockets and cocked the twin .303 machine guns which were mounted atop the cabin. Not a word of command had been spoken and none was needed. These men were sea-

RIGHT: Four-man stop group takes up position near an African kraal to block possible terrorist escape route. Fire Force, a melding of air and ground security force assets, was no more than a large-scale game of chess, controlled by the airborne senior army commander. Photo: courtesy John Coleman

HORNET'S NEST

Hornet One, the author's SOF nom de guerre, had a long and distinguished career in military aviation in southern Africa. From 1964 through 1974, he served *variously* as a helicopter pilot with the South African Air Force and Royal Rhodesian Air Force, working counterinsurgency operations in South West Africa, Angola, Rhodesia and Mozambique. In 1974 he started flying fixed-wing aircraft in reconnaissance and close air support roles during the Rhodesian war, and after other command and instructional positions, took command of 4 Squadron, Rhodesian Air Force, in 1979.

Hornet One stayed on in the Zimbab-

wean Air Force after independence in 1980, but, in 1982, as his resume states, he was a "member of the Board of Inquiry established to ascertain responsibility for the sabotage of 13 aircraft at Thornhill (Air Force Base). Arrested with six other officers, I was held incommunicado for three weeks during which time I was variously assaulted, malnourished, and finally tortured by the Zimbabwe Police and Central Intelligence Organization to get me to confess to having planned the sabotage. I was held in solitary confinement for five months. Eventually in May 1983 I was tried, and on 31 August 1983, acquitted. I was then redetained and eventually deported to the United Kingdom."

We welcome his first contribution to *Soldier of Fortune*.

Lynx makes a
frantan (napalm) strike.
Photo: courtesy author





soned professionals who had been through this drill many times, and they knew what had to be done.

Along the pathways of the camp, pilots and stick commanders (four-man RLI "sticks" consisted of a commander, machine gunner, and two riflemen) were running to their respective operations rooms, some of the pilots still pulling on their flying overalls as they ran. In the ops rooms, the operations staff gave the grid reference of the terrorist sighting to the pilots who plotted their route to the area on 1:250,000 maps. They then transferred the details of the target on to the large scale 1:50,000 maps which they would use during the final run to the target.

It was mid-morning on 19 August 1979, and we were based at Mtoko Airfield, or FAF 5, some 100 miles northeast of Salisbury, the capital of Rhodesia, on continual operations against terrorists of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) who were infiltrating the country. At the time, I was Officer Commanding Number 4 Squadron, Rhodesian Air Force. Four Squadron (or The Phiting Phourth, as we called it), flew a modified version of the Cessna 337, which we called the Lynx or, as it's known in the United States, the O-2.

This aircraft had been a major sanctions-busting victory for Rhodesia and had an interesting background. In 1977, we had purchased several of these aircraft from the French manufacturer, and they were then

1979 Rhodesia, especially in the eastern districts near the Mozambique border, was a hotbed of terrorist activity. Fire Force camps, such as Mount Darwin, Mtoko, and Grand Reef located near Umtali, bore the brunt of stemming infiltration by Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army guerrillas.

ferried out from France, through Black Africa, by Rhodesian pilots. On arrival, the aircraft were equipped with underwing hard points from which we hung a variety of ordnance including rockets, frantan (napalm), and locally produced fragmentation bombs. Its major shortcoming, however, was the lack of a forward firing gun, but this didn't present an insurmountable problem to the ingenuity of the Rhodesian Air Force. After considering the alternatives, we simply mounted two .303 machine guns above the cabin so they fired over the forward propeller. Ammunition belts containing 1,200 rounds were stowed in boxes mounted on the cabin walls, fed to the guns through a slot in the roof, and expended cartridge cases were caught and stowed to prevent them flying into the rear propeller. Once this modification had been made the Lynx became a formidable weapon.

My home base was at Thornhill Air Force Base, just outside Gwelo some 180 miles south of Salisbury, and, like the rest of the pilots in my squadron, I used to spend a good portion of my life in the bush on anti-

terrorist operations.

The sounding of the siren had not really come as a surprise to me, as together with a few other pilots I had been in the crew room adjacent to the ops room playing bridge and had followed reports that a Selous Scouts observation post call sign had been observing a group of terrorists.

As it became more obvious that a callout was inevitable, we had finished our bridge game and prepared our maps, waiting for the call. Bridge was the main way we passed the time. It's been said that war is 99 percent boredom and one percent sheer terror, and we tried to cope with the boring part by playing bridge.

As the siren started its wail, the helicopter gunship pilot, Lucio Mantovani, and I ran across to the RLI ops room for a tactics meeting with Major Piet Farnell, Officer Commanding One Commando.

The Fire Force concept was born during the Rhodesian war and was designed to provide a quick reaction force to terrorist sightings or incidents. Its basic concept was to make the maximum possible use of the elements of speed, surprise, intelligence, concentration of force and economy of effort, this being achieved by vertical envelopment using heliborne troops and paratroops, and then once they were on the ground, their firepower would be supplemented by close air support. An additional advantage of the concept was that the battle was controlled by a company or commando commander in the gunship helicopter.

All in all Fire Force was an extremely efficient killing machine. It consisted of one Alouette III helicopter with a side-firing 20mm cannon and which carried the army commander, and another Alouette with four .303 side-firing machine guns. These two helos were nicknamed "K-cars", the "K" standing for killing with a capital K. Troops were carried in four Alouette IIIs with one stick per helo, and each aircraft was equipped with a side-firing 7.62mm machine gun. The paratroops (paras) were carried in venerable C-47 Dakotas, many of which were veterans of World War II and some of which had dropped the British paras at Arnhem in 1944. Each aircraft carried 20 paras in five sticks of four, and a few spare troops whose job was to pick up the parachutes after the drop (there was a shortage of 'chutes and we salvaged them whenever possible).

The Lynx was another component of Fire Force, and the final member of the team was a Cessna 185 Sky Shout aircraft equipped with powerful loudspeakers and which carried a fluent linguist who would broadcast surrender messages to terrorists.

As Lucio and I entered the army ops room, we exchanged greetings with Piet Farnell and Captain John Cronin, an American who commanded the Selous Scouts detachment. Between us we analyzed the situation. John's call sign 86 Bravo, who were perched atop a large granite outcrop ("gomo" in the vernacular) in a tribal area about 20 miles from the Mozam-

bique border, had watched a group of about 30 terrorists walk past their position and settle in a clump of trees along a small re-entrant (gully). Eight-Six Bravo had passed all the relevant information to John, including the fact that there was a slight breeze blowing from east to west. In light of this, and the fact that a small ridge of hills hid our approach from sight, we elected to approach from the west where the wind would also help to disperse the aircraft noise. Piet and Lucio worked out predetermined landing zones (LZs) north and south of the terrorist position as it appeared the re-entrant was wooded whereas there were empty fields running either side of it. Logically, therefore, the killing ground would be in the wooded area as it was unlikely the terrorists would break out into the empty fields.

Planning only lasted a few minutes and then we called in the rest of the pilots and stick commanders for the briefing. With an average age of little more than 19 or 20, their young faces reflected the tenseness and anticipation all soldiers feel prior to action.

"OK guys, callsign 86 Bravo has got about 20 gooks visual at this grid reference," Fardell pointed to the map and to the callout board. "They seem to be dressed mostly in civvies, but there are a few in rice-flecked cammo." He paused as he went down the list the operations staff had written up. "They're carrying AKs, AKMs, at least two RPDs, two RPG-7s, and a mortar. It's probably safe to assume they're fresh from Mozambique as we're so close to the border, and SB (Special Branch) have 'int' that quite a few groups have recently left Chimoio.

"Anyway, they're probably full of all the normal propaganda bullshit and we should be able to give them a good coming home present." Smiles creased the suntanned faces of the troops.

"As we see it on the map, after we make contact they will only run up or down the re-entrant, so we'll preplan the drop. As the K-car pulls up I want Yellow One and Two [the first two helicopters] to drop Stops One and Two [stop groups generally comprised one stick in a blocking position] either side of the re-entrant, here" — he pointed out a spot about 400 meters north of the terrorist position — "and Yellow Three and Four, drop Stops Three and Four here," this time pointing to a position 400 yards south of the target.

"We'll hold the paras in reserve for the time being. I'll be in K-One, usual callsign One-Nine, and Capt. van Malsen will be in K-Two. If there are any changes we'll let you know enroute. We'll be on channel 23. Any questions?"

"Yes sir," said a young corporal holding up his hand. "When we're down, do you want us to move forward or hold our pozzy [position]?"

"No, I want you to get into a good ambush position and only move when and if I tell you to. Also, once you're down and settled, put out your day-glo panels so we



TOP: Sanctions-busting Lynx, Fire Force's air-ground attack aircraft, carried two top-mounted .303 machine guns, and a variety of ordnance including frantan (napalm), rockets, and Rhodesian-manufactured fragmentation bombs. Photo: courtesy author

ABOVE: Top-mounted .303 machine guns, firing over the forward propeller, gave the Lynx formidable defensive firepower against terrorist ground fire. Photo: courtesy author

can see where you are. Any more questions?" Everyone shook their heads. They'd all gone through this drill many times before.

"OK Lucio, do your thing," Fardell said, stepping aside.

"Start up taxi and takeoff will be SOP (standard operating procedure)," he said. In fact one of the first things a pilot did when he arrived at a FAF was to be briefed on SOPs to prevent any unnecessary delays during a callout. "I estimate we'll be on target about 28 minutes after takeoff." He turned to me and asked, "Where are you going to hold, sir?"

"I'll be at the big bend in the Ruenya River just west of Elim Mission," I replied. "Call me when you're five minutes."

"Roger," he acknowledged. Turning to the helicopter pilots, he continued, "Drop per the major's briefing and once you've dropped, go into low orbits and keep your eyes open for 'runners.' If you see gooks drop an orange smoke grenade to mark the

target and start firing. Stay in the area for about five minutes or until I tell you to go and refuel. There's fuel at Elim Mission, and after you refuel maintain a listening watch so I can get hold of you. If I run short of fuel, K-Two will take over."

He turned to the Dakota captain, Wing Commander Rob Gaunt. "I want you to hold about three minutes out and I'll call you in if I need you."

Turning to the Sky Shout pilot, he said, "Hold three minutes out high above the contact area and I'll let you in once things settle down.

"OK guys, I want radio chatter kept to a minimum, especially if we have a contact. Any questions?" There were none. "Let's go."

At that the briefing broke up, soldiers and pilots picked up their rifles and maps and ran to their aircraft.

Within a minute, the air was pierced by the high-pitched whine of the helicopter engines as they raced toward their idling RPM of 18,500 revs. As I reached my aircraft, the helicopters started turning out of the dispersal area, their nose wheel oleos fully compressed by the weight of the troops and their weapons. Two soldiers sat on a bench seat behind the pilot with another two on the front seats but facing rearward. The gunner sat at the left rear. Many of the troops were still in their teens but were veterans of many contacts. They certainly looked the part in their camouflaged T-shirts and shorts. Most wore black basketball shoes and they all had camouflage cream on their faces, arms and



legs, the "look" being completed by face veils wrapped around their heads bandana style. The FN rifles and machine guns (MAGs) they cradled were also camouflaged, this to break up the stark black lines of the weapons in the bush, where camouflage often meant the difference between living and dying. As the helos taxied out, those abroad waved to their mates who were remaining behind in reserve.

In the meantime, I checked my aircraft over. Three napalm bombs nestled snugly beneath the wings as did a pod with 18 37mm rockets. Over the cabin sat the twin barrels of the .303 machine guns. The aircraft's exhausts were baffled and the aircraft was painted in a matte brown/green camouflage. Both were Rhodesian modifications designed to reduce infrared emissions from the aircraft and to foil SA-7 missiles sometimes carried by the terrorists. As I climbed into the aircraft, I put on my parachute and tightened the Velcro straps on my flak vest, strapped into my armored seat and pulled on my helmet. On the back of my helmet was a red cross with my blood group stenciled below. A 9mm Browning pistol sat in a shoulder holster and my UZI submachine gun lay on the floor. I closed the door and prepared to start.

Everything in the cockpit was ready, as our routine was to get up before first light, do all the pre-flight checks, start the engines and run them up, then leave everything ready to facilitate a quick start. I switched on the battery, hit the starter and the front engine coughed into life. I checked the

Rhodesian Light Infantry Fire Force troopers prepare for a callout to a terrorist sighting. Venerable C-47 Dakota was used to deploy parachute element of Fire Force. Because of speed of the Dakota as compared to slower Alouette III's, paras normally departed their Forward Airfield to the terrorist sighting area well after the initial callout. Photos: courtesy John Coleman

lights and gauges and then started the rear motor. As I ran through my after-start checks I switched on the radios and heard the helos clearing the airfield. I waved the chocks away and eased the throttles forward, moving out of the revetment and toward the runway. I did my pre-takeoff checks, taxied, and checked my power and magnetos.

Lining up on the runway, I applied the brakes, brought the engines up to full power, let them stabilize momentarily, felt the nose lower as the oleo compressed and released the brakes.

The Lynx lurched forward, slowly at first, straining against the weight of the load. As I approached flying speed I rotated the nose wheel off the ground and then gently lifted the aircraft into the air. Airborne I retracted the landing gear, and at 200 feet I raised the flaps. I maintained full power until I had cleared the hill at the eastern end of the runway then reduced it as I settled into a cruise. Heading east I flew low over the Mtoko club into the wild rugged country where our quarry was hopefully still sitting under the trees.

Hugging the contours, I flew between the giant granite outcrops so typical of the area, over small farms, streams, roads and rivers as I monitored my progress on the map toward my holding area. The air was crystal clear and off to my right loomed the majestic heights in the Inyanga mountains, some of the most beautiful country in Rhodesia, now infested with terrorists. Every few minutes my eyes would flick across the instrument panel, checking my gauges. I looked over the 1:50,000 map of the target area checking to see whether there was anything that could affect my attack profiles, like wires, or unduly steep terrain.

After about 10 minutes I saw a huge dome-shaped rock which I knew from past experience was close to the holding area, or Initial Point (IP), where I would hold until the helos were five minutes from the target. Soon I was orbiting a bend in the Ruenya River. Ironically, this was a place I knew very well, as in 1969 I had spent a week there while on a battalion exercise with the RLI. As I had a few minutes to spare I reached down and pulled a pack of cigarettes from the leg pocket of my overalls, lit one and inhaled deeply. The strong toasted Madison was good and helped to still the sense of anticipation and excitement I felt for the coming fight. As I smoked I watched the river flowing lazily below and I recalled the happy days of 10 years before.

My reverie was suddenly interrupted by Lucio's voice over the radio, calling the Selous Scouts callsign overlooking the terrorist position.

"86 Bravo . . . K-car."

"K-car . . . go."

"We'll be with you in figures seven minutes. Give me a sitrep."

Automatically I widened my orbit slightly so that I would be in a position to leave the IP in two minutes time.

"Roger, K-car. Things are still pretty much the same; all the gooks are still at the locstat we passed you, but we can't really see them too well."

"Are there any civvies with them?"

"Negative," came the reply.

"Okay, fine. Lets check the locstat again: 977 435?"

"Roger, that's affirmative."

"Right. We'll be overhead your loc in about six minutes. Let us know if they break."

"Roger."

"Hornet . . . K-car"

"Go," I called.

"We're six minutes."

"Roger," I acknowledged. "I'll call leaving IP," I said, simultaneously pressing the stopwatch.

I continued my orbit, planning to roll out over the Ruenya River on course for my final run in. At 120 knots, the 10 miles would take me five minutes, however, as I flew I would be adjusting my speed to make good the minute markers I had drawn on my map. As I rolled out I pressed the transmit button on the yoke and called, "Hornet leaving IP." Lucio acknowledged with two

clicks of his transmit button.

Now I flew just above the trees, trying as best I could to prevent the terrorists hearing the drone of the Lynx's engines. I noticed the wind blowing directly toward me, so I nudged the throttles forward to increase my speed to 125 knots and took up the resulting trim change, all the while maintaining a height of no more than 50 feet above the ground, which in reality meant that on occasions I passed below the tops of the taller trees. Things were looking good and I heard Lucio call, "Yellow is two minutes."

I switched my armament selector to "Bombs and Guns," selecting a single napalm as the target area loomed closer. Looking up, I saw the granite outcrop where 86 Bravo were located, and caught a glimpse of a helo off to my right. Almost immediately I saw K-One pulling up, the length of the 20mm cannon poking beligerently out of the left cabin door. I applied full power and raised the nose of the Lynx, positioning myself so that the terrorist position would be below my left wing as I flew over it, and ensuring that I was slightly outside the orbit of K-One. The K-car banked over the re-entrant looking for any sign of movement, and I could imagine the terrorists cowering in the undergrowth as the full realization of their predicament hit them.

As I settled into my orbit, I was slightly wider and higher than the K-car, Lucio being at about 800 feet AGL (above ground level), and my plane being at around 1,000 feet. I leaned over to the left, looking out of the bubble window, my eyes straining to try and pick out the enemy who must be skulking in the trees. The cover was thicker than we had been led to believe, and try as I may, I couldn't see anything. In my peripheral vision I saw the first two helos landing north of the target, the downwash from the rotors kicking up a brown cloud of dust and maize stalks. Closer by, K-Two prowled the area at about 300 feet.

Halfway around my second orbit the radio burst into life. "K-Two . . . contact, contact, contact." Immediately a dust cloud erupted in the trees as K-Two poured a hail of bullets into the terrorist position he had spotted. Even in the bright sunlight, the red tracer rounds were clearly visible as they hurtled toward their target.

"K-Two . . . K-One. I've got your strikes. Pull away, we're firing on your dust."

As Lucio said this, I saw puffs of smoke drift lazily out of the barrel of the cannon and watched the high explosive shells sparkle as they slammed into the ground. Small trees were felled and out of the dust cloud I saw a group of figures running up the re-entrant.

"Stop One . . . One-Nine. I've got gooks coming up to your loc." Farndell now took over the running of the battle.

"Stop One, roger," came the terse reply.

"Hornet . . . K-car," Farndell called me.

"Go."

"Are you visual with our strikes?"



Observation posts were key to success of Fire Force concept. OP teams would infiltrate a suspected terrorist area, sit tight and observe, and when terrors were spotted, call out the Fire Force. Photo: courtesy John Coleman

"Roger."

"Okay, we've knocked a few down, but some of them are snivelling near that big baobab tree and I want you to put a frantan down about five yards north of the tree."

"Roger," I replied, applying power and climbing, simultaneously adjusting my orbit to position myself to attack from the east. As I reached 1,200 feet above target height I was in a good position to turn in. While I turned I kept my eyes riveted on the target, as it was too easy to lose it in the turn if you were not paying attention. Automatically I checked my switch selections and as I rolled into the dive I flicked the Master Armament Switch "On" and called, "Hornet One, live."

Once in the dive I brought my gunsight onto the target, raised the nose slightly to compensate for gravity drop and the fact that I would be firing out of range, centered the ball with a touch of rudder and pressed the gun button. The twin machine guns above the cabin stuttered and I watched the tracers arc down toward the target. Suddenly tracer from the terrorist position swept up at me. I checked the sight back onto the target and gave a long accurate burst but fire was still coming back. I rechecked my balance and kept the button down as I pressed the attack home. The ground rushed up at me and as the target disappeared under the nose of the aircraft at about 100 feet, I released the napalm. Out of the corner of my right eye I saw the bomb leave the rack and the aircraft bucked slightly from the sudden loss of weight, and I heard a dull thud as the bomb detonated. I held the Lynx down on the treetops before pushing the throttles forward and climbing and pulling the plane around to the left. I looked back and saw a pall of black smoke hanging over the target.

"Good one, Hornet," shouted Lucio. "Smack on target."

His words were followed by another transmission. "Stop One, contact." As the stick leader transmitted calmly and clearly,

the sound of a firefight — the clatter of a MAG and rifle fire — was clearly audible in the background. "Stop Two is with me and we're in contact with eight gooks to our southwest."

"Stop One . . . One-Nine. Do you need any help?" asked Farndell.

"Negative at this time."

By now, the K-car's attention was slightly north of the original contact area as they tried to see what was happening in Stop One's area. Because of my wider orbit I was covering the area of my napalm strike and had a vested interest in seeing whether or not anything came out of the still smouldering bush. As I reached the northernmost point of the orbit I saw two terrorists break from the area of the big baobab tree and run down the side of the re-entrant. They had obviously decided to take advantage of the contact to their north and run, in the hope that nobody would notice their escape.

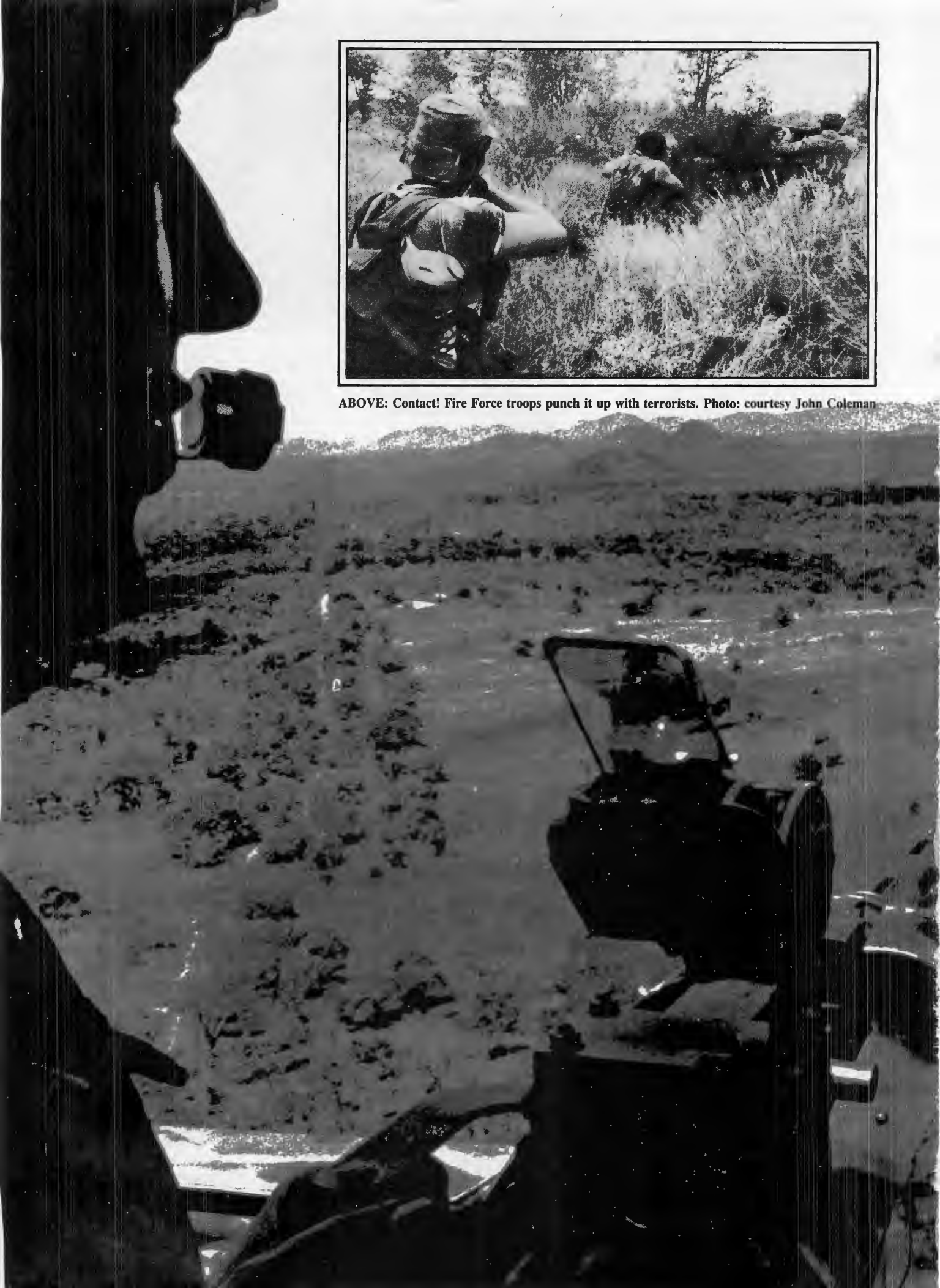
"K-One . . . Hornet. I've two visual, gapping it (escaping) east."

"Roger, Hornet. I'm not visual. Take them out. Call live."

By now I was perfectly positioned at the top of the dive. "Hornet live," I called as I pulled the aircraft around, flicked the Armament Master Switch "On" and lowered the nose, putting the lighted reticle of the sight on the two matchstick figures hurtling across the field. As my speed built up I adjusted my trim, checked my balance and trod lightly on my right rudder to correct a slight imperfection. At about 500 feet, I felt good about the attack; the figures were now clearly distinguishable and I raised the nose slightly to put the sight just above the terrorist on the left. I gave a short burst and saw dust kick up about 5 yards behind the man. Ever so gently I let the sight ride up a touch and pressed the gun button again. The storm of bullets thudded into the fleeing terrorist, and the curved magazine of his AK-47 assault rifle was distinct as the weapon flew from his dead hands. His escape ended in a cloud of dust as he crumpled to the ground. Unbelievably, the other terrorist was still running straight ahead but no amount of adrenaline was going to help him now. I touched the ailerons, applied slight pressure to the rudder and as the sight reached his left shoulder I fired. The impact slammed him



ABOVE: Contact! Fire Force troops punch it up with terrorists. Photo: courtesy John Coleman



up and sideways and he completed a full somersault before he too lay dead in the dust of the maize field.

As I sped over the re-entrant, I heard the sound of small-arms fire passing the aircraft and a distinctive thud as a bullet found its mark somewhere behind me. There were obviously still some terrorists left in the re-entrant that the napalm had missed. This was not an unusual problem as the napalm only covered a very limited area and it was impossible to hit all the terrorists in one pass. As I pulled the aircraft up into a steep climb I called the K-car.

"K-One . . . Hornet. I got both runners but there are still gooks in the main target area, and I got revved as I went over."

"Roger Hornet. Stop Three, did you copy?"

"Stop Three, roger."

"Okay, you guys keep your eyes open and stay in your position for now."

"Roger."

"Out to you . . . Viking, K-car," Lucio now addressed the para Dakota.

"Go."

"I want you to drop about 1,000 meters east of the target, out to you . . . Yellow Four . . . K-car."

"Go."

"Get an accurate ground height in that field just to the target side of the village and behind that row of trees and mark the DZ."

Yellow Three, who had been orbiting south of the contact area, now swooped down toward the drop zone (DZ) where he would fly low, get the correct altitude and pass it to the Dakota. He would then mark the extremities of the DZ with two orange smoke grenades. The plan was to use the paratroops to reinforce the stop groups and at the same time box the terrorists in, leaving one escape route to the west. If they broke cover, picking them off from the air would be a simple task.

"Hornet . . . One-Nine," Farnell called me.

"Go."

"Okay, Pete. I want you to put another frantano into the target area on my strikes, out to you . . . Stops Three and Four, as soon as Hornet drops his frantano I want you

guys to move up into the target, but watch out as the bastards may be gapping it down to your pozzie."

"Hornet, roger."

"Stop Three, roger."

"Stop Four, roger."

This time I turned in from the east, away from the impending para drop as I did not want any possibility of my micochets hitting our own troops, and watched as the 20mm cannon shells exploded in the trees. I called "Hornet live" and the gunship stopped firing. Down the dive I gave short bursts until I was about 300 meters from the target when I held the gun button down and sprayed the area with a vicious raking fire. Again as the target passed below the nose of the Lynx, I dropped the napalm. I knew it was a good bomb, so Lucio's confirmation was superfluous.

As I pulled up, the radio came alive.

"Stop Three . . . contact, contact," shrieked a voice. "About eight gooks have gapped it our way."

"Roger, Stop Three," called Lucio.

Now all the stop groups were in contact and I saw the olive drab of the parachutes drifting toward the ground east of the target.

"Stop One . . . One-Nine. What the fuck is going on?"

"Roger, sir. We've culled about seven gooks and we're linking up with Stop Two and moving south."

"Okay, well done. Now hold your position and get ready for runners. Did you copy what I told Stop Three?"

"Affirmative."

"Good, we're going to go and give Stop Three a hand."

The K-car now moved into a tight orbit above Stop Three.

"Stop Three . . . K-car. I've got your day-glo visual, where are the gooks?"

"Roger, sir. They're in the rocks about 20 meters north of us just by that big msasa tree."

"Oh shit, yes . . . visual . . . K-car firing," came Lucio's voice.

A cloud of dust rose from the position as the shells exploded in the rocky outcrop and the soldier's voice came up again.

"On target," called Stop Three. "Some are gapping it north but we've culled a few

and we're advancing into the area."

"Good stuff. Stop One, did you copy?"

"Roger."

"One-Nine . . . Stops Five to Nine are down," from the senior para stick commander, indicating their jump had been good and that they were on the ground.

"Roger, position yourselves along the tree line and cull anything that comes up from the contact area."

"Roger."

"Sky Shout . . . K-car."

"Go."

"Get into the area and tell these fuckers that we've got them surrounded and that we've culled a bunch of their mates and if they don't want to end up the same way, their best move is to surrender right now. I want them to drop their weapons and then move slowly up out of the re-entrant toward the paras with their hands up high."

"OK, I'll be on target in one minute."

"All callsigns . . . One-Nine. Let's try and get some captures, guys."

As the Sky Shout came into the area, we widened our orbits to enable him to provide a clear broadcast.

While he was relaying the message, Stop Two came up. "I've got about six gooks moving up toward my loc. They're all snivelling around and they don't look as though they intend to surrender."

"OK, cull them," came the flat reply.

As Stop Two acknowledged the order we heard the sound of the machine gun in the background. They obviously didn't need a second invitation.

A minute later Stop Two called again. "One-Nine . . . Stop Two. We've killed three and we've got three captures, but we've got one wounded. Not serious, but I would like a casevac (casualty evacuation)."

"Well done guys," Farnell replied. "I'll get a helo in soonest."

"Yellow One . . . K-car. Get in here, we've got a casevac," Lucio called.

"Roger."

Farnell now applied finishing touches to what had been a text book operation.

"Okay, Stop Two. Let's get your casualty out, and once he's out I want you guys to stay in ambush while Stops Three and Four sweep up into your area. Make sure you keep the captures quiet."

All the stops acknowledged.

"Stops Five to Nine . . . One-Nine.

LEFT: Troop-carrying G-Car, an Alouette III, heads toward area of terrorist sighting. Varied, and oftentimes intensely thick, southern African bushveldt made it tough to draw the terrorists out into the open. That meant Fire Force troopies had to physically clear contact areas, with punch-ups often occurring at a range of a few feet. Photo: Al Venter

Continued on page 78

SAS OPS IN NORTHERN



Loughgall Police Station after the attack during which eight IRA men died in an SAS ambush. The damage caused by the massive explosion can be seen as can the closed minibus in which the gunmen tried to make their escape. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.

IRELAND

British Elite Hunt Down IRA Terrorists

by Major C.E. Parks

SPECIAL Air Service Regiment activities in Northern Ireland are inevitably shrouded in mystery. The army maintains very tight security around the unit and even within the services the "need to know" principle is rigidly applied. Ministry of Defence spokesmen will not discuss the SAS and all operations are attributed to other regiments.

As far as the press is concerned, any covert activity by unidentified troops or police is credited to the SAS, and this further helps to confuse matters.

In 1969 as the civil rights movement began to turn to violence and the British army started to deploy in numbers in Northern Ireland, D Squadron of 22 SAS was de-

ployed in a conventional role in the Newtownards area, openly wearing their famous beige berets and winged dagger badge. Their task was to prevent any attempt at

COMMONWEALTH CHRONICLER

Major C. E. Parks, a former officer in the Royal Horse Artillery, twice served in Oman, first during the communist insurgency and later on secondment from the British Army. He is a frequent contributor to SOF in the fields of tactics and military history.

gunrunning by the Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force — the UVF.

D Squadron was withdrawn after a few weeks during which they found the time to lay a wreath on the grave of one of the Regiment's heroes of World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Paddy Blaire Mayne. After they went home, no formed unit of SAS returned to Ulster until 1976.

As military operations in Northern Ireland developed, covert tasks became the province of ad-hoc units that were raised as needed. The best known of these was the Mobile Reconnaissance Force (MRF), which was formed to operate in Belfast under the orders of the Commander, 39 Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Frank Kitson.

CAPTAIN ROBERT NIARAC, G.C.



Captain Bob Niarac of the Grenadier Guards was abducted and murdered while on plain clothes duty in South Armagh. Bob, whose body has never been found, was not a member of the SAS as claimed by the Provisional IRA. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.

In many ways Captain Robert Niarac of the Grenadier Guards was the *beau ideal* of a British Army officer. Handsome, intelligent, tough and very brave, it was inevitable that he would be drawn to the secret war fought in the lanes, fields and pubs of Ulster.

Bob Niarac was a Catholic and educated at Ampleforth, one of the great Catholic Public Schools. Later he went up to Oxford, where he read history at Lincoln College. He excelled at sports, gaining his Blue for boxing. He was a keen falconer and his favorite bird took a part in the BBC TV drama *Kes*.

After university he joined the army, commissioned into the senior Regiment of Foot Guards, the Grenadiers. With his battalion he took part in public duties, guarding the Queen at Buckingham Palace and Windsor. But the Brigade, as the Guards like to call themselves, are not just ceremonial troops and Bob took his platoon to Northern Ireland on a number of occasions.

Bob loved the Irish. Not one side or persuasion or religion, just the Irish. He was also a romantic at heart and perhaps that was what drew him most strongly into the secret world.

His death in a wet field just over the border of the Republic of Ireland made him into an instant public figure and object of much intense and misinformed comment. Most of the speculation revolved around his role and much of it placed him as an SAS secret agent.

Bob did not belong to the SAS although much of his work was alongside them. He belonged to ... Well, it doesn't really matter who he belonged to, for as far as the Great British Public are concerned he was an SAS man, and his death did a great deal to focus the media spotlight on a little corner of Ulster called South Armagh.



I knew him well at one time. He was efficient, helpful and a great comfort to have around in moments of stress. His favorite recreation was singing and his favorite songs were all Irish, and mostly what are known as Rebel Songs, the songs of the IRA. He sang well in a trained baritone and the song he sang best was *Danny Boy* or *The Londonderry Air*.

I was far away from Ireland when he died, and I read the five-day-old newspapers in horror. Later when I returned to the province I talked with the RUC men who investigated his killing.

Bob was based in Portadown, the headquarters of 3 Infantry Brigade, but spent much of his time working out of Bessbrook Mill, the base of the infantry battalion responsible for South Armagh, and it was from there that he set out on the night he died.

I have no idea what he was supposed to be doing that night but whatever it was he took the time to visit the Three Steps public house in Drumintee where he took part in their regular sing-along. That was not unusual for Bob, he had sung in most of the border pubs, and was well known in the area.

With his pronounced Belfast accent he was not taken for a local but was believed by many to be a "Stickie," a member of the Official IRA who were at daggers drawn with the "Proxies" or Provisional IRA. *Danny Boy*, they called him.

He didn't sing *Danny Boy* that night, but he did sing *The Broad Black Brimmer* and another old IRA favorite *The Boys of the Old Brigade*. When he left the pub he was accosted in the car park by a large group, perhaps as many as nine, of local Republicans, none of whom were members of the PIRA proper but rather were fringe activists.

After a violent struggle during which he was unable to reach the 9mm Browning pistol which he carried under his arm, he was knocked unconscious and bundled into a car and driven to a cottage just over the border.

When he regained consciousness he was alone with a single guard who he attacked and relieved of his revolver. As another man came into the room he

Captain Bob Niarac was abducted from outside this bar in South Armagh in 1977. He was later tortured and murdered by fringe IRA activists. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.

pulled the revolver's trigger three times only to hear the awful click of a misfire each time. Before he could try again he was overpowered and knocked unconscious once more.

Taken to a lonely field in the middle of nearby Ravensdale Forest he was brutally tortured for several hours. During all this time Bob maintained his cover and told his captors nothing.

Finally realizing that he was going to die he asked for a priest and, in a last attempt to discover who he was, one of his killers played the role of the priest and heard his last confession. He was then shot twice, in the head and body, and his body buried in a shallow grave nearby.

At this point the killers still did not know who they had killed. It was not until the following day when an army press statement told the world that an officer was missing that they realized what a prize they had lost.

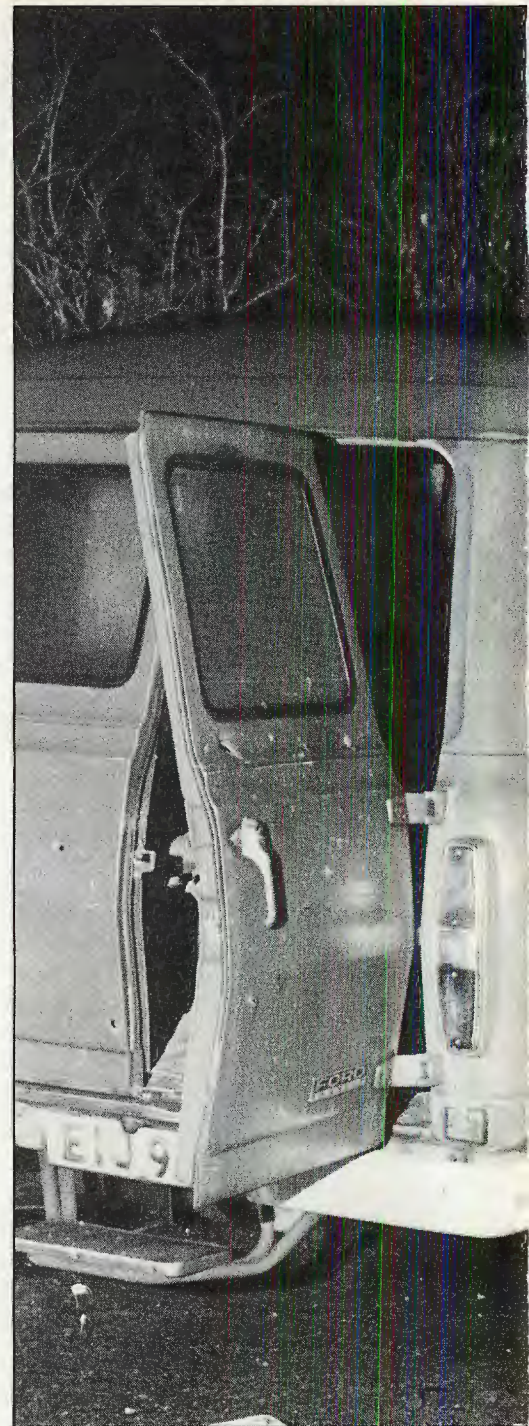
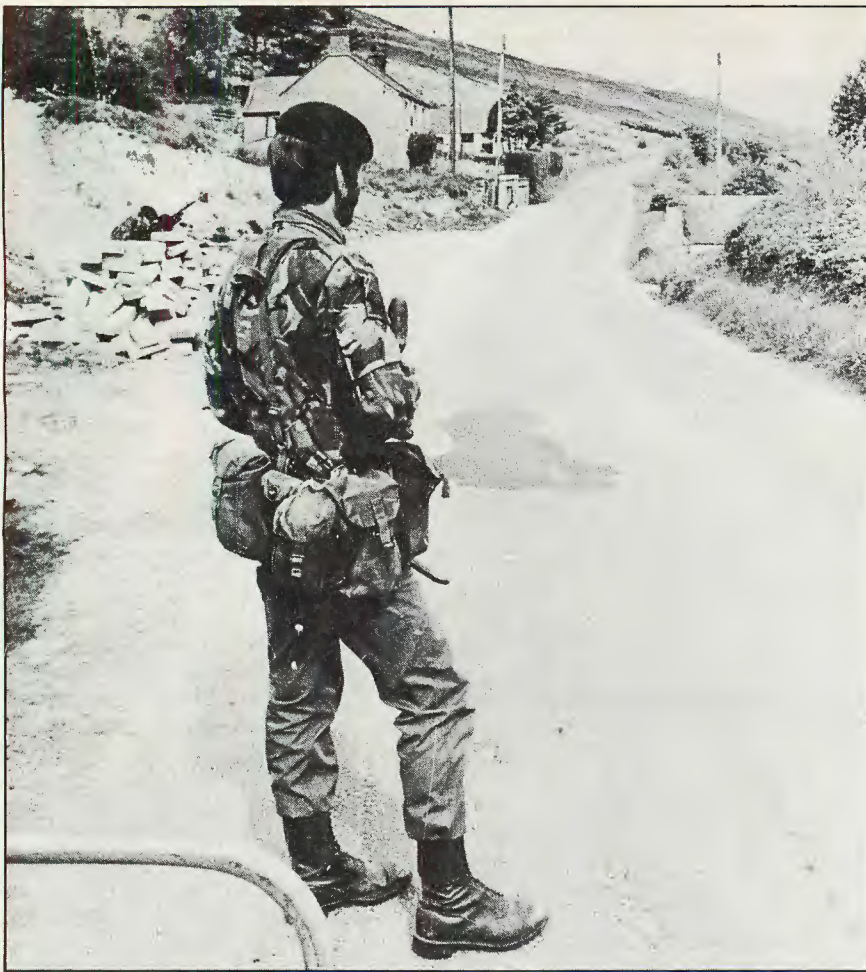
In an attempt to hinder the investigation, Bob's body was recovered from its grave and fed through the grinders of a nearby animal food plant.

Later that year a 24-year-old joiner from Meigh in County Armagh confessed to the Irish Police that he had shot Bob Niarac. He took them to the scene of the murder and showed them where his clothes and pistol had been hidden.

Liam Townson was jailed for life for the murder by a Republic of Ireland Court and information he provided led to the conviction of five other men in the North.

Bob became a hero in a war which has been without heroes and in February 1977 was posthumously awarded the George Cross, Britain's highest award for peacetime valor.

I was still far away when his memorial service was held in the Guard's Chapel in London, but I hope they sang *Danny Boy* for him. He would have liked that.



ABOVE: Following the abduction of Captain Bob Niarac an intensive search was mounted north and south of the border. These soldiers are carrying out vehicle checks on a deserted country road. Photo: Belfast Telegraph

LEFT: An RUC officer searches for empty cartridge cases at the scene of the 1988 Drumnakilly ambush in which three IRA men died. Photo: Belfast Telegraph

RIGHT: The murder by the Provisional IRA of 10 men traveling in this minibus was the trigger that brought about the deployment of the SAS to Northern Ireland. Eleven men were lined up along the side of the bus and shot. One survived. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.

Kitson, a highly experienced counter-terrorist fighter, saw the need for specialist troops to take the fight to the enemy and recruited a highly unconventional group of young men for the task.

One of the early tasks of the MRF was the running of "Fred's," turned terrorists who were provided with an MRF soldier who lived cheek-by-jowl with them and accompanied them on expeditions in which they pointed out their erstwhile colleagues for subsequent arrest and interrogation.

The MRF was also responsible for the operation of the Four Square Laundry, a complicated scam in which a laundry firm clandestinely run by the army collected dirty linen from a wide area of Catholic West

Belfast and returned it, duly washed, after it had been tested for traces of explosive and other forensic intelligence. The operation was finally blown, but not before a great deal of useful intelligence had been gained, and an embarrassingly large profit made.

At a lower level, covert operations, and especially static surveillance tasks, were carried out by the Recce Platoons organic to each infantry battalion. The training of these Close Observation Platoons varied greatly, often in direct ratio to the importance attached to them by the battalion commander and hence the caliber of officer appointed to command the platoon. COPs are still active in the province.

SAS-trained soldiers did serve in the pro-

vince, but only while serving with their parent units. Keen-eyed observers sometimes spotted their distinctive jump-wings and read rather more than they should into a minor dress distinction.

The MRF was disbanded in about 1972, and a more formal and better-trained intelligence-gathering unit was raised to replace it. The soldiers were all volunteers who underwent a course similar to the SAS selection course. After 1974 a detachment of the new unit was attached to each of the three infantry brigades deployed in the province.

From 1974 on there was a steady expansion of covert operations. The frustration of the army was such that many soldiers became convinced that it was only by a mas-



sive covert effort that the Provisional Irish Republican Army — PIRA — could be defeated. Covert Ops became the fashionable thing, and many ambitious officers regarded a tour in the “Secret Squirrels” as an important tick on their records.

The inability of the police and army to contain the activities of either PIRA or the Protestant paramilitary groups, most noticeably the UVF, was underlined by an increasingly savage series of sectarian murders in the South Armagh area which soon became known as the Murder Triangle.

These culminated in an incident on 5 January 1976 when a group of workers on their way home to Bessbrook village near Newry were stopped by an Active Service

Unit of the PIRAs South Armagh Brigade. They were ordered from the bus, a Catholic among them was sent into a nearby field, and the remaining 11 men were shot at point-blank range. One of the 11 survived the shooting.

As a result, on 7 January 1976 the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, announced that units of 22 SAS would deploy in South Armagh. The Recce party of D Squadron flew out to the province only days after their return from Dhofar in the Sultanate of Oman, where they had been fighting Communist rebels.

On 12 March, not long after the arrival of the main body of the squadron, the SAS scored their first success with the arrest of

Sean McKenna, a prominent PIRA terrorist who was active in the Newry and North Louth area. Official reports denied the involvement of the SAS and stated merely that McKenna, drunk, had wandered across the border from his cottage at Edentubber, County Louth, 200 yards into the Republic of Ireland and stumbled into the arms of a normal army patrol.

McKenna later said that he had been asleep in bed when he was woken by two men, one of whom pressed a pistol to his head and gave him the choice of coming quietly or being shot. A Royal Ulster Constabulary officer who was involved in his prosecution has since told me that when he was handed over to the police McKenna was



so relieved that he could not stop talking. As a result of the statements he signed he was later convicted of a total of 25 different offenses and sentenced to over 300 years in prison.

In an account of the incident published by Fathers Denis Faul and Raymond Murray, McKenna said that he was forced to make statements of admission when it was pointed out to him that there was no record of his presence in the province and that he could easily disappear.

Just a month later on 15 April another terrorist, Peter Cleary, was arrested by an SAS patrol at his girlfriend's house at Forkill, County Armagh, just 50 yards north of the border with the Republic. Cleary, a Staff

Captain in the PIRA's South Armagh Brigade, had been living in the South, but was in the habit of visiting the girl's home on a regular basis.

While the patrol waited for a helicopter to collect them, Cleary attacked his lone guard and in the ensuing scuffle was shot dead. Press statements issued by the army falsely claimed that the patrol was from 3 Para, which had taken over responsibility for South Armagh from 1 Royal Scots just a few hours before. The soldier who fired the fatal shots was later tried and acquitted by a civil court.

Cleary was reported in various newspapers to have been involved in the Bessbrook minibus murder and a number of other

attacks in the South Armagh area. At the time of his death he had been "on the run" for 12 months.

The effect of these two incidents was to warn PIRA terrorists living "on the run" in the Republic that they were no longer as safe as they had believed. Prior to this the men could often be clearly seen going about their daily business just a few yards over the border. Many of them relied on British Government social assistance money which they were sent by mail once they had convinced the social services that they would be subject to "harassment" by the RUC if they travelled north to draw it.

They also became much more security conscious, and life became much harder for



ABOVE: An M60 machine gun juts defiantly from a window following the surrender of the PIRA ASU which shot SAS officer Richard Westmacott in West Belfast. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.

LEFT: Loughall RUC Station following the attack in which eight members of the Provisional IRA's East Tyrone Brigade died in an SAS ambush. The remains of the loader which carried the explosives can be seen in the fence of the shattered barracks. The minibus in which the eight died stands

empty in the road. Photo: Belfast Telegraph

BELOW: Weapons recovered by the Royal Ulster Constabulary after the SAS successfully ambushed a PIRA attack on Loughall RUC Station in 1987. They are (left to right) two Belgian 5.56mm FNC rifles, a 7.62mm FN FAL, a 12 gauge SPAS combat shotgun, a .357 Magnum Ruger revolver of the type issued to the RUC, and three 7.62mm Heckler & Koch G3 rifles. Photo: The Press Association, Ltd.



surveillance organizations. The murder in the South of PIRA terrorists by the UVF was also laid at the door of the SAS, which heightened the fear in which these men lived and made it much harder for PIRA to mount their operations.

This fear was backed up when three SAS covert cars strayed over the border on 6 May at an unapproved border crossing point at Flagstaff Hill and were arrested by the Irish Police. This incident has never been fully explained, but it is reliably reported that the first car made a map reading error which was repeated by the other two cars when they were sent to find out what had happened to the first. This is less unlikely than it seems because the maps of the area are not

very accurate, nor is the border prominently marked.

As a result of that incident eight SAS soldiers were tried in Dublin for illegal possession of weapons. One of them was a Fijian soldier who must have rather stood out in an area where black faces are not often seen.

A measure of the effect of publicly acknowledging SAS presence in South Armagh, is that in the six months before they deployed 21 civilians were murdered in the area as part of a tit-for-tat round of sectarian killings. In the 12 months that followed there were no attacks on civilians in South Armagh.

The success of covert action in what had

been known as Bandit Country led the RUC to believe that they should become more involved in similar operations. Two new departments were raised. E4A, part of Special Branch, was to be responsible for surveillance, while a new Special Patrol Group unit, Bronze Section, was to take on the active measures role.

Bronze Section later became known as the Special Support Unit when the SPG was disbanded. It was on the SSU that suspicion fell when the RUC was investigated for an alleged "shoot-to-kill" policy following the deaths of a number of unarmed terrorist suspects. The RUC is no longer in the covert ambush game.

A second SAS Squadron was deployed in



ABOVE: Captain Richard Westmacott was killed in a firefight with a Provisional IRA Active Service Unit in Belfast's Antrim Road. His body lies covered by a sheet after the incident. Photo: Pacemaker Press International, Ltd.



LEFT: Captain Richard Westmacott, a Guards officer serving with 22 SAS was killed in a shooting incident in Belfast in 1980. He was later awarded a posthumous Military Cross. Photo: The Press Association, Ltd.

RIGHT: The Chief of the Defence Staff, Field Marshal Sir Michael Carver, arrives at No. 10 Downing Street to discuss security in Northern Ireland with the Prime Minister the morning after the Bessbrook minibus murders in 1976. It was at this meeting that the decision was taken to deploy an SAS squadron to South Armagh. Photo: The Press Association, Ltd.



Northern Ireland by mid-1977, bringing the total of SAS soldiers in the province to 160.

Twelve months after deploying in South Armagh the SAS had their first brush with an armed PIRA ASU. On 19 January 1977 a SAS patrol was lying in wait over a stolen car that had been used in the murder of a Royal Highland Fusiliers lance corporal at Crossmaglen two weeks before.

A man dressed in boots and combat clothing with a black face mask approached the vehicle. He was armed with a sawn-off shotgun and was wearing a belt of Brenneke ball 12 bore cartridges. The man was challenged and the ambush came under fire from a PIRA covering party. The SAS returned fire and when the smoke cleared the first terror-

ist was found to be dead with 13 bullet wounds, two of them from his colleague's Armalites.

This ambush which resulted in the death of Seamus Harvey was a classic SAS operation. Good hard intelligence, the whereabouts of the car which had been reported by locals, good fieldcraft which enabled them to maintain the ambush unseen for at least three days and finally good, accurate shooting.

Much less satisfactory was an incident which resulted in the death of an innocent boy and the trial of two SAS soldiers for murder.

In July 1978, 16-year-old John Boyle took time off from haymaking on his father's farm near Dunloy, County Antrim.

In a nearby graveyard he found a black plastic sack containing an Armalite rifle and other terrorist equipment. John and his brother, Hugh, immediately told their father, Con Boyle, of their find and he in turn called the police.

In due course the information was passed on to the SAS who were tasked to ambush the hide. An OP was established overlooking the cache and the SAS settled in to wait as long as was necessary for the terrorists to arrive.

What happened next has never been satisfactorily explained, but what can be said with certainty is that John Boyle went back

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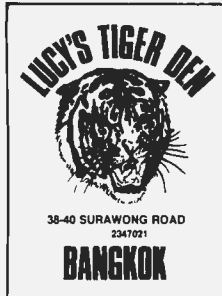


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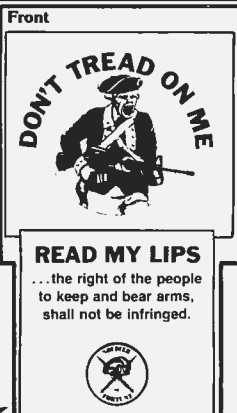
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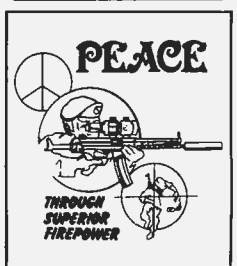


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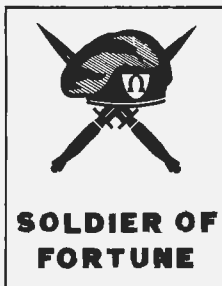
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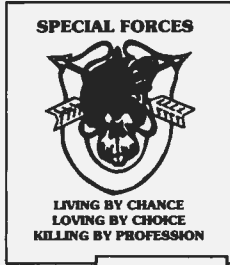


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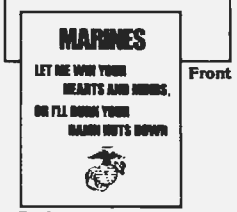


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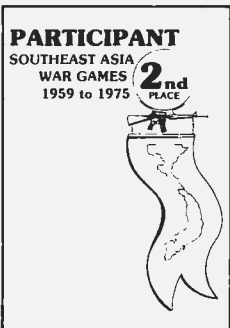


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COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 19

better come to grips with their environment. A basic tracking course usually lasts only a month and it is combined with a general review of all essential military skills.

However, it is possible to teach yourself to track. Just walk through the bush, turn around, and backtrack your way home. If you lose your own tracks, then your anti-tracking is improving. Either way, it is a good skill to know and a small investment to make, especially when it's your posterior you're protecting. ✕

DEATH IN HIGH PLACES

Continued from page 35

charting its progress. In case we are forced to land, the bomber pilot will provide cover and mark our location in the wilderness. I wonder how much good a flak jacket would be in case of a crash.

For Guatemala's 40 chopper pilots, stress is a way of life. They take bullets on board on most missions, and they also face the danger of metal fatigue on the old, albeit meticulously maintained, aircraft. After their missions, they sit together over a beer or a rum and coke and talk about their triumphs and worries.

"A pilot isn't superman," admits Espinoza. "We feel fear."

January is considered the air force's "Black Month." During the nine Januarys from 1981 to 1989, 28 pilots have been killed, six in one month. Some people believe this is because of the EGP's morbid custom of celebrating their 19th of January and 31st of January columns by killing as many troops as possible during January. Bagging a chopper is a special prize.

"To shoot a chopper or a pilot," says Erwin Sagastume, "increases their morale."

Known for awhile as "Top Gun," Sagastume is the volatile, daring chopper pilot who managed to save his crew and passengers after his 412 lost electrical power when it took 14 rounds of 7.62 last year, some injuring Jody Duncan (See "Winning Hearts and Mayans," SOF November '88). He also says he's the real life role model for a scene in one of Barry Sadler's novels. His code name is *Pinguino*, or penguin.

"But please be sure to put two dots over the 'u,'" he says. "Otherwise the word means 'a drunk.'"

Sagastume is one of the new guard of chopper pilots—a talented, feisty young man about 30 years old. The old guard—the men who learned to fly Guatemala's first

choppers and who fought the guerrillas when the war raged out of control — have gone on to jobs other than flying. Those who are still alive, that is.

Santamarina is now spokesman for the air force. Espinoza holds a coveted staff position in the new Military Aviation School, and Rudy Pozuelos is flying Channel 5, the Army's television station. But the men from those days are still haunted by the stress they endured as the miracle men of the country's new fighting machines. They flew 11 hours a day, 800 hours a year (present pilots average 300 hours a year). They flew without a co-pilot because of fatigue. They flew the old UH-1Hs into the mountains in emergencies, and because every day brought crises, they flew the Hueys at altitudes and with loads they were never designed for.

"We thought the Hueys were the most amazing things ever made," recalls Santamarina. At 42, his hair is mostly gray, and his moniker has changed to White Lion. "Those choppers could do things the charts never said they could. We would expect a flameout and our hearts would pound and our hands would sweat, but the machine survived. The air force had three crashes from excess confidence because we thought the Hueys could do everything."

One time, the pilot of a Huey had to take off from 7,000 feet with 14 people on board.

"The mechanic let the fuel out, and the chopper hopped down the field like a tennis ball before it could get off," says Santamarina. "But what could the pilot do? Leave some people behind?"

On his third flameout, Santamarina broke his back, then flew the machine back to the base before he lost the feeling in his legs. But physical wounds weren't the only ones the pilots suffered.

"We would spend eight days flying over Huehuetenango and then be home for only one day," recalls Santamarina. "The air force needed 100 percent participation from us and called for a sacrifice — our wives and our kids."

According to the chopper pilots from the decade of 1977 to 1987, many of them lost their marriages and children, a special difficulty in a conservative, Catholic country.

"In aviation school, we receive the inspiration to maintain our control," continues Santamarina. "But sometimes you break down and you need a rest. The problem begins when your wife complains, 'You've been gone for eight days, and now you want your meals on time and your kids to come running.' But you can't blame her."

"Many pilots relaxed with alcohol," adds Espinoza. "And while some got help and recovered from alcohol dependency, others never have. It's a psychological problem created by war."

While the pilots' backbones are examined regularly for damage, they complain about the lack of professional psychological debriefing or stress management after a crisis. After an accident, a crew may be split up, and its members shuffled into other crews until they overcome the shock. But

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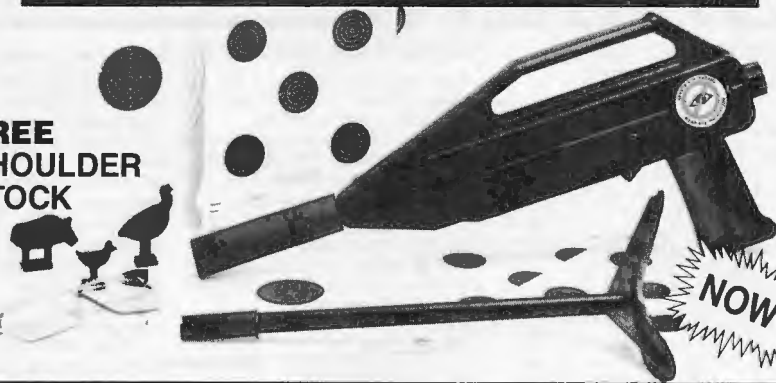
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Photos by Ron Bailey

mostly, the men rely on the people who know what they've been through — their buddies.

"After we've been in a bad situation, the best way to get our courage up is to fly again," says Sagastume. "Don't think. Just get up into the sky. To fight alongside a friend, without hatred, sometimes it helps."

"We can go to the military hospital, and the doctors nod their heads and smile and write something down," says Santamarina. "But they aren't pilots. They don't know how we feel."

"I've seen my friends' bodies like trash in the back of my chopper," adds Sagastume. "Many times I have taken an officer to the combat zone and the next day I picked up his body. The doctors don't understand. So on Friday, we go out and drink and talk. Then, on Sunday we go to church with our wife and sons. It balances us."

Flying higher than usual, the ailing Bell 412 moves south. The piercing scream of the engine invades our skulls and makes even the simple process of thinking impossible. Finally, Rodila smiles and points ahead toward the urban sprawl barely visible on the horizon. When the chopper sets down on the tarmac at the FAG base, the crew sheds their armor and sets about discovering what is causing the engine trouble. No one mentions until much later the hope

that the forward camps will have enough beans and ammo, and that there are no wounded until the 412 is made whole again. Sometimes, when your hands are tied, you just want to forget that there's an enemy at your back.

Later in the day, when it's too late to fly again, Rodila gives us a regretful smile. On the downside, the mission wasn't completely fulfilled. On the upside, the crew preserved its chopper, and if the weather and parts hold up, tomorrow is another day.

"In an emergency, you just forget everything but being in the moment," he says. "You don't think about dying: you only think about your mission — protecting the aircraft and the troops on the ground."

Rudy Pozuelos, with his decade of flying all of FAG's various choppers, sums it up: "It comes down to luck. You apply everything you've ever learned — all your logic and courage and common sense. That's the potion for surviving. But mostly it's luck. Because in the same situations I've lived through, others have died." ✕

DAY OF THE HORNET

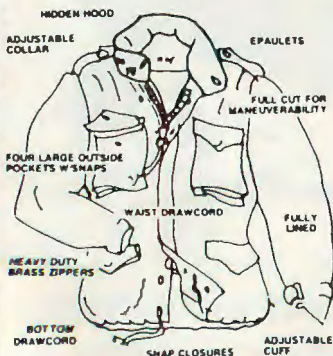
Continued from page 67

Move down and halt about 100 meters from the target. Call me when you get there."
"Paras moving now."

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As they advanced across the open area, the K-car and I covered them and saw Yellow One swoop down and lift the wounded soldier from the other side of the re-entrant.

Some 10 minutes later, it was all over. The stop groups had linked up and they now started sweeping up and down the contact area looking for dead terrorists and picking up weapons. For my part I did not have much fuel left and there was no real point in hanging around any longer, so I bade my farewells to the helos and headed back toward Mtoko.

Now there was no need to fly low, so I climbed into smooth air at about 3,000 feet, took out a cigarette and opened the small side window. These were always the best smokes and always reminded me of an advertisement for a brand of South African cigarettes that stressed "after action satisfaction" as their slogan. I inhaled deeply and loosened my straps while I listened to the sounds of the troops sweeping the contact area. This really had been a good contact: good radio discipline, good weapons delivery, excellent coordination, and above all, we had killed well over a dozen terrorists and captured at least three.

Approaching Mtoko, I prepared for a straight-in approach, and lowered my landing gear and flaps.

The wheels squeaked as they touched the runway, the aircraft settled and slowed down, and I taxied straight in to the revetment where my technician was waiting to service and re-arm the Lynx.

I switched off the engines and got out. Obviously, as I was the first person back, there were dozens of questions. However, I was concerned about what damage I had sustained. There were two holes in the left rear boom and one at the back of the engine cowling. One round had nicked my rudder control cable and this would necessitate a new cable being flown out from Salisbury, but nothing too serious.

Later the helos arrived back with the troops and after a chance to get something to eat and drink we had a debrief. There were few problems and we were now able to ascertain the success of the operation. We had killed 18 terrorists and captured three, together with all their associated weaponry. The three captures would provide valuable intelligence upon which we would launch attacks on ZANLA's rear echelon bases in Mozambique. In addition we had picked up a large pile of documents which would be analyzed by the intelligence folks. There was no reason to believe that any terrorists had escaped.

That night the pilots and soldiers got together for a barbecue, the beer being provided by the air force at the rate of one crate for every terrorist accounted for. Everyone relived the contact, and as the beer took effect, the descriptions became more colorful. However, as we sat there that evening, none of us could know that within six months we would have lost our country to the terrorists without losing a single military action. Politically, Rhodesia was doomed,

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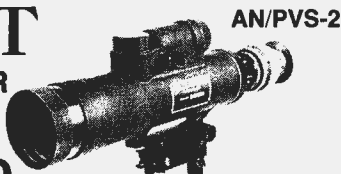
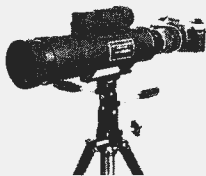
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sacrificed on the altar of expediency by the high priests of appeasement — the British government. And, in April the following year, Rhodesia would become Zimbabwe and take its first step along the regressive path plotted by Robert Mugabe and his politburo who would ultimately turn the country into a Marxist dictatorship.

But that night we were the victors. We were Fire Force. ✖

IN REVIEW

Continued from page 24

hampered and, without gentlemanly consideration of the nice, peaceful "message" LBJ was sending them, those nasty, duplicitous North Vietnamese blasted American planes out of the skies at leisure from emplaced, hardened missile sites. LBJ, the wheel-dealer politician, was clearly outclassed by hard-headed tyrants interested in conquest, not political gamesmanship.

The name **Rolling Thunder** comes from the operational name for the U.S. bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the 1960s. Though this book — the first of three in a series — begins with action in the southern military regions of South Vietnam, it moves north toward the end where Rolling Thunder was in full swing. This shift follows the

focus of the war itself, which shifted in the '60s from anti-guerrilla warfare in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam to the high hills and northern action against the regulars of the NVA.

Berent's book, with its skillful weaving of decision-making at the top and action at the grunt and airman level, enables the reader to have a bird's-eye view of the events. This perspective is similar in many ways to what a pilot sees of a war: its theater-wide aspect instead of just one farm, one rice paddy, one battle. It makes the reader almost prescient in his or her ability to foresee problems over the next hill. It's a good read. Get it. ✖

TAKE-DOWN SNIPER

Continued from page 29

and is encountered only on magnum cartridges of considerable power. Starting with the .338 Magnum case, Winchester necked it down to .30 caliber and moved the shoulder forward. Because the neck has been shortened to increase case capacity, bullets must be seated fairly deep. At present, no FMJ bullet in the required weight is manufactured. However, should the cartridge be adopted by the U.S. military, this small detail could be corrected in short order.

With the proper ammunition, the HSP762/300 will shoot sub-MOA groups in

both calibers every day in the week. We used Olin's .308 Winchester Ranger Match ammunition for our tests of the 7.62x51mm NATO barrel. Distributed for law enforcement use only, these cartridges consist of the superb Sierra 168-grain .308 International Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) bullet propelled by 42 grains of Olin 749, a flattened ball powder with characteristics similar to the more common Olin 748. Velocity, 10 feet from the muzzle, was 2,560 fps with a standard deviation of 18 fps.

Range conditions were less than ideal with winds gusting at 20 mph, severe heat mirage and an ambient temperature of 90 degrees F. Groups ranged from ½ to ¾ MOA. That's outstanding accuracy for any rifle, let alone a take-down system. There was no significant change in group size or point of impact after the barrel was removed and re-installed several times.

Reloads consisting of the Sierra 190-grain Matchking JHP bullet backed by 67 grains of IMR 4350 were fired during the .300 Winchester Magnum tests. The velocity produced by this combination was 2,840 fps 10 feet from the muzzle, with a standard deviation of only eight fps. In this caliber, groups hovering at and below ¾ MOA were the average. Again, changing the barrel had no significant effect on the group size or point of impact.

Some high-power target shooters believe that resilient rubber recoil pads introduce vertical stringing to shot groups. We found no evidence that this is the case. Perceived

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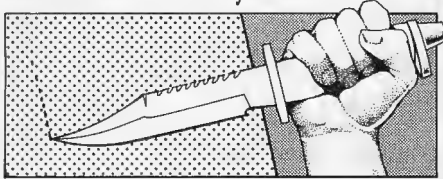
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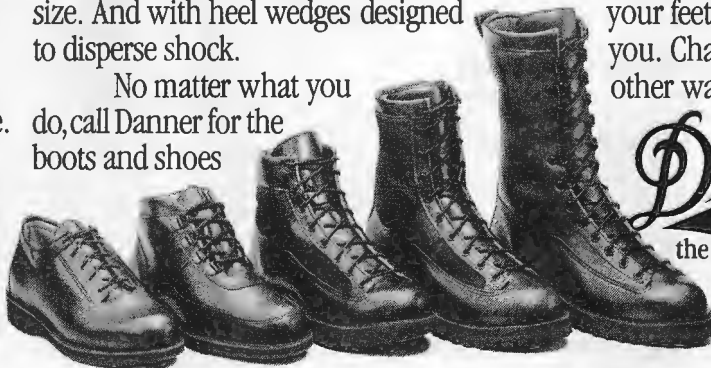
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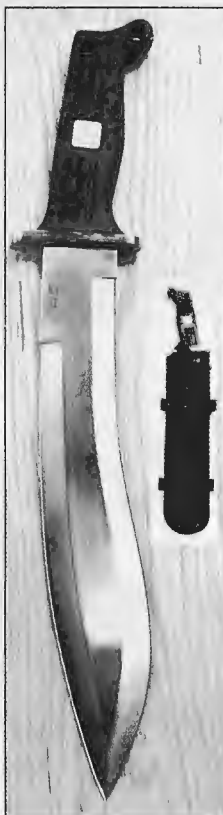
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recoil was substantially moderated by the Pachmayr Decelerator® pad. My subjective perception of the felt recoil produced by the .300 Winchester Magnum cartridge is that it is sharper, but of shorter duration, than that produced by most .40 and .45 caliber Magnum rifle cartridges. Those not accustomed to this degree of recoil impulse will definitely require extensive training and practice.

Rifles weighing 12.5 pounds are not intended for offhand shooting. However, sniping scenarios that would call for the standing position are, at best, few and far between. Toting this beast in the bush would not be a pleasant experience, but there are no free lunches and that's the price you must pay for its exceptional accuracy potential.

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PRIVATE DELTA FORCE

Continued from page 59

carried out three other successful rescue operations. In addition, the firm has continued to provide security training programs to government and industry, and fulfilled several security contracts in Latin America. After the kidnapping of a wealthy businessman in Europe in 1988, CTU was retained to protect the victim's children in the United States and to assist in the search for the perpetrators. They also conducted an investigation of efforts to smear a prominent American real estate developer by a business rival.

The firm's training courses are more popular than ever, and the offerings range from terrorism awareness to various forms of advanced firearms instruction. Students range from law enforcement personnel and employees of discreet government agencies, to businessmen and private security professionals. Among those attending a recent executive protection course, for example, was a Washington, D.C. clothier, and a former Formula One Grand Prix driver.

In contrast to CTU's first two years of operation when it maintained only a large staff of full-time employees, with the case load today, additional operators and contract employees are drawn from the large community of retired Delta and Special Forces veterans living in the Fayetteville area. After nearly going bankrupt in the aftermath of the Lauren Bayan rescue, Feeney and Chatellier have put the firm back on a solid economic footing by trimming costs and introducing more businesslike management procedures. Nevertheless, Chatellier admits that they are still suckers for a mother's tears and

heartrending story.

Editor's Note:

Families United Corporation, P.O. Box 44143, Fayetteville, North Carolina 28309 is a new non-profit organization which has been formed to help people like those in this story. This organization is specifically for families with limited means who have run the gauntlet of State Department empty promises and private investigator scams and don't know where else to turn.

For readers who will be attending the SOF Convention in Las Vegas in September, CTU will have a booth at the Convention and you can meet them for yourselves. ✂

SAS OPS

Continued from page 74

to the hide next morning and while examining it was shot dead by two SAS NCOs.

At their subsequent trial they said that he had picked up the rifle and pointed it in their direction. Details of the postmortem showed quite clearly that the five bullets that hit Boyle entered from his back, not his front as they would have done if he was facing the SAS men. The reasons that a 16-year-old boy, unfamiliar with firearms, might have had for pointing a rifle at two soldiers who had just appeared, out of the ground as it were, were never adequately explored.

At the trial a sorry tale of bungling and confusion was revealed. The SAS had been told that the finder was a child, not a young man. They had been assured that the Boyle family had been warned not to go back to the hide when in fact the message was passed to the family just 10 minutes after John left the house to visit it.

The two NCOs were finally cleared of murdering Boyle, but suspicion lingers to this day in many quarters, including the military. John Boyle's death played straight into the hands of the IRA propaganda machine. Not only did it show the SAS up in a bad light, at worst brutal, at best inept, but it highlighted the dangers of informing on PIRA activities.

A lack of knowledge of the best way to employ the SAS's undoubted skills — although at least one NCO is understood to have died as a result of an accidental shooting while leaving an OP — has led to tragedy.

In 1980 a report was received in HQ 39 Brigade that men carrying weapons had been seen entering a house on Belfast's Antrim Road. In many ways this could have been seen as a classic "come on" but an SAS patrol was nearby and was tasked to investigate the report.

Subsequent reports shed some light on the Regiment's operating practices. The patrol consisted of two cars with eight men dressed in civilian clothes. Their weapons included Heckler & Koch MP5K sub-

machine guns, Colt Commando carbines and Browning automatic pistols.

The patrol was told to search the house for a weapons hide. As they left the cars they came under fire from a number of automatic weapons, but nonetheless entered the house and cleared it, only to find that they had been sent to the wrong address and the gunmen were in the house next door. Worse, their CO, Captain Richard Westmacott, had been shot dead in the opening burst of fire.

The terrorists later surrendered to the RUC but insisted on waiting until after the SAS had left the area, a measure of the fear in which the IRA hold the unit.

These two disasters had a marked effect on the conduct of SAS operations and the way in which they were employed. The result was that the wraps went back on again and, although the number of SAS operators in the province has not greatly decreased, the number of operations which have been subject to the cold light of media attention has.

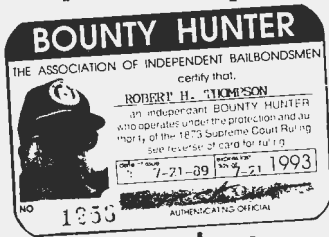
Two recent operations can be said to demonstrate not only the skill with which the Regiment fights but the skill with which targets are now chosen.

On 8 May 1987 a special ASU of PIRA's East Tyrone Brigade was ambushed by an SAS group as it carried out what was planned as a spectacular attack on an isolated RUC station. In the hail of gunfire eight IRA men died, the largest number to be killed in a single incident since the trouble started in 1969. Un-

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fortunately, the triumph was marred by the death of an innocent motorist who was caught in the cross-fire.

The attack on Loughgall was the thirteenth on an RUC station that year. In two of these a JCB mechanical digger had been used to break through the heavy wire rocket screens which surrounded the stations, carrying the bomb in its bucket.

The station in Loughgall is a "limited opening" station, more used to dealing with the daily chores of a country policeman than fighting off a determined terrorist assault. It seems likely that, if the attack had gone ahead undetected, the station would have been destroyed with heavy loss of life among the police officers inside.

The theft of a JCB was a clear sign to the RUC and army that a similar attack was planned. At the same time intelligence information was received that the East Tyrone Brigade "had a big job on." Surveillance of the Brigade's quartermaster and known PIRA activists resulted in the JCB being located in a derelict barn less than 10 miles from Loughgall.

The barn was immediately placed under close observation by the men of the RUC's E4A surveillance team. The SB men saw the bomb arrive at the farm and watched it loaded into the JCB's bucket.

Normal RUC patrols based in Loughgall continued while the SAS set up an ambush both inside and outside the station. It was now only a matter of waiting.

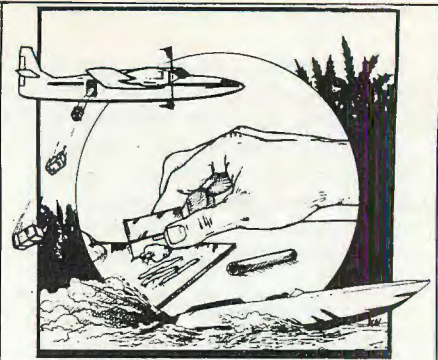
The eight men of the ASU under the leadership of James Lynagh arrived at the barn with a stolen Toyota delivery van early on Friday night. The theft of the van a little earlier had been the final confirmation, if any was needed, that the operation was about to start. The ASU changed into blue boiler suits and balaclavas and climbed into the vehicles, one to drive the JCB and seven in the blue van.

Warning that the attack was imminent was given by a sighting of the van which drove slowly past the police station, and the SAS men deployed into their ambush positions. When the van reappeared the JCB was close behind and as it pulled up in front of the police station the seven men spilled out, deployed in a rough line, and opened fire on the station.

The JCB crashed through the wire and the bomb exploded, destroying the front of the station. At the same time the waiting SAS marksmen opened fire on the terrorists who tried desperately to escape. All of them were killed as they tried to pile back into the van.

A passing motorist tried to accelerate out of danger but the car was caught in the crossfire. The driver was killed and his passenger wounded.

Immediately following the Loughgall incident there was a great deal of speculation in the press about a high-level leak in the Provisional Army Council. In fact, nothing could have been further from the truth. The success of the operation resulted from sheer lack of tactical ability by the PIRA ASU. Not only did they use the same method for a third time but they



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started to change one of them. In such a strongly Republican area the news of the lorry's whereabouts would not take long to reach the gunmen.

That afternoon four men, dressed in what has become the PIRA's standard combat uniform of blue boiler suits and black balacavas, burst in on a local family and, after reminding them of the consequences of making trouble, took the family car, a Fiat Regatta. They were unaware that they were under surveillance throughout.

Unfortunately at that moment the watchers were spotted by a local youth, which forced them to leave the area, depriving the SAS of their eyes.

The ASU then crossed the road and repeated their car hijacking at another house, this time making off with a white Ford Sierra. The hit team took the Sierra while the fourth gang member drove the Fiat to a pre-arranged rendezvous to await the successful outcome of the attack.

The waiting SAS were expecting the approach of the Fiat and were initially surprised by the appearance of the Sierra. As the SAS driver ran for cover he could hear the crack and thump of AK-47 bullets all around him. Somehow he managed to reach the shelter of a brick wall unscathed. The car stopped and the three terrorists started out to hunt down their quarry. All three were killed instantly in the withering cross-fire that followed.

The three men were identified as brothers Gerard and Martin Harte and Brian Mullen. All were well-known terrorists whom the police suspected of involvement in at least 30 murders, including soldiers, policemen and former servicemen.

The operation was a complete success, but what followed was defeat. The RUC's PR organization reacted as if the whole matter was a complete surprise to them. They issued the usual bland statement that there had been a shooting incident and that it was under investigation. It was left to the IRA's well-oiled machine to break the first news which was seized on by the media in the absence of any hard facts. The IRA announced the names of the three dead men and claimed that they had been ambushed by the SAS, given no opportunity to surrender and shot in cold blood.

The real story did not come out for some considerable time after the IRA's version had been relayed around the world. As a result when the facts became clear it was too late. What had been a magnificent victory based on good intelligence, outstanding tactical ability and good shooting was turned into a propaganda defeat which could only help to keep the war alive.

The patience that enabled the security forces to maintain a watch on a weapons hide for nearly three months, the bravery and skill of the SAS troopers, can count for nothing if not backed up by a PR system that is as alert and professional as they are. Unfortunately the same mistakes are likely to happen again.

In the meantime there is no doubt that the



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A well-placed source has recently told me that the Regiment has been particularly unfortunate in having no successes in Ulster since Drumnakilly. "They've been in the right place at the wrong time and in the wrong place at the right time just recently," he said, "but their luck's bound to change soon." ❌

FLAK

Continued from page 20

men well supplied with quality gimcracks of our own invention, we sometimes take smug comfort in the idea that our ally or enemy must make do with such things as, say, a Chauchat automatic rifle or a Type 94 pistol, or risky homemade ordnance. But we, too, often experience the slip 'tween the cup and the lip — and when we do, we usually compound it with production on a grand scale. To keep us humble, we should bear in mind that we invented Ham and Limas. Then went on to issue them for a full generation.

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R. C.
Claymont, Delaware

SOF Technical Editor Peter G. Kokalis replies: We never manufactured AKs of any type. Whatever AKs these Laotians had they got from their own pipeline or from captured stores. We did make ammunition for these weapons at the Lake City Arsenal. It had no headstamp but was Boxer primed and packaged in 20 round boxes with the Lake City name on it. ❌

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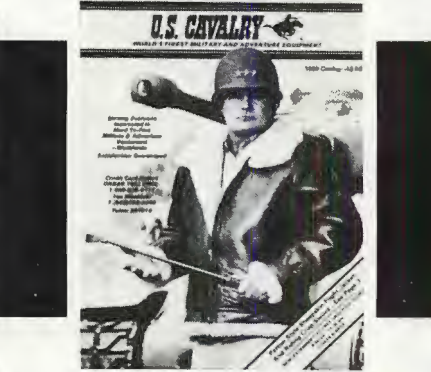
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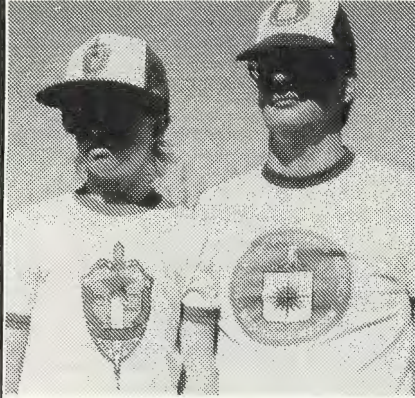
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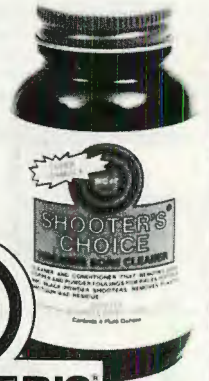
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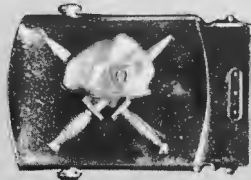
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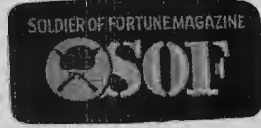
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“...The Right Of The People To Keep And Bear Arms...” — *Second Amendment, U.S. Constitution*

REUTERS/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS: JUNE 3 - An unidentified demonstrator beaten by troops near Beijing's Great Hall of the People on Saturday manages to stagger away from his assailants.



Today's Headlines Remind Us Why.

The students of Beijing did not have a Second Amendment right to defend themselves when the soldiers came. All they had was the hope and dream of liberty. Because tyranny cannot tolerate armed citizens, these brave young Chinese could only hurl words and hold out empty hands against an army.

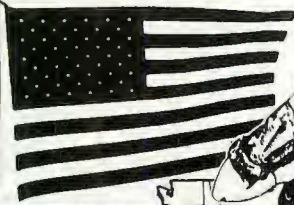
There is no right to bear arms in Soviet Georgia. Once again, a totalitarian regime would not tolerate it. That's why the Georgian people could not stop Soviet agents from first registering and later confiscating 66,000 personal firearms. Dictators are quick to send their soldiers against speechmakers. But not against armed citizens.

America's founding fathers understood that an armed people are a free people. Free to defend themselves against crime and violence. Free to rise up against tyranny. That's why the individual armed citizen remains one of democracy's strongest symbols.

The National Rifle Association's defense of firearms isn't just about hunting, or competitive shooting, or even personal protection. The right to own a firearm is a statement about freedom. If you don't get the message, take another look at the photographs. Read the headlines again. These words and images — and a million bitter tears — tell it all.

Time and Newsweek magazines
rejected publication of this message
for undisclosed reasons.

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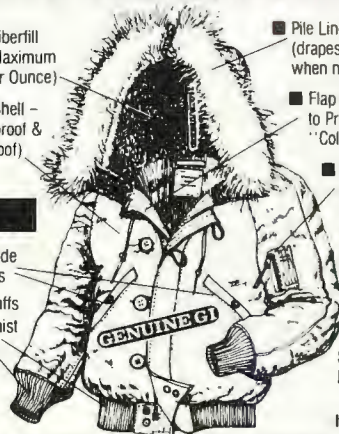
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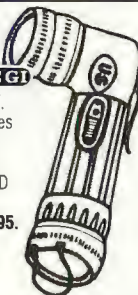
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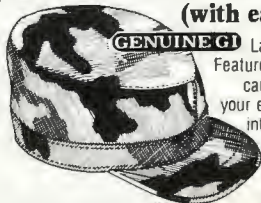
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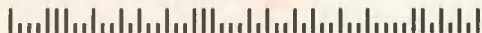
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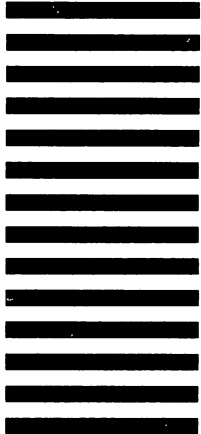
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