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The Journal of Professional Adventurers

FEBRUARY 1990  
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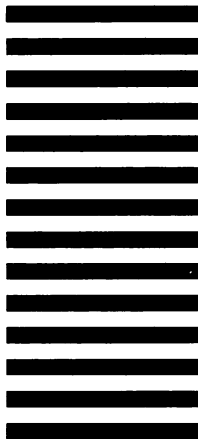
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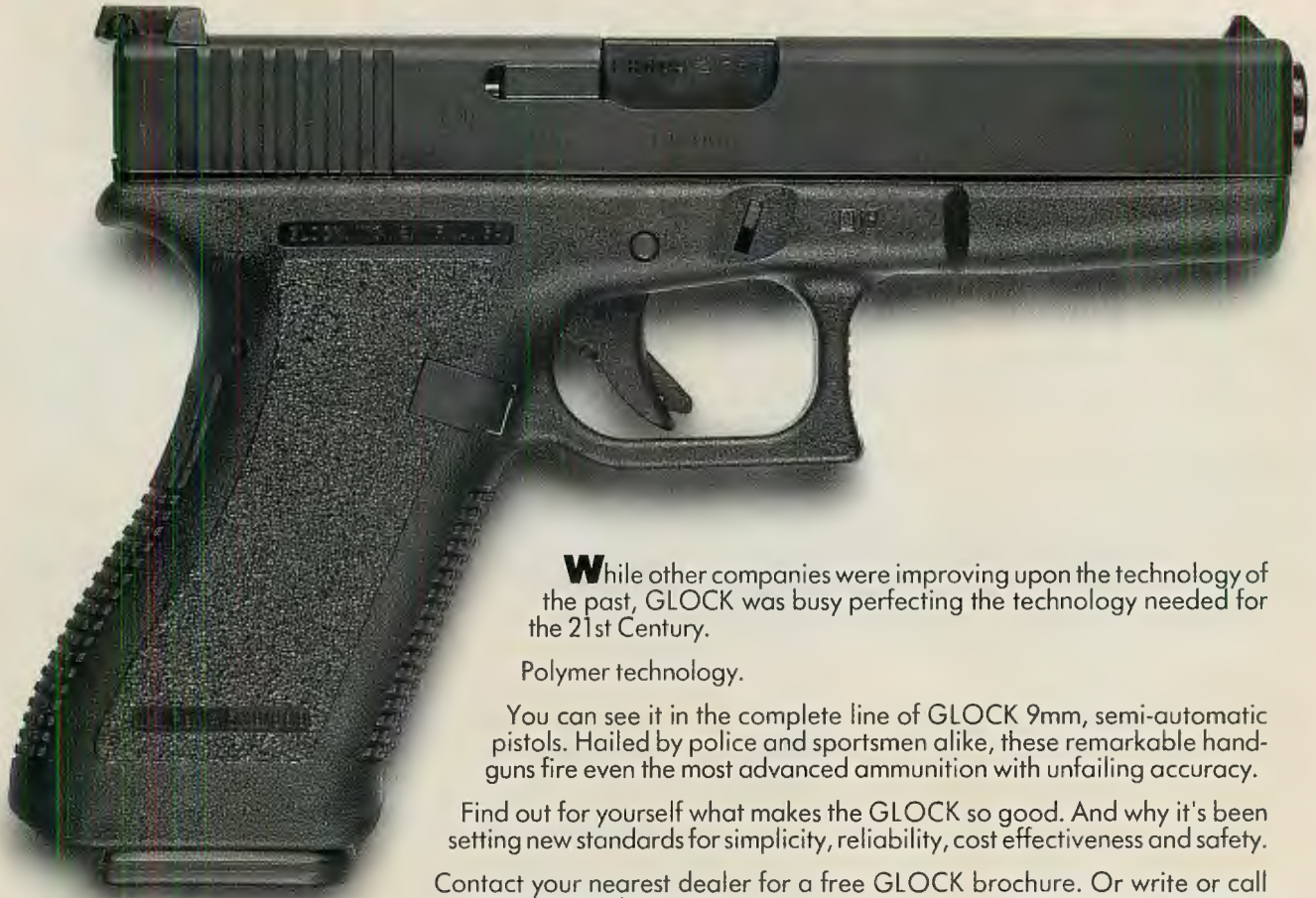
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## LADY KILLERS

David Truby

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Tom Peterson

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Until recently no reporter was even allowed to write about them. Finally we can tell the story of South Africa's, and perhaps the world's, most elite unit. They're combat tested and their training is so intense it hurts just reading about it **40**

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## COVER

COVER: Karen resistance fighter aims one-of-a-kind bastardized blooper: pistol grip and rear trigger housing are from an H&K G3 or H&K 33 rifle, while the wood forearm, trigger mechanism, action and chopped barrel are from a British SMLE bolt-action rifle; tubular buttstock, recoil pad and ventilated front sleeve are almost certainly of indigenous origin. See how the beleaguered Karen continue to resist and even strike back at the Marxist Burmese, beginning on page 28. Photo: Alain Haas

INSET: South African Recce Commando recruit fires commando mortar during selection course. It's the toughest selection course we've encountered and until recently it was all top secret. SOF again goes where no one else can; story starts on page 40. Photo: Hilton Hamman



# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

## Open Letter To Lee Atwater

The Honorable Lee Atwater  
Chairman, Republican National Committee  
310 First Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Mr. Atwater:

Thank you for your letter inviting me to contribute to the "President's Council of Sustaining Members" of the Republican Party. I'm afraid I won't be able to oblige, and it's important that you understand why.

For the past year, America's 75 million gun-owners have been engaged in a desperate struggle against the most sweeping and determined assault on the right to keep and bear arms in this century, if not in the history of the Republic. The pivotal event that ignited that assault was the decision by the Bush administration to ban the importation of dozens of hitherto wholly legal semi-automatic rifles into the United States — on the contemptibly dishonest pretext that by doing so it was fighting drugs.

That decision has effectively deprived millions of Americans of the right to own modern arms — a right explicitly secured by the Constitution and as fundamental as the right to free speech and to freedom of worship. At the same time it has demonstrably done nothing to slow the flow of drugs into the United States nor to reduce violence—drug-related or otherwise. Indeed, its most tangible consequence has been to give unprecedented new legitimacy to the anti-gun cranks of the liberal left. This last point is particularly troubling, because the Bush administration has done nothing effective to stop the even worse proposed acts of unconstitutional tyranny hatched by Senators Metzenbaum and DeConcini and Representatives Berman and Stark.

The truth is that American gun owners — who provided the president with his margin of victory in at least a dozen states — have been betrayed by the president. The damage he has done will take years to repair.

Because of this, henceforth my political contributions will go exclusively to the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action and to those political action committees dedicated to supporting candidates who support the Second Amendment. Future fund-raising appeals such as yours will receive replies such as this — think of it as a lump of coal in your Christmas stocking — until three things happen:

- 1) The Bush Administration repeals its ban on the importation of military-style semi-automatic rifles.
- 2) The president uses the full influence of his office to defeat all gun control legislation presently before the Congress, beginning with an explicit promise to veto any such bill that might pass this year or in the future.
- 3) Drug Policy Director William Bennett publicly recants his misdirected attack on the Second Amendment and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Director Stephen Higgins is returned to private life.

Let me add one final thought. In the wake of the defeat of Republican gubernatorial candidates in New Jersey and Virginia last November a number of Republican officials called for the development of a new and more positive vision for the 1990s. As a life-long Republican I would like to submit that our party most emphatically does not need a new vision, but it does need to rededicate itself to an old one — the defense of liberty and of the Constitution that secures it to all Americans. That should be our first priority.

The truth is, sir, that when the president shows as much interest in defending the substance of liberty as its symbols I will be more favorably disposed to requests such as yours.

Sincerely,  
Robert K. Brown

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## NEW OLD (OR OLD NEW) CUBAN CONNECTION...

Last spring Castro shocked the world with admissions that certain high-ranking, long-trusted (and potentially competitive) military officers were involved in drug trafficking. Oh, my! Trials. Executions. Long prison sentences. Drug problem corrected, right? Wrong! Federal agents in Miami tell SOF that nothing has changed — Cuba is still the number one way station for drug smugglers. A Miami police intelligence officer laughed when queried on the subject, replying “Did you think Fidel would let that source of hard cash dry up? No way, he’s into drugs up to his curly eyebrows.” SOF will continue to monitor the situation.

## ASSAULT CARRIOTS AND TERMINAL TURNIPS...

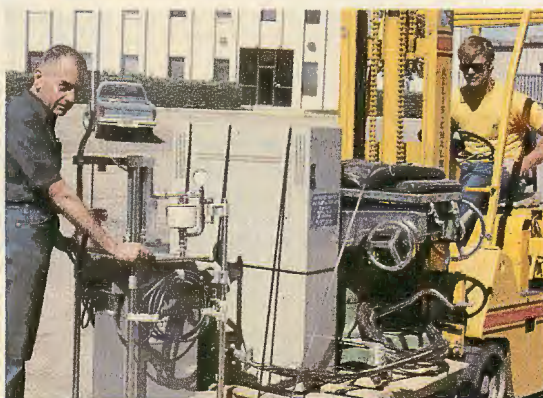
A dispute between workers at a food-processing plant in Denver escalated from soft fruit grenades to high-velocity vegetables, to wit a 4-inch diameter carrot which resulted in an employee hospital trip but did no “permanent” damage. But a 56-year-old London man was not so lucky: he died after a large turnip thrown from a passing car broke a rib, punctured a lung and ruptured his spleen. There has been a rash of such violent veggie attacks there of late, including a jogger who suffered a ruptured stomach plus head and facial injuries when targeted by a cabbage flung from a passing car. Gives pause to those of us who have occasion to dine with our Fearless Leader and Publisher, RKB.

# BULLETIN BOARD



### DUFF MATSON 1926-1989.

Duff Matson, believed to be the last surviving member of World War II's real “Dirty Dozen,” died at his home in Florida as we went to press. Soldier, adventurer and businessman extraordinaire, Matson was recruited from an Army stockade by the 1st Special Forces Group under command of General Robert Frederick and distinguished himself throughout the war by his daring behind-the-lines exploits in Europe. After the war Matson became a prominent businessman in south Florida, and remained always a soldier's friend. Matson maintained close ties with the active military, especially his beloved fellow airborne, and sponsored many training sessions and other gatherings at his Florida estate. Diagnosed with terminal intestinal cancer last spring, Matson made it a point to attend the 10th Anniversary SOF Convention last September at Las Vegas (above), where he regaled a standing-room-only crowd with stories of his wartime exploits. His life story was chronicled in *The Devil's Bodyguard* by Jim Phillips (Phillips Publications, Dept. SOF, Box 168, Williamstown, NJ 08094). The passing of Duff Matson may well mark the end of an era. He will be missed.



An operating table, X-ray machine and anesthesia machine go on their way to a new hospital in a free zone of Afghanistan last fall. Three weeks later it was there and a team of doctors and nurses from the Miami Medical Team were assembling it and other components of the 50-bed hospital. If you have medical supplies or equipment to donate contact McColl at RRI, Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

## GOODBYE, BARRY...

Barry Sadler — soldier, adventurer, writer, SOF contributing editor, immortalized through “The Ballad of the Green Berets” — died 5 November last year at the Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, TN. As we reported in our February '89 issue, Barry was critically wounded by a gunshot in September '88 while in Guatemala (his out-of-country home), and since that time had been undergoing rehabilitation in Tennessee. According to his court-appointed conservator, Philip Duer, Barry had stabilized to the point that a specialist from the West Coast had been scheduled to fly out later that week and see what could be done to improve his condition. Barry apparently passed away in his sleep, sometime between 0500 and 0600 Sunday morning. When Barry was shot, the rumor mill went wild with conspiracy theories; our own investigation into the matter convinced us that Barry's head wound was self-inflicted and accidental. Again, the rumor mill is churning up various conspiracy theories regarding his death; although an autopsy is scheduled as we go to press, we believe Barry died as a result of complications from the head wound, and nothing more. We mourn Barry's passing — he was a good friend and a good soldier, and this world of Wall Street warriors will be poorer for his loss.

## THIS AIN'T NO SHIT...

With much discussion of late regarding the advisability/possibility of somehow utilizing military assets in the domestic and/or foreign fronts of the drug war, one of the considerations has been how this might interface with the constraints on domestic use of the military as imposed by the Posse Comitatus act of the 1800s. One specific instance where military assets may be used is excerpted from a late 1800s edition of *Farrow's Military Encyclopedia*: “15. The President is authorized, at his discretion, to employ the land and naval forces of the United States to protect the rights of the discoverer [of a guano island] or of his widow, heir, executor, administrator, or assigns.” We're not often enthusiastic about using military assets to do a “civilian” job. And we're not often enthusiastic about proposing new laws. However — if we can use the Army and Navy to protect an island of birdshit but not our children — maybe some legislative updating is in order.

## **I**INTRUDERS IN PANAMA — USMC KICKS ASS, USG CLAMS UP...

Sources tell us that in April 1988 a platoon-size force attacked the Marine-defended tank farm in the Canal zone. There was an hour-long firefight and the Marines kicked ass. Surviving intruders headed down the road to their apparent mothership. The U.S. government told Noriega to come police up his mess. He did, removing wounded, bodies, brass and even bullet-scarred trees. The incident was filmed, but nobody's talking.

We think the Marines should have gotten credit for a job well done. Anyone with details or film please contact Jim Graves or Don McLean at (303)449-3750.

## **M**ONUMENTS...

A Battle of Normandy museum is to be constructed on a hill overlooking Caen, Normandy, to include film archives and a research and documentation center. One of the pivotal battles of World War II, the Battle of Normandy launched the Allied invasion of Nazi-controlled Europe and the fight to free some 400 million people. This museum will preserve and promulgate the history of one of the most important battles in history. For information write Senator Strom Thurmond, Director, U.S. Committee for the Battle of Normandy Museum, Dept. SOF, 1074 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington, DC 20007.

And a bronze monument to USMC Drill Instructors is to be placed at each Marine Corps Recruit Depot in a Corps-approved program sponsored by the USMC Drill Instructors Association. These iron-asses have saved a lot of lives over the years because of their untiring dedication to their mission, and whether you are a Marine or a pigeon you'll agree this tribute is a worthwhile idea. Write Sgt. Maj. Bill Paxton, USMCDIA, Dept. SOF, Box 171544, San Diego, CA 92117 for info.

## **F**RAUDS...

The director and assistant director of the Vietnam War Museum in San Antonio's Alamo Plaza have both resigned after a *Dallas Times Herald* reporter uncovered the fact that the photocopies of discharge papers the two displayed — which credited them with having served in elite units during the war — were phonies.

And one Robert Fife (rhymes with Barney Fife) of Salt Lake City, ad-

judged by his shrink as suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome and "very much a casualty of the Vietnam War" did himself in with carbon monoxide. He left behind a lengthy manuscript which detailed his experiences as a POW after his USS Ranger-based F4 Phantom was shot down. His widow, who had endured 23 years of his war stories and his "Post-Traumatic-Stress-induced" weirdness, asked to have his name engraved on Utah's Vietnam War Memorial. The Memorial Committee decided to add the name to the memorial, which was dedicated last October. But AP reporters, attempting to locate men who had served with Fife for a story, learned that Fife had never served in Vietnam — in fact had only served eight months before being given a medical discharge. I wonder if he ever put on cammies and hugged another veteran for TV.

## **W**HEN DOCTORS ARE OUTLAWED, ONLY OUTLAWS...

In 1987, the latest tabulation we have at hand, 62 percent more people were killed by "medical/surgical misadventures" (the doc screwed up), than were killed by firearms accidents (the shooter screwed up). Assuming these stats from the National Center for Health Statistics are correct, and if those plaintive voices we hear are really worried about saving lives, they should be going after the AMA, not the NRA.

## **J**UST THE FAX...

From a modest apartment in a suburb of Los Angeles is being published a Chinese-language newspaper for the PRC called *Press Freedom Herald*. How do you write a Chinese paper here and publish it *there*? Simple — you FAX it there. And have a lot of the 40 million Chinese expatriots individually mail it. Because of the total blackout on foreign publications and the jamming of radio and TV, the 80 percent chance it will get through the mail and the instantaneous transmission of FAX is the best shot to get news past the bamboo curtain. But does the *Press Freedom Herald* get through? Yep. And then it sells for 30 Hong Kong dollars on the black market. The old concept of Liberty and the new concept of FAX — a marriage of the times. Long live Liberty, the Free Press, and heh-heh. *Free Enterprise*.

## **T**HE OTHER MARINES...

Some view it as 44 years late, but the DoD has finally granted Veteran status to the merchant seamen who carried war supplies to our forces overseas during World War II. Those who piloted our merchant fleet through submarine-and-bomber-infested waters and manned the ship's guns — and sustained a death rate comparable to those in the U.S. Marine Corps — sure thought they were fighting a war, and now it's official. As there is no list of those surviving seafarers, there is no mechanism for notifying them they are now entitled to benefits. One organization which is acting as a clearing house for information — and which was prime mover in gaining Veteran status for our wartime merchant marine — is Combat Merchant Mariners WW II, Dept. SOF, 14 Castle Drive, Spring Valley, NY 10977. Write to Kermit Haber, the XO there, if you were a member of our wartime Merchant Marine.

## **B**ITING THEIR OWN LIVER...

It's calmed down now, but in a move that confirmed our suspicions as to the sort of mentality which embraces communism, the Southern Tagalog Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines assassinated large numbers of its top cadre in a witch hunt for non-existent deep penetration agents they suspected of snitching off CPP chairman Rodolfo Salas in late 1986. He had been seized in front of a Manila hospital, which was under surveillance because of government suspicions that wounded insurgents were being treated there. One mass grave uncovered by the Philippine military contained over 200 bodies. This is really not new, however, as in 1985 as many as 800 party members were killed by their own on the island of Mindanao. Communists seem to make the most effective anti-communists, as they're so much more ruthless and they know who to hit. Left-wing death squads hacking up left-wing revolutionaries — we don't usually look with favor upon death squads, but *this* suits us just fine.

*Continued on page 86*



## PARA KNIFE EAGERLY AWAITED...

Sirs:

I read Mr. Karwan's "Para Knife" article (SOF, November '89) with considerable interest, as it addresses a problem related to my experiences as a rock climber and mountaineer. Each year the American Alpine Club records a climbing accident where the victim survives a fall while roped, but subsequently strangles on a nylon webbing sling attached to the chocks or pitons which he uses for safety. My own climbing experiences include frustrating moments cutting vines, old slings, dead brush in which my gear is tangled, and so on, while clinging by my fingertips to precarious holds.

A knife suitable for one-handed operation is important (opening my lock back with my teeth is a poor substitute). A sheath knife does not work, as it is guaranteed to poke my ribs or thigh during the gymnastics involved with rock climbing. A lanyard is essential, lest sweaty palms in a panic situation cause one to drop the knife on one's climbing partner directly below. A rounded point would be ideal to allow one to cut webbing, without cutting one's 11 millimeter climbing rope.

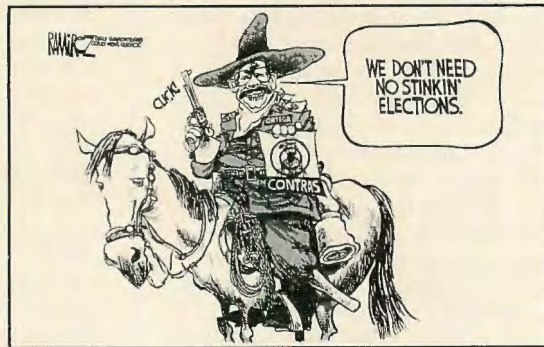
I own one of the West German gravity knives depicted in your article for use while climbing, but legal issues dissuade me from using it.

Please notify Gerber that five million active U.S. climbers await the introduction of their "Para" knife.

Glen Bishop  
Vergennes,  
Vermont



## FLAK



## BLACKJACK'S WAR FLASHBACKS...

Sirs:

As a former operative (10) with Studies and Observation Group (SOG) Vietnam, your article and photo of "Blackjack's War" (SOF, December '89) sure brought back a lot of memories.

I trained with and inserted a couple of times with Spike Team Idaho; Nguyen Cong Heip was my interpreter while training a team of Bru tribesmen at Phu Bai prior to spiking out of Khe Sanh in 1967.

Things must have really changed in Phu Bai after I left in September '67; before then all our teams had SF-qualified 10s (Team Leaders) well trained in inserting A Teams, Spike Teams or Hatchet Forces. It really surprised me that a 10 would knowingly place his team in such a circumstance as described in this article.

It surprised me even more that SOG was utilizing regular Army personnel to lead Spike Teams; I was unaware of this.

I left Khe Sanh in February '68 at which time the shit was heavy all over, so maybe that stands to reason.

In '67 we had a team from 1st SF assigned to Phu Bai (Team Sergeant was Master Sergeant Fisher). They picked up the mission where needed and also trained teams for missions. I cannot recall any team being chastised for aborting a mission when compromised or without immediate assistance to engage such superior forces with six to eight men. It sounds to me like a real cluster fuck, not to mention the possibility of losing the team and others trying to rescue them.

Herb Marshal  
Silverdale, Washington

Sirs:

I just got through reading "Blackjack's War" in the December '89 issue of SOF, and it's fine as long as you stamp it "Fiction!" It's more a tribute to John Wayne and Sergeant Rock than U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

D.M.S  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Blackjack's War is an account of a real battle. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes life really is more violent than fiction.*

## TRACKING MEDIA'S VIETNAM DISTORTIONS...

Sirs:

I need your help. As a Vietnam combat veteran I have been concerned with how the war in Vietnam was reported in the media. I am researching how the press, television, magazines, etc., deliberately distorted what occurred to suit the needs of what the media wanted to present. If any of your readers can write me with personal experiences of what they observed versus what ended up in the media, I can compile the needed data. I believe the practice to have been extremely widespread.

Recently we learned that Dan Rather was involved in some questionable reporting in Afghanistan. Could he have just switched wars?

As a psychotherapist whose dissertation concerned PTSD and who treats Vietnam vets, let me say this data is extremely important.

Eric H. Wood, Jr., Ph.D.

9 Woodlot Lane

Huntington, New York 11743

## THANKS FOR FLYING ESTONIA'S FLAG...

Sirs:

This year, for the second time, I was honored to attend the SOF convention. As an Estonian expatriate, I wish to thank you for displaying my flag among those of occupied nations during your banquet. I hope one day to see it among those of the liberated nations. Thank you!

Lembitu Lergo  
Ringsted, Denmark

## REPLACE WIMPS WITH MEN...

Sirs:

I totally agree with your views on how the U.S. should deal with terrorism. How can one remain patriotic and have faith in one's country when those who would be in charge allow incidents like that of Lieutenant Colonel William Higgins to go unpunished? It will take men of strength and comprehension to run the United States if we hope to stay great, so remove the wimps who are running the country now and put in some men.

Byron Green  
Baltimore, Maryland

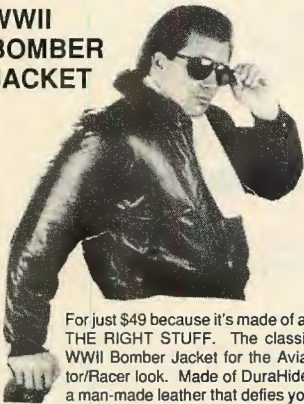
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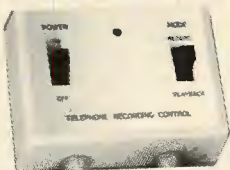
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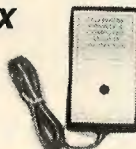
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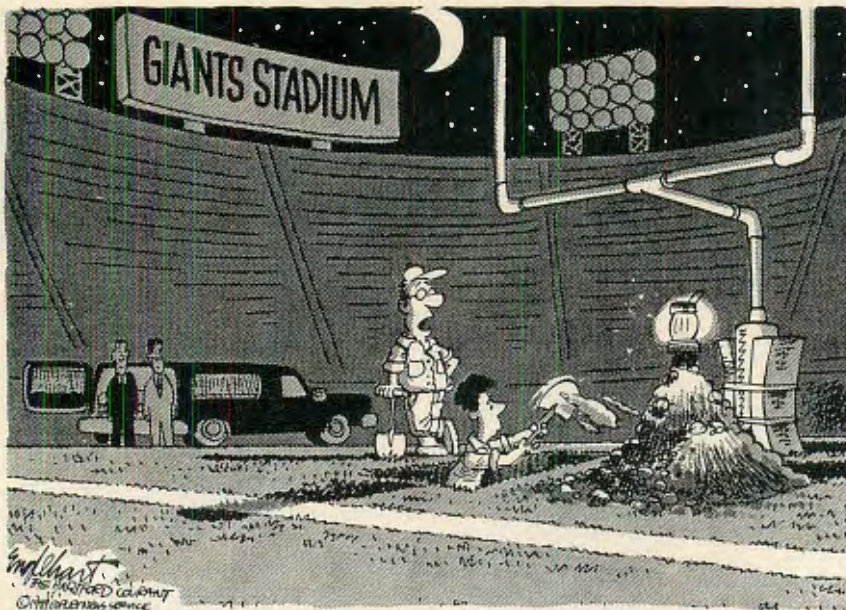
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"THE GOVERNMENT WON'T LET MARCOS BE BURIED IN THE PHILIPPINES SO THEY'RE PLANTIN' HIM HERE NEXT TO JIMMY HOFFA."

## LEARN FROM MOTLEY'S DEATH...

Sirs:

I was saddened to hear of the death of Lance Motley. In life he was a warrior who taught his craft to fellow soldiers. Perhaps we can learn some things from his death and the article describing the events surrounding it that will help us improve the lot of those we teach and fight beside.

First, I noted the description of the French adviser "worn down by malaria." Many military missions have been compromised by failure to observe precautions against local flora and fauna. Disease may kill and debilitate more than enemy action. It certainly decreases the ability and will to conduct effective operations.

I would be an armchair soldier if I believed that supply lines can always deliver anti-malaria prophylaxis (or anything else for that matter) with certainty. But to borrow from John Coleman's musing: "what if" Jacques did bring along his own malaria tablets? For those who are not part of the organized active military, I would advise that any good physician can advise of the medical hazards and the inoculations or medicines needed for extended "travel" in any part of the world. Use of DEET (however unpleasant) is also effective, if utilized for other than putting on camo stick.

Also noted was a comment by John Coleman about real soldiers "encrusted with six weeks of crud." Soldiering is necessarily a dirty business both philosophically and literally. I know of no way to avoid it. However, I would note that, operational considerations taken into account, main-

tenance of basic hygiene and cleanliness is important in maintaining the physical and mental welfare of the men in your charge. I have seen too many soldiers who feel that being in the bush is an excuse to be filthy.

You may recall that Mike Hoare is said to have required his men to be close-shaven, as clean as practical and maintain reasonable hair trim. Maintenance of a practical standard helps maintain discipline and imposes some order in what is often a disordered state.

Finally, I would like to indulge in a last "what if." When I read Alain Haas' account of Lance Motley's injury and the events immediately surrounding it, I wondered what if Motley had received immediate "buddy care" in the form of pressure dressings to stop the bleeding. Admittedly the account is not complete, and I cannot state the exact circumstance of his death the following day, but we can suspect from the description of injuries and the fact that he became "paler and paler" that there was significant blood loss which might have been prevented.

I do not mean this to be an indictment of anyone; rather perhaps Motley's death can be instructional. Seconds count when an artery is lacerated by hot steel.

J. Grant Barr, M.D., Ph.D.  
Universal City, Texas

## OFFER REWARD FOR DRUG LORDS...

Sirs:

The governments of Colombia and the United States should jointly offer a

\$100,000 reward for the capture, extradition, conviction, sentencing, and imprisonment of the 20 most-wanted drug lords.

This reward should increase \$10,000 per day up to but not to exceed \$10 million per drug lord. The money should be awarded to the person or persons whose information leads to a prison sentence for one of the top 20 drug lords.

Both Colombian and U.S. television stations should be encouraged to broadcast several pictures of each drug lord, along with the current dollar level of the reward.

There should be a sunset clause in the reward offer. If the drug lord is not in the hands of U.S. authorities within one calendar year of the initial public announcement of the reward offer, the offer is withdrawn.

For once, let's put fear and terror into the hearts of the criminals. Let the drug lords wonder when the amount of the reward matches the greed of their hired murderers. I would give odds that what little honor there is among thieves would bag us 20 drug lords for under \$20 million.

Samuel A. Masters  
Overlook, California

## THINK ABOUT WHERE TO PLANT YOUR GUNS...

Sirs:

We have three safeguards to protect our Second Amendment rights to keep and bear arms: The Supreme Court, Congress, and the President.

The Supreme Court just said it's OK to burn the flag. The Congress is loaded with assorted liberals, ultra-leftists, communist sympathizers and perverts, most of whom fear, hate, and loathe anyone with traditional conservative, patriotic values. It turns out that the President is a sheep in wolf's clothing (remember the hostage murder and the screwed up Panama coup), sort of a Dukakis after growth hormone.

It's time to stop crying about *Time* magazine, the NRA, and what Thomas Jefferson would do. It's time to start thinking where you can plant your guns, because the day after you line up at the armory to turn in your guns, the violent criminals and looters will have a field day. They won't be turning in their guns.

How about an educational article from *Soldier of Fortune* on the long term storing of weapons and how the various resistance forces did it in Europe.

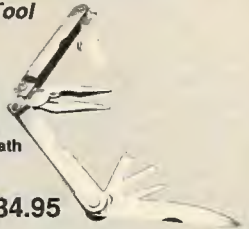
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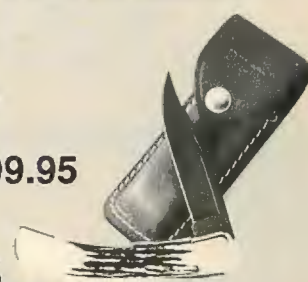
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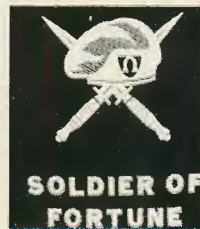


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Col. Robert K. Brown

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**W**HEN I arrived in Vietnam for my first tour in October 1966 I found out in a hurry that navigating the Cambodian border west of Pleiku was a helluva lot harder than anything I'd done before. My prior unit had been B Company, 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry (Mech) in Germany, where paved roads, broad open fields and rolling hills were the norm. It was quite a change to think of a day's travel in terms of clicks counted on just one hand. It wasn't always that bad, but it did happen often enough to make one a believer in the power of the machete.

Shortly after I arrived we got a new platoon sergeant, an SFC out of Fort Polk who constantly regaled us with his knowledge and experience in land navigation, which apparently was the light of his life at Polk. As a young buck sergeant I stood in awe of his professed skills. Unfortunately we were unable to benefit from his expertise until a few months later. This was after our "bastard brigade," 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry (by then 4th Division), was moved to the coastal plains in I Corps after working the mountains of II Corp's Binh Dinh Province.

It felt great to be on flat ground for a change. We had been working on hill-sides so long we were developing shorter legs on one side. A day's patrolling could cover a lot of ground here. And depending on the size and number of villages in our path or the type of mission, we sometimes moved over 10 kilometers before lunch.

Quang Ngai Province offered good visibility and plenty of landmarks, including Highway 1, railroads, dams, bridges, a number of respectable hills and a large, wet blue area known as the South China Sea. All these factors, combined with the unusual practice of asking several squad leaders for a consensus as to our location, began to make us wonder if our platoon leader was testing us like trainees.

Or, unthinkable as it may be, maybe he couldn't find his ass with both hands? He would frequently call one or all of us over for a look-see at his map. Often his finger would be resting on a map point and he would ask, "Say, where would you say we are?" We would then point out our correct location, at which time his finger would drift to meet ours. This deft movement was always followed by the comment, "Just what I thought." This went on for weeks while we old-timers (five months in-country) kept the troops going the right way. We began to hope that our platoon leader would contract malaria, terminal shits or something to get him out of the field.

Salvation arrived one day in the form of an 18-year-old, 6-foot, 2-inch, smiling black kid named Grace. He was slender, energetic and as cheerful as a man could be in Vietnam as a draftee. Grace had a different attitude. He saw the Army as a temporary interruption in the music. All



# I WAS THERE

by O.W. Redmond

## "Pathfinder" Lost



**U.S. Army Warrant Officer teaches students from 2nd ARVN Rangers how to use the most valuable navigation tool — the compass. Author's platoon leader likely didn't attend such a course. Photo: DoD**

he wanted to do was go home and dance with the ladies. At least he could see beyond day 365 in the RVN.

Shortly after his arrival we went on another search and destroy mission at a small village that another unit had already started working using tear gas. As my machine gunner and I rounded the corner of a grass-walled hut we saw Grace. All 6-feet, 2-inches of him was wound up like a major league pitcher, but with a frag grenade rather than a ball in his hand. He pitched the frag into the doorway of a bunker. My gunner, Grace and I all shouted "grenade" at the same instant. Bamboo-lined bunkers tend to spit hard, egg-shaped things back at you. This one snapped that frag back at least as fast as it went in. Grace managed to be on the opposite side of the bunker and my machine gunner and I flattened behind the soil platform the hut was built on when the grenade detonated. At the instant it exploded there was a piercing shriek followed by a low agonizing moan. Thinking one of my people had been unlucky enough not to hear the warning

shout, we ran for help. When we located the source of the moans it turned out to be our "navigator." When he heard the shout of "grenade" he had been on the opposite side of the hut, the grass hut, mind you. His immediate action had been to turn his back and bend over.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, that's right where he got it. The left cheek as I recall. Our medic wasn't able to retrieve the single sharp steel segment which had lodged so perfectly, geographically speaking. It was hard guiding tweezers when your eyes were tearing and sides splitting with laughter.

That was the end of the "navigator," at least in my platoon. He did come back to the field however, and on two occasions I was fortunate enough to hear him report his position to the CO. The first time, the old man called him back to say, "Well, you had better start ducking — you're on the airstrip at Duc Pho!" The second time his comment was, "Start swimming — you're 17 clicks into the South China Sea!" You know, you really can hear teeth gritting over a handset.

They say that God protects fools and drunks. That must be true to some degree, because he completed his tour and got home. I ran into him at Fort Sill a few years later. By that time, I'm happy to report, he had retired. ☒

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## INCOMING

Last month you read all about the unique Timbershepherd™; now have a look at WKE Limited's Tundra Shepherd. Perfect night vision, 1,000 pounds of jaw pressure and ultra keen perception combine to make one effective shepherd/wolf mix. For security purposes or as a companion, this dog can help you out in a clinch.



Sunglass fads come and go, but Army aviator-type shades have remained in style for years. Surgitec Inc. currently offers them in two frame sizes. For a mere \$29.50 each they offer 98-100% UV protection: don't be fooled by discount store clones, these are the real thing.

A joke book aimed at the divorced man, titled "Your Last 1,000 Weekends," is available from Vet Pro. It's illustrated and purports to show how men survive through humor. And I always thought we only survived with guns and women.

Not the kind of thing you'd want to be wearing in Afghanistan, but in the U.S. you may want to be the first guy in your unit to sport a Soviet officer's watch. It's shock resistant, contains a longlife battery and features a two year warranty so it's certainly not made in the USSR, but hey, they've been ripping us off for years. They copied our space shuttle, we cloned a watch. Talk with the folks at Mil-Time for your copy. Price of admission: \$49.95.

Registry Distributing is offering two new books of interest to would-be spooks, spies and others of questionable sanity. *The Spook Book: A Strange and Genuinely Dangerous Look at Forbidden Technology* features chapters on Hypersecure Encryption, Defeating Alarms and Titanium Warheads among other esoteric topics. Also available is *Surveillance Audio Amplifiers: The Cult of Elec-*

# ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by Tom Slizewski

*tronic Super-Hearing.* Boy, these cults are really getting out of hand. Maybe the "super hearers" bought *The Spook Book*?

Ordering information on items not given detailed treatment can be found elsewhere in the mag with the manufacturer's ads (see Advertisers Index for help).

## WARMER HANDS THROUGH CHEMICALS

Eptek's "Heat Wave" personal body warmer is one of several new heat-producing portable pouches that have hit the market of late. Heat Wave consists of a thick plastic bag filled with sodium acetate and water that gives off heat when activated. Activation is triggered by pushing a small metal button floating in the solution which initiates an exothermic reaction. As the unit gives off heat the solution begins to harden. Once completely solid the

their "Hand and Body Warmer." Oxy-Therm's use different ingredients to create heat and are disposable. They last for up to 24 hours and rather than pushing a button you simply remove Oxy-Therm heat pouches from their packaging and oxygen activates them. They stop producing heat when placed in an air-tight container and can be reused.

Also from Oxy-Therm and designed to go hand-in-hand with their heat pouches is the Muff. It's custom designed for comfort and durability and tailor made for outdoorsmen or fans of outdoor sports. It consists of a weatherproof nylon shell and double-layered polar fleece lining and features heat-retaining cuffs and nylon zippers. There's no shortage of colors or styles, ranging from your favorite sports team to camouflage schemes and plain colors. Each Muff comes with five heat



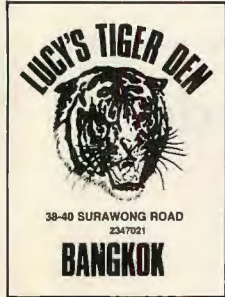
unit stops producing heat but can be recharged by boiling in water for six minutes. Each unit can be recharged well over 150 times and comes with a handy foam-rubber carrying case. Three sizes are available, from 4-inches by 3-inches (\$3.95) to 8-inches by 18-inches (\$27.95).

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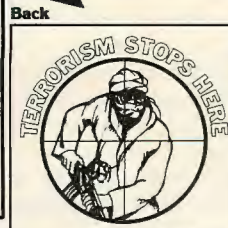
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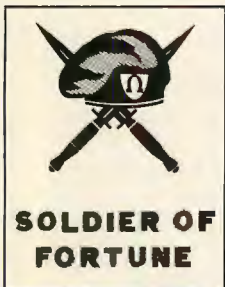
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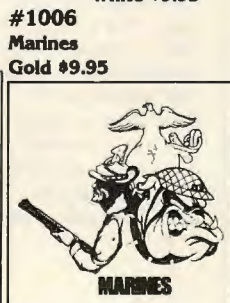
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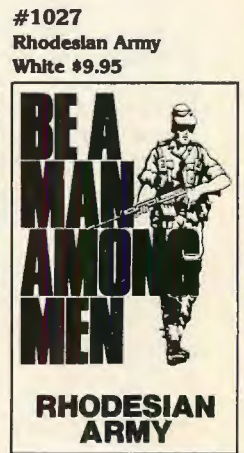
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**W**INDING their way down the steep ravine, the men of the 4th Platoon know that the enemy is close at hand. This ravine runs all the way from Chimalteango to the fertile south coast of Guatemala and only a few crossing points exist, all of which are ambushed. With contact likely, the platoon commander, Lieutenant Barrera, makes sure that his men are ready for action. Suddenly, the guerrillas spring an ambush from high ground to the west. Lieutenant Barrera's men instinctively go to cover and return fire. The guerrillas are from the group ORPA and are well-trained fighters. Now a PG-7 rocket slams into a tree a mere 10 meters from Lt. Barrera. He knows that guerrilla small-arms fire is usually ineffective but that an RPG-7 is definitely something that must be quickly dealt with. So, he issues a fire control order to his lead squad.

"First squad! 150. Ceiba tree. Slightly left, RPG-7."

"When he shoots again let him have it!" Three seconds later a ball of dust erupts near the big Ceiba tree followed closely by the explosion of the rocket which hits near the machine gunner of the second squad. First squad, as ordered, immediately shoots the hell out of the place where the rocket came from, dust being kicked up from the impacts. They receive no more rocket grenades. Shortly after losing their rocket launcher, the Gs split, no longer able to pin down the airborne platoon.

The reason that the first squad was able to defeat the rocket launcher was because they had received a precise *fire control order*. This order concentrated their fire on one target, enabling them to take it out. A fire control order makes fire both coordinated and effective. It makes it *fire with a purpose*. Let's examine, then, fire control orders and how they're used.

First, let's deal with the sequence of a fire control order. We use the word G-R-I-T to help us remember the sequence.

G: group — rifle group, machine-gun group, anti-tank group etc., which receives the order.

R: range — in meters, enabling the group called to set sights.

I: indication — (see "Target Indication," January '90).

T: types of fire — (see "Combat Fire Control," November '89).

Example: "Machine-gun group" — Group

"200" — Range

"Half left, big tree, slightly right, enemy mortar" — Indication

"Five short bursts, fire!" — Type of fire

This is known as a *full fire control order*. It gives all the necessary information to engage a target quickly and



# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

## Fire Control Orders



**Fire control orders, to be understood above the confusion of battle, must be given clearly, loudly, distinctly. Corporal Tony Hartman, a squad leader with 1st Bn, 3rd Marine Regiment, calls for another machine gun to assist his squad in a heavy firefight on a sweep and clear mission south of the DMZ in Vietnam, July 1968. Photo: SSgt D. L. Shearer USMC, courtesy DoD.**

effectively. When time permits a full fire control order should be used.

Aside from the full fire control order, there are also *brief, delayed and individual fire control orders*.

A brief fire control order is used when there is little time and the target is obvious.

Example:

"100 — half left — rapid fire!"

Next, we have a delayed fire control order. This is the type of fire control order that Lt. Barrera used in the opening scene; there is a delay between the target indication and order to fire.

Example:

"Machine-gun group. 200. Hut, right three o'clock, small trees. Enemy patrol moving through the trees — when they are in the open, await my order, —fire!"

Finally, we come to the individual fire control order. An individual fire control order gives your men the initiative to

engage targets of opportunity. For example:

"First Squad" — Group

"150" — Range

"Road Junction" — Indication

"Enemy in that area. Watch and shoot" — Type of fire

When the men of first squad see the enemy they will shoot at will.

Now that we have covered the types of fire control orders we can address "how" to give fire control orders.

Needless to say, you can't be shy about giving these types of orders. We use the word C-L-A-P (not to be confused with the medical version) to assist us in giving fire control orders correctly.

Always give fire control orders:

C — Clearly, calmly, concisely.

L — Loudly enough to be heard above battle noise.

A — As an order.

P — with Pauses so that your men can assimilate what was said.

Remember, use GRIT for the sequence and CLAP to assist in communicating it effectively.

Fire control orders concentrate and coordinate fire. Without fire control orders a unit's fire is random and ineffective, which allows the enemy to suppress you and defeat you. As my friend Lt. Barrera knew, effective fire control orders can mean the difference between life and death. ☒

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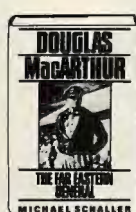
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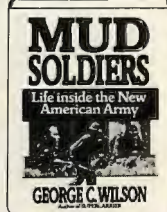
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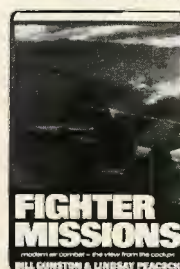
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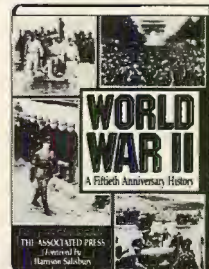
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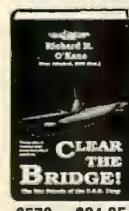
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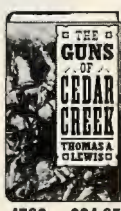
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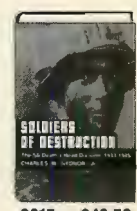
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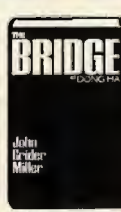
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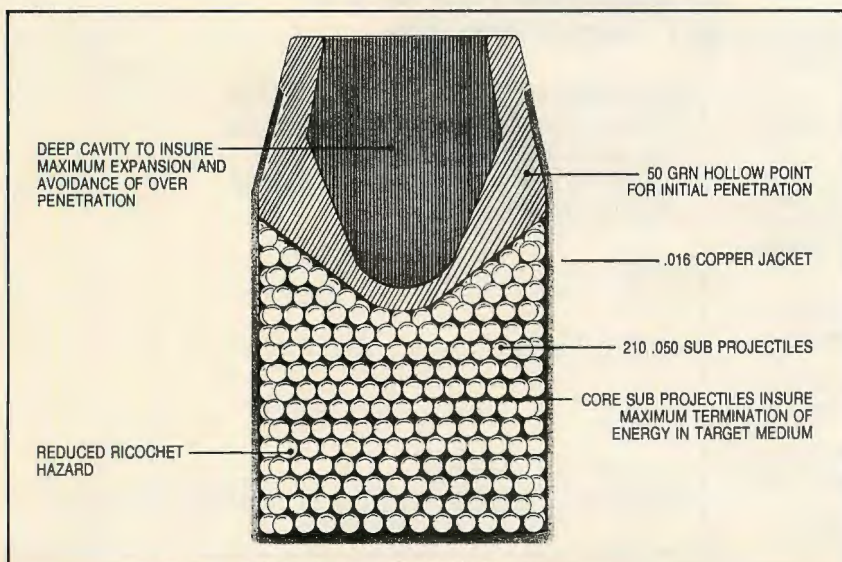
**E**VERY month in every issue of every gun publication in the English language we are bombarded with glowing reports of some new combat ammunition stressing its awesome muzzle energy, a total non sequitur, and its amazing velocity, most often a negative factor in measuring its effectiveness.

A case in point. Remington has just introduced a '+P' .45 ACP load using the company's excellent 185-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) bullet with a serrated tip. It flies out of a Colt Government Model's muzzle at 1,120 fps. That sounds impressive, as does the kinetic energy calculated from this velocity. Yet driven at this velocity, the bullet will invariably overexpand and underpenetrate, precisely what we are seeking to avoid.

Using this same bullet, Black Hills Ammunition (Dept. SOF, 3401 South Highway 79, Rapid City, SD 57701, phone: 605-348-5150) produces a load with a more modest velocity that is truly effective. Averaging only 900 fps out of the 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch barrel of a Colt Officer's Model (OM), it will penetrate from 14 to 17 inches of soft tissue, depending upon the amount of expansion, which varies from .57 to .68 caliber (as expansion increases, penetration decreases). That's exactly what we're looking for and until someone develops a heavier bullet that will reliably expand and penetrate to the same depth, the Black Hills 185-grain JHP load should be stuffed into all of our .45 ACP magazines.

While testing the Black Hills 185-grain JHP .45 ACP load, we fired one round into Duxseal to check our Oehler Model 35P chronograph and to avoid wasting a

**Cross-section of Core-Shot projectile whose lead tip may travel somewhat farther than the Glaser's plastic cap in soft tissue but which is still rated by the author as unacceptable. Photo: courtesy of Buffalo Bullet Company**



# FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

## Combat Loads



shot in the carefully prepared block of 10 percent ordnance gelatin (Type 250 A). Bullets that exhibit no expansion whatsoever in living tissue will mushroom with regularity in Duxseal and clay. In this instance, however, the Duxseal plugged the projectile's hollow cavity and there was no expansion except for a bulging of the jacket to .48 caliber. We can safely conclude that shooting into Duxseal is a complete exercise in futility and yields misleading information in every case. Bullets that will not expand in living tissue will commonly do so in Duxseal and those which expand reliably in human targets will sometimes fail

**Four new combat loads (left to right): Highly recommended Black Hills .45 ACP JHP which expands up to .68 caliber and penetrates 14 to 17 inches of soft tissue; awesome looking .45 ACP Pin Grabbers™ with 247-grain JHP bullet that expands to .80 caliber but penetrates no more than 13.5 inches; Remington subsonic 9mm Parabellum cartridge with 140-grain JHP bullet will expand up to .64 caliber but penetrates only 10.5 inches of soft tissue; and 9mm Parabellum Core-Shot frangible ammunition whose No. 12 birdshot will penetrate only about 5 inches. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis**

to mushroom in this pseudo-simulant, the use of which should be confined to sealing sheet-metal ducts.

Having already fouled our Colt OM, we decided to test six different loadings of the ferocious-looking Pin Grabbers™ .45 ACP ammunition manufactured by Kaswer Custom, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 13 Surrey Drive, Brookfield, CT 06804; phone: 203-775-0564). Bullet weights varied from 185 to 260 grains. Five were JHP projectiles and one was a lead hollow point without a jacket — all with six serrated teeth-like projections. As the cavity depth varied with each bullet weight, we were presented with an opportunity to examine how this parameter of the bullet's construction affected its performance.

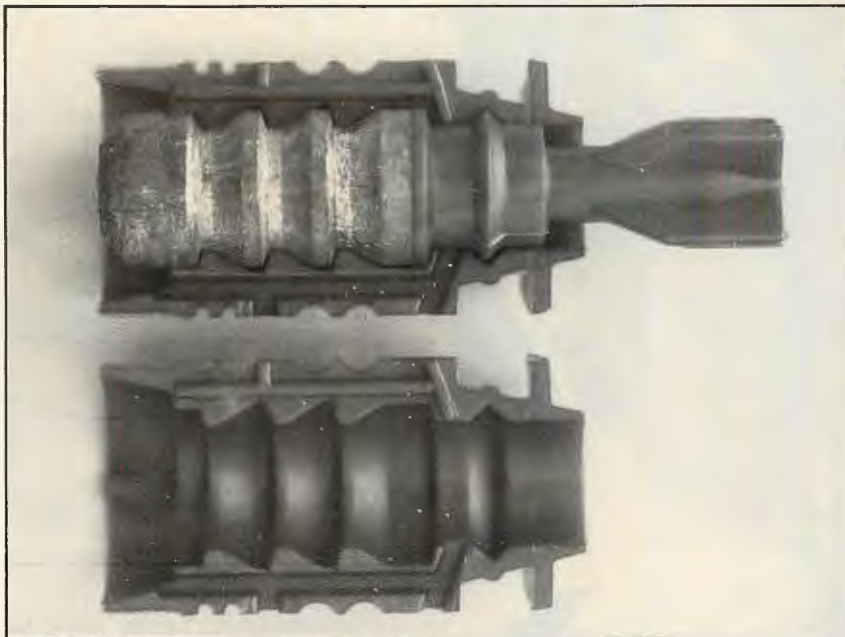
Lightest of the .45 ACP Pin Grabbers™ is a 185-grain JHP with a substantial cavity measuring 0.280-inch in

depth. It is, apparently, too deep, as this bullet, traveling at only 920 fps, will expand to .75 caliber with some fragmentation, but penetrates to less than 10 inches. We need at least 12 inches of penetration and this load cannot be endorsed.

Next up the weight scale was a 200-grain JHP Pin Grabbers™ with a cavity also measuring 0.280-inch in depth. Performance was only marginally superior to the 185-grain bullet. Moving out at an average velocity of about 880 fps, this bullet expands to approximately .60 caliber with minor jacket fragmentation and penetrates up to 11.5 inches of soft tissue. Not bad, but not impressive.

Cavity depth on the 225-grain JHP bullet was also 0.280-inch. Average velocity was about 840 fps. Penetration varies from 17 to 19 inches. That's good, and the bullet tip expands to about .58 caliber with no fragments. Sometimes the bullet ends its travel point forward and other times it ends up base forward.

The 225-grain Lead Hollow Point moves downrange with an average velocity of approximately 910 fps. At 0.270-inch, the cavity depth is only slightly shallower than those of the previous bullets. This bullet will penetrate from 20 to 21 inches of soft tissue. However, expansion is insignificant as only the crown opens up to no more than .46 caliber. Most of the time this



bullet will end its travel point forward and sometimes a few of the teeth-like projections will break away. There's nothing special about this load.

Cavity depth of the 247-grain JHP Pin Grabbers™ bullet is 0.290-inch. Velocity of this heavy bullet is about 790 fps from the Colt OM's short barrel. There is considerable expansion out to almost .80 caliber, but the penetration is no better than from about 12.5 to 13.5

**French Silver Plus 12 gauge discarding sabot slug weighs 400 grains, is fin-stabilized, penetrates 42 inches of soft tissue and extends a shotgun's effective range out to 200 meters. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis**

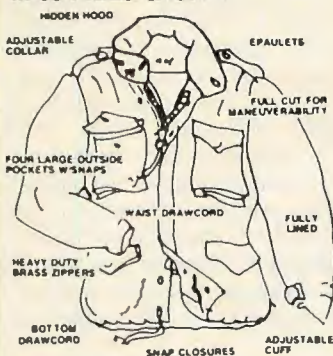
inches with no fragmentation.

Heaviest of the Pin Grabbers™ is a 260-grain JHP with a cavity depth of only 0.10-inch. This is far too shallow

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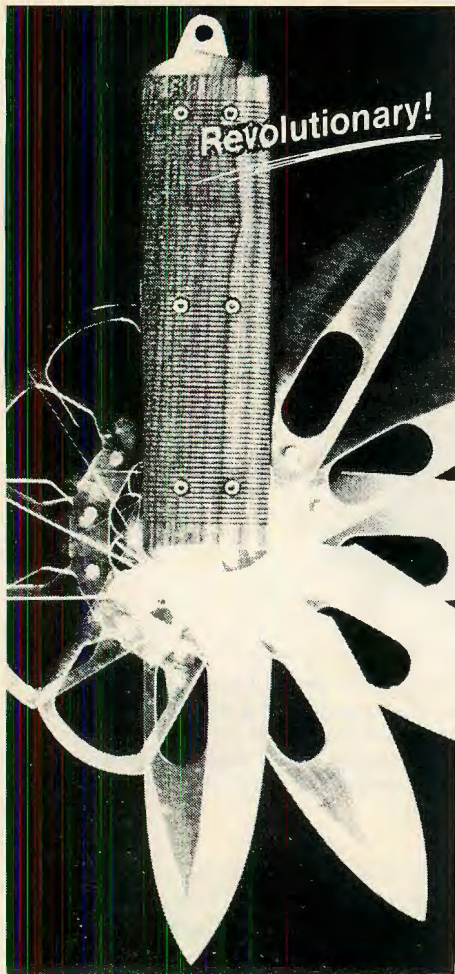
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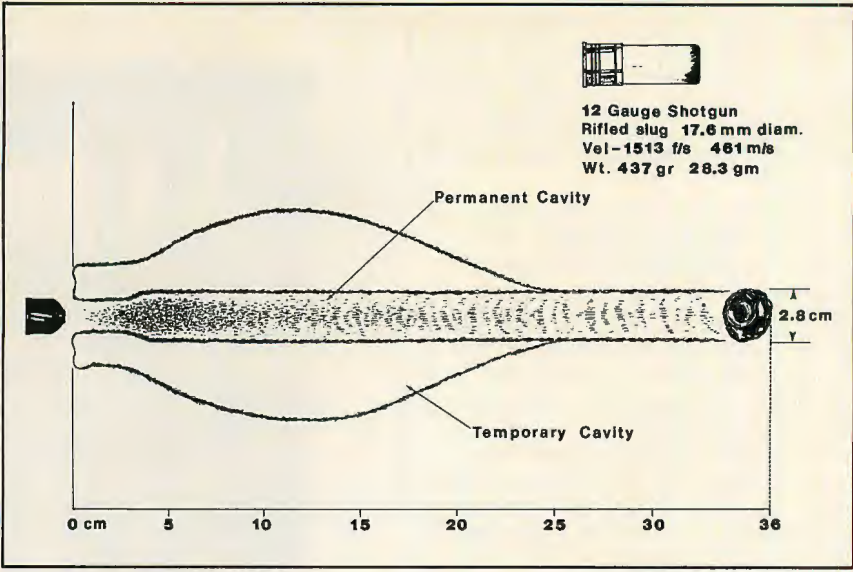
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and unsatisfactory results could be anticipated. The velocity of this load was erratic and varied from 768 fps to 811 fps. At the higher velocity it penetrated about 31 inches of soft tissue. Penetration dropped to 24 inches at the lower velocity. Worst of all, this bullet does not expand and all six of its "teeth" invariably shear off. This just won't do.

We can draw a few rather obvious conclusions from the above tests. First of all, as expansion increases, penetration invariably decreases. Once expansion exceeds approximately one and a half times the original bullet diameter, penetration usually drops to unacceptable levels. If the other parameters are held constant, increasing the depth of the cavity will usually increase expansion of a hollow point bullet. Finally, driving handgun bullets at extremely high velocities will result in overexpansion and underpenetration unless the bullet's lead alloy core contains a high percentage of tin/antimony (such as those used in the Freedom Arms .454 Casull bullets).

While the 225-grain JHP Pin Grabbers™ .45 ACP ammunition provides acceptable performance, at \$1 per cartridge it is not, in my opinion, cost effective when compared to the Black Hills 185-grain JHP at approximately one third the cost.

The .45 Long Colt (LC) cartridge remains a perennial favorite with wheelgunners, and with good reason, as it provides heavy, large-caliber bullets moving at moderate velocities. There is a 260-grain JHP Pin Grabbers™ round in this caliber as well. Its performance is no better than mediocre. Plodding down-range at about 600 fps, sometimes it will end its travel point forward; other times it will yaw 180 degrees and end up base forward. On occasion, it will completely shed its jacket after about 5 inches of penetration in soft tissue. When it remains intact, penetration reaches 20 inches. However, expansion is minimal—never more than .50 caliber—prob-

**Remington's 437-grain, hollow-base 12 gauge slug will penetrate up to 14 inches of soft tissue with expansion to over one inch, as this wound profile illustrates, and remains the preferred choice against human targets. Graphic: courtesy of Dr. Martin L. Fackler**

bly because the cavity depth is only 0.11-inch. Quite often the teeth-like projections break away from the bullet. We cannot recommend this load.

Even more dreadful are the 12 gauge Game Grabbers™ slugs. Two projectiles are available — a 662-grain Lead Hollow Point and a 648-grain JHP. Both have hollow bases. Both of these projectiles travel at approximately 1,250 fps and will penetrate up to 30 inches of soft tissue. They will usually yaw 180 degrees and end their travel base forward. When produced by projectiles of this size and weight, temporary cavity stretch can become a more significant factor in incapacitation of human targets. The diameter of the temporary cavity approaches 8 inches and this would probably scramble your guts. Penetration, in this instance, is accompanied by considerable expansion. However, it is asymmetrical — an almost sure indication that the bullet is yawing, or "keyholing" in flight.

There are three important parameters that affect exterior ballistics (the projectile's flight after it leaves the muzzle, but before it strikes the target). They are, in the order of importance, 1) bullet rotation, 2) mass stabilization, and 3) bullet shape.

Dr. Martin L. Fackler, M.D., director of the Wound Ballistics Lab at the Letterman Army Institute of Research, Presidio of San Francisco, has demonstrated that once a projectile strikes living tissue, the parameters of bullet rotation and bullet shape transpose themselves in order of importance.

**Continued on page 83**

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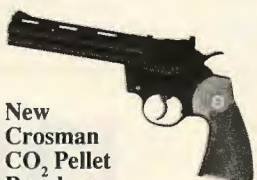
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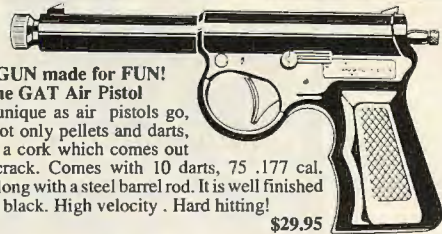
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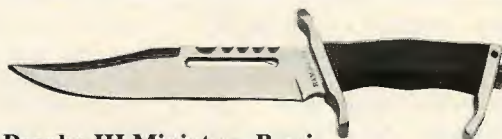
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**THE DEFENSIVE SHOTGUN: TECHNIQUES & TACTICS.** By Louis Awerbuck. Desert Publications, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1751, El Dorado, AR 71730. 1989. Softcover. 75 pages with 107 illustrations. \$10.95 plus \$3 p&h. Review by Peter G. Kokalis.

**B**ASED upon the syllabus for his highly regarded shotgun course, Awerbuck's book covers in concise detail every important topic pertaining to the employment of the fighting scattergun. There are chapters on ammunition, patterning, chokes, loading and downloading, shooting positions, multiple targets, carry slings, shooting on the move, tactics, weapon retention and one-handed operation. Throughout, Awerbuck emphasizes the difference between sport shooting and deadly encounters.

Along the way, we are treated to explanations of "ghost-ring" aperture rear sights, "jug" choking, the three primary ready positions, snap shooting, braced shooting positions, the "African" carry, the 10 tactical commandments and action types.

Awerbuck offers the reader some exceptionally significant nuggets of information. We are advised that loading techniques must always be practiced the same way without variation, if possible. The trigger finger should never contact the trigger until the gun is on target. Focus on the front site, not the target and always follow through. Learn to identify your mix of ammunition (one of the shotgun's salient features) by touch. Stationary range targets are inadequate preparation for moving human opponents. Under stress, you will inevitably react in the manner in which you have practiced. There are many more.

A native South African and former chief rangemaster at Jeff Cooper's American Pistol Institute, Awerbuck is well qualified. Although a sound first step, his book is no substitute, however, for actual training by competent personnel and subsequent continual practice, as the author himself stresses.

**ATTACKS.** By Erwin Rommel. Athena Press Inc., Dept. SOF, PO Box 776, Vienna, VA 22180. 1979. Paperback. 325 pages. Review by Tom Slizewski.

**P**UBLISHED in German in 1937 under the title *Infanterie Greift An* (Infantry Attacks), Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's book of World War I tactical infantry combat has become a classic of military literature. Like classics of all genres, however, it's a book many people talk about but few bother to read. That's a real tragedy

## IN REVIEW



and probably why history repeats itself, since the lessons of past generations are forgotten or considered no longer applicable.

**Attacks** is organized into six main chapters with numerous sub-chapters. Each sub-chapter details an action Rommel was involved in during his time on the Western, Rumanian and Italian fronts during World War I. At the conclusion of each chapter there is a summary of what he learned from the given action. Much of what Rommel learned as a young infantry officer is still very apropos today. *Make heavy demands on your men in peacetime*

*exercises if you expect them to perform in times of war; dig in, dig in, dig in (but not in woods); be prepared and fire first* are just some of Rommel's axioms learned through five years of combat.

You won't get a broader view of the war to end all wars, nor will you learn anything about what made Rommel tick in **Attacks**, it's not that kind of book. What you will get are hard-learned battlefield lessons in the comfort and quiet of your own living room. Like most things worthwhile, **Attacks** is at times tedious, but you'll feel better for having read it.



**HITLER'S UNDERCOVER WAR.** *The Nazi Espionage Invasion of the U.S.A.* By William Breuer. St. Martin's Press, Dept. SOF, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010. 1989. Cloth. 358 pages. \$19.95. Review by SOF staff.

**T**HAT the seeds of World War II were sown in the ashes of World War I is a generally acknowledged point of history, as is the fact that Germany began its rearmament program almost from the onset of the Versailles Treaty—its crippling provisions notwithstanding. Soon thereafter the military potential of Germany was consolidated under the demonic hand of Adolf Hit-

ler and his National Socialists. History records that the United States was largely unprepared for the Nazi military onslaught which became World War II. Not often acknowledged, although doubly true, is that the United States was also woefully unprepared for the German espionage invasion which began in 1927.

By the time Hitler began rearming Germany in earnest and in the open, he had concluded that the wild card in his global poker game was the technological and industrial might of the United States. Practically unopposed, agents of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris' Abwehr managed to steal virtually every United States defense secret, from the revolutionary Norden bomb sight

to our latest warship plans. And millions in Nazi funds were channeled through U.S. papers, publishing houses, magazines and ethnic organizations to pervert public opinion against America's coming to the aid of peoples being ravaged by the Nazis. This unfettered rape of American assets and opinion continued right up to the point in 1939 when FDR appointed the FBI as the single agency to combat subversive forces in the United States. The ease with which Nazi spies stole technology and obtained sensitive military information is frightening. Equally alarming is the ease — and scope — with which Nazi money was filtered from the Abwehr and from Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda and used to influence American public opinion to remain isolationist and not get involved (in the name of "Peace") in a "Foreign" war. This was done not just through Nazi-front newspapers and organizations, but through "legitimate" publishers and by influencing outspoken American heroes, industrialists and even the very offices of sincere but isolationist U.S. Congressmen — to the extent of even using congressional franking privileges and personnel for mailing their propaganda! Perhaps this is all the more alarming because although the National Socialists may have been the most *enthusiastic* of the world's criminal conspirators, the communists were *and are* the most *resolute*. And although the Nazi disease has been healed except for a few lingering pustules, the communist conspiracy is still a leprous epidemic of worldwide proportions — and still using the kind offices of various Americans (and legislators) to push the idea that American might should not (again, under the false banner of "peace") come to the aid of those fighting today's even more insidious and staggeringly prevalent disease of socialist tyranny known as communism.

Author Breuer presents not merely a good solid historical work, a cataloging, if you will, of the bad guys and their unopposed early successes, but he weaves a fabric upon which J. Edgar Hoover and his dedicated band ultimately painted a picture of astounding successes. And a story where the good guys win always makes good reading.

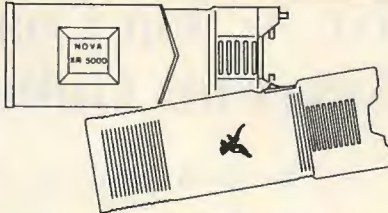
Just about as fast as Hoover was given the responsibility and the agents to do the job, the FBI had in place a small army of tireless agents tailing known subversives, and had set up some of the smoothest "sting" operations ever devised. Using Abwehr money (he was even able to turn back \$18,000 of Hitler's spy funding to the U.S. Treasury

*Continued on page 86*

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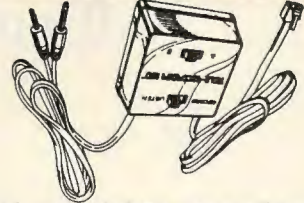
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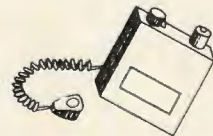
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# LADY KILLERS

## Affirmative Action Comes to the Assassins Guild

by David Truby

**J**UST one more young plain Jane doing her grocery shopping. Who'd pay much attention to mouse-brown hair, jeans, and a plain wedding band to match the face and figure?

She put the bulky shopping bag carrying the name of a mall discount shop in her grocery cart and proceeded to run the gauntlet of aisles in the modern supermarket of a close-in DC suburb.

After 10 minutes of "shopping," she checked her watch and quietly parked her cart near a display of motor oil that was on sale. No one noticed her walk out of the store. Five minutes passed. If you'd lifted the discount store bag she left in her cart and listened carefully, you'd have heard something softly ticking, but only for another couple of minutes.

Her weeks of solid and thorough intelligence work placed the trade chief of a key friendly OPEC nation in that market at nearly the exact time,  $\pm 5$  minutes, on this day. No deviation, as he and his girlfriend met there to get nourishing goodies for their afternoon delight. Both were married to others, so clockwork timing was vital in scandal-loving Washington.

The continuing, paid-for, political co-operation of this man was vital to the less-than-thread-tenuous oil price/production agreements that were made outside public channels for world trade balance. It is even possible that his mistress may have been a contract employee of the U.S. government.

None of it mattered that day, because 10 minutes after the forgettable young woman left the market, five blocks of C4 wired to a timing device inside her discount-store shopping bag tore that building apart, doing the same to several dozen shoppers, including the OPEC diplomat and his mistress.

It happens for real, and you can frequently see terrorist assassination stories like this unfolding on the nightly news. Some of the experts, though, have not

accepted the concept of woman as assassin.

Dr. Deborah H. Galvin wrote that "assassination is a comparatively rare occurrence. The female assassin is even rarer." Her first claim is relatively correct; her second is untrue. There are many female assassins skilled in very deadly arts and sciences and using a variety of weapons.

For example, in 1980 Paris police arrested five members of what they described as a "well-trained, disciplined Islamic hit squad" whose target was Shahpour Bakhtiar, an outspoken critic of the Ayatollah Khomeini. One of the hit team was a woman, who led the way as they tried to blast their way into the Iranian's fortified apartment with suppres-

**This semi-lovely lady with the Hungarian machine pistol was dispatched to Saigon during the final days to do numbers on key South Vietnamese politicians and any remaining U.S. personnel who presented themselves as targets. Photo: author's collection**

**"Andre" was the field name for a female assassin of East German origin who defected to the West and was used by our side for various operations in Southeast Asia. She spoke several languages, did some intelligence gathering, but according to Stock, was also involved in several killings. Photo: courtesy of Fred Stock**

### COVERT CHRONICLER

Dave Truby will be remembered by early SOF readers for articles on clandestine operatives and activities, people and conspiracies. In this article he examines two of his favorite topics, women and assassination plots. Truby has authored innumerable books and articles on weapons and historical subjects, including the books *Silencers*, *Snipers and Assassins* and *Women at War*, most under his own name, and many — for various reasons — under a nom de plume. When not roaming in search of action stories, Truby resides in the east, where he also holds a legitimate job in the journalism department of a large university.



sor-equipped submachine guns.

Despite Islamic fundamentalism's male chauvinist imagery to the contrary, it's obvious that murderous women are top assassins in the world of true Khomeini grits. Likewise, the finger that pulled the trigger of the silenced Skorpion submachine gun used to kill Aldo Moro in 1978 was female, a high-scoring Red Brigade assassin whose code name in Interpol files is Rita. Italian police reports give her nine confirmed kills.

Europe has had a number of women assassins, e.g., Inge Viet, Gabriele Rollnik, and Juliane Plambeck, the German terrorettes whose operations almost always involved sexual seduction. In the '70s, a German lawyer named Klaus Croissant recruited and had trained as killers several young ladies who became known to European police officially as the Croissant Group, unofficially as "Klaus's Devils," after the TV series, "Charlie's Angels." The group spread murder and terror through Europe, although rarely making headlines unless they wished to create an especially splashy assassination, e.g., the murder of Austrian banker Juergen Ponto in 1977.

Perhaps we ought to use the word *professional* in front of the word *assassins*, to exclude the one-shot zealots, loners, losers, and other amateurs, e.g. Lynette Fromme, Sara Jane Moore, Charlotte Corday, et al. There is a vast difference between the spur-of-the moment zealot, the Son of Sam, and the unisex cabal of professionals who plotted the unsuccessful attempts on Fidel Castro and Muammar Khadaffi.

Statistics tend to bear out milady's murderous militancy. Between 1960 and 1976, FBI data show a 116 percent

increase in the number of women arrested for murder. Those data also show that the number of women involved in violent crime has risen 161 percent in the same time period. Between 1976 and 1987, the two figures were 210 percent and 350 percent!

Commenting on the amazing increase in violent female crimes, the noted criminologist Dr. Freda Adler says, "Women have taken traditional male roles as stevedore, pilot, manager, cop, even assassin. No longer content to just make the coffee, they want to make and use the bombs. The major physical difference between men and women, strength, has been equalized by the gun and the bomb."

The psychosociologist Dr. Ralph Klondyke feels that as assassins, women are inherently more savage than men, saying, "The female of any species is generally the hard killer ... beneath even the warmth of motherhood, there lurks the soul of a killer."

According to Mike Decker, there are far more women assassins than you might like to believe. Decker, whose name and appearance have changed since going into the Federal Witness Protection Program, has solid bona fides to make such claims. A SEAL during the Vietnam years, he also handled "wet jobs" for the CIA both during and after his assignments in Southeast Asia. He later joined Alberto Sicilia Falcon, the infamous Cuban-born dope magnate, as chief "security man," (aka enforcer). During this time Decker handled several hits for Falcon.

"I've heard of a lot of incidents (aka

**Arrested by South Vietnamese authorities at the behest of U.S. intelligence people, this NVA operative posed as a hooker. Her specialty was headquarters officers with loose tongues, who, once they had divulged all they were likely to, were dispatched. Photo: Chris Doyle**

hits) involving girls. Girls probably comprise about 60 percent of the world's top assassins. That's the truth.

"Women are excellent. Nobody suspects women. A woman can get closer to a man than a man can get to a man. They can go to parties unnoticed, they can go anywhere unnoticed.

"And, if they're built like many of them are built, it's a one-way ticket. Where's a man most vulnerable? When you get him in bed. Get him drunk, make love to him, find out information ... Or, if it's killing him, you [a woman] can get him to a remote spot and he's not going to be suspicious at all, because, he'll take you there."

In addition to Decker's points, many security people still do not view women as suspiciously as they do men; women assassins have a stronger element of surprise.

Why women become assassins is probably an academic question, good babble fodder for scholars with nothing better to do than engage in useless mental masturbation. The story of women in armed combat is as old as military history. I wrote a book on the subject nearly 15 years ago. People of either sex become professional assassins for the following reasons.

1. They are operational psychopaths whose behavior can be controlled and directed.

2. They enjoy killing and view it as a rational act to exchange for some tangible reward.

3. With a military background, some find killing another person is not all that difficult and that people and nations will pay highly for the skill.

4. Some prefer the adventure, the stalking and the feeling of "getting away

**"Aleta," nom de guerre for a top lady assassin last seen working Central America. Her employer remains a mystery. Photo: National News Service**



with something few other people can do.”

5. Some see themselves as instruments of state policy, viewing assassination as just another method of gaining national goals.

6. Finally there is the trade-off assassin, who has been promised something in return for his work, e.g. a Mafia killer recruited by the CIA to kill Fidel Castro and others in return for Agency protection against law enforcement officers.

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## “Lady assassins? They’re the best kind.”

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Perhaps, though, women do have special incentives to become assassins. Some experts argue that this role really increases the emancipation of these women, others see it as their declaration of independence. Some experts, such as DoD psychologist Dr. Nati Hoover claim it is a role better suited to women by temperament.

One federal security person I spoke with told me about some recent (1988) technological devices his organization has collected as hard evidence that associated death with women assassins. He told me, “We have in our collection a lady’s umbrella with a very nice 9-inch blade built into the handle. We have a lipstick tube built around a .410 shot-shell firing device. One of our people recovered a Maxi-Pad box stuffed with plastique and exploder ... all set to be left at a table in a State Department dining room ... KABOOM!”

He added, “Lethal gas in a small container is something we’ve paid almost no attention to. Suppose a female assassin packed a couple of CO<sub>2</sub> tubes filled with a highly concentrated and lethal toxin into lipstick cases? Who’d spot that in a casual search? It nearly happened right here in the United States, and, thank God the search was thorough, or it would have made a helluva headline, and, we’re for real here, not some James Bond movie bullshit.”

Just who are some of these death-dealing darlings?

Terri worked for the IRA. A Maureen O’Hara look alike, she relied on her outstanding figure, red hair and outstandingly pretty face to lure British soldiers to overdrink, overreach, then die slowly and horribly.

Former British Army intelligence officer Brian Millen knew Terri when she was finally arrested early in 1986. He adds, “She used poison, firearms and razors to kill. When she was brought in we had five cases I could hang her on. She is in prison right now.”

The son of one of my good friends is a U.S. Army intelligence officer in Saudi

Arabia. He recently lost his best informant due to damaged parts, e.g., a severed carotid artery, the work of a beautiful, 25-year old woman who speaks French, English and, interestingly, Farsi. Police caught her quite by accident.

“From their and our interrogation I know she is the killer. But, whose? There’s no question why. She found, followed and set up my man, then killed him with a straight razor after getting him

passed-out drunk, which is not easy in this nation.”

Organized crime has proved to be an equal opportunity employer for assassins, too. I spoke with a man who knows...he used to hire them.

Today, Clay Alexander is a man in his late 50s whose real name is known only to his family, former employers, and a few people in what’s left of the Federal Witness Relocation Program. He chose his “name” for this interview because, he claimed, “it fits some of my former associates who were involved in the JFK murder.”

Alexander owned up to eight killings while dealing with the feds to stay out of prison, which also included violation of his employer’s code of silence, *omerta*. I had first interviewed him in 1982 for an article I did on the “.22 Caliber Killers,” a loosely based squad of professional murderers used mostly by organized crime officials for various hits. Alexander, one of only four of the squad to be caught or killed, testified that three of his associates were women.

“Our trademark was the .22 caliber pistol to make very clean, very neat kills. Let me tell you about one of the women shooters I ran. We knew her as Alice, wimpy enough name, huh?”

“She had this assignment up in New England, an outsider, not connected, and he tried to move some blow without paying the Family tariff fee. He got the usual warnings and tried to lie out of it. Finally, he was ordered to be burned and Alice got the job.

“Alice conned him into thinking she was a really friendly newspaper reporter wanting to do a story on his trucking business and wanted to meet him alone one night. What the hell, a young broad? He fell for it. The cops found him the next day at the wheel of one of his trucks, with a .22 hole right up one nostril and a bag of coke jammed up the other one.”

Think of assassins and you always conjure up bad guys shooting sneakily from the other side of the fence. Truth is,

our good guys also use assassination as an operational tool of both domestic and foreign policy. For example, as we will detail below, both the CIA and the Israeli Mossad use kill teams that include women as more than decoys.

In late 1976, the world was shocked by the news that the Mossad was running liquidation squads whose assignments included countering terrorism in the Biblical sense of trading eyes for eyes, teeth for teeth and bodies for even more bodies. Some of the action agents in these squads were women.

In one such squad that made headlines that year, there were three women assigned as killers. One, a veteran agent named Sylvia Rafael, was regarded as one of Israel’s top intelligence people. The second was known only as Tamar and was described by *Time* magazine’s David Tinnin as being “bright, beautiful and a very young university graduate who’d joined the Mossad from the military.” Tamar was described as a shooter.

The third female was Marianne Gladnikoff, a Norwegian national who had emigrated to Israel, and was a crack shot with a variety of weapons. All three of the women were shooters in a Mossad squad known as Aleph units, and each carried a long-barreled Beretta .22 semi-auto pistol with integral suppressor.

The way this Aleph unit found themselves uncomfortably in the headlines was by bungling an assassination job against some PLO nasties and killing an innocent civilian, then getting caught. Rafael and Gladnikoff were arrested by Norwegian police and sentenced to prison. A diplomatic release was later arranged.

The late Fred Stock was a Korean War vet who later did some contract jobs for the CIA in Cuba, Central America and Vietnam. I first knew him during some adventures I had with Fidel’s island in 1961. Fred was always an honest friend who helped me in my later career as a journalist.

“Lady assassins? They’re the best kind. We used one, a real honey, in Vietnam in ’65. She was about 20 percent French which gave her the mean veneer, while the Vietnamese genes provided the charm. We provided the training and the weapons.

“She used every cover from school teacher, to party girl, to VC tax collector so she could get next to the targets we picked for her. She hit NVA cadre, political officers, informants, and while I was there, her top-shot, no pun, was a turncoat French military adviser. She got him with poison. Mostly, she set small

*Continued on page 86*

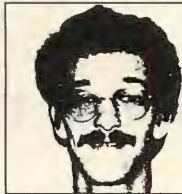
**The West German equivalent to the FBI issued this wanted poster for known terrorists in 1986 — and 11 of the 18 were women, some with multiple assassinations to their “credit.” Poster: courtesy of Das Bundeskriminalamt**

# Terroristen



**Susanne  
ALBRECHT**

35 Jahre, ca. 175 cm groß,  
2 Leberflecke links am Kinn,  
Leberfleck neben dem linken  
Nasenflügel, Sommersprossen



**Henning  
BEER**

28 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
große abstehende Ohren, zeit-  
weise Brillenträger, vermutlich  
Linksschreiber



**Sabine Elke  
CALLSEN**

25 Jahre, ca. 175 cm groß,  
kleines Kinngübchen, v-förmiger  
Nasen-Lippen-Rinnen-Ein-  
schnitt, 2 parallel verlaufende  
Halsfalten



**Wolfgang Werner  
GRAMS**

33 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
Hautveränderung links neben  
der Nase



**Eva Sybille  
HAULE-FRIMPONG**

32 Jahre, ca. 160 cm groß, Brillen-  
trägerin, vermutlich Hautveränderung  
neben linkem Nasenflügel, punktförmige  
Narbe auf Nasenspitze, senkrechte  
Narbe über Nasenwurzel,  
Nach Zeugenaussagen retuschiertes  
Lichtbild



**Monika  
HELBING**

32 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
2 Muttermale (Warzen) ober-  
halb des linken Mundwinkels,  
Muttermal links vom Kehlkopf,  
trägt zeitweise getönte Brille



**Birgit Elisabeth  
HOGEFELD**

30 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
zeitweise Brillenträgerin



**Andrea Martina  
KLUMP**

29 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
Hautveränderung auf linker  
Wange



**Friederike  
KRABBE**

35 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
trägt zeitweise getönte Brille



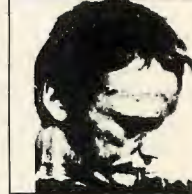
**Werner  
LOTZE**

34 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
Leberfleck an linker Wangen-  
seite



**Barbara  
MEYER**

30 Jahre, ca. 160 cm groß,  
senkrecht verlaufende Bauch-  
OP-Narbe,  
Nach Zeugenaussagen  
retuschiertes Lichtbild



**Horst Ludwig  
MEYER**

30 Jahre, ca. 175 cm groß,  
ca. 1 cm lange waagerechte  
Narbe auf der Stirn



**Silke  
MAIER-WITT**

36 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
Ohrfläppchen angewachsen



**Freiherr  
Ekkehard von  
SECKENDORFF-  
GUDENT**

45 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
Wurze an der linken Wange  
neben dem Ohr, Brillenträger

Diese Personen sind der Begehung schwerer Straftaten dringend verdächtig und werden mit Haftbefehl zur Festnahme gesucht. Für Hinweise, die zur Ergreifung der Beschuldigten führen, sind für jede gesuchte Person bis zu 50.000 DM als Belohnung ausgesetzt.

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**Christoph Eduard  
SEIDLER**

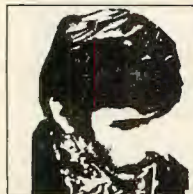
28 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
rechtes Ohrfläppchen durch-  
stochen, Ohrringträger, ca. 1 cm  
lange Quernarbe über dem  
rechten Auge, Hautveränderun-  
gen auf linker Halsseite,  
zeitweise Brillenträger

Neu in der Fahndung



**Sigrud  
STERNEBECK**

36 Jahre, ca. 170 cm groß,  
große abstehende Ohren,  
Ohrfläppchen angewachsen,  
zeitweise Brillenträgerin,  
Nach Zeugenaussagen  
retuschiertes Lichtbild



**Thomas  
SIMON**

33 Jahre, ca. 180 cm groß,  
Warze auf rechter Schläfe



**Inge  
VIETT**

42 Jahre, ca. 165 cm groß,  
Narbe am rechten Zeigefinger  
(1 cm lang, 3. Glied, Finger-  
unterseite) zeitweise Brillen-  
trägerin

Stand  
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Hinweise an jede Polizeidienststelle.

Belohnung bis zu 50.000 DM

# BAD DAY AT THINGANNYINAUNG

## SOF Joins Karen Rebels Behind Burmese Lines

by Tom Peterson

**T**HE battered pickup whipped its way along the winding and dipping dirt road up into the hills with us and a bunch of Karen troops packed standing room only in the back. Every so often the driver would stop to pick up more troops walking along the road towards our assembly point further up.

When we started out from the base camp at Palu on the Thai-Burma border early that morning it was still pitch dark, but now daylight was breaking through, revealing green, mist-shrouded hills and valleys around us. A whack to the head from an overhanging branch ended my nature appreciation session for the day. Being taller than all our fellow passengers we had to keep an eye out for these roadside hazards.

Soon our truck pulled into the assembly point located in a clearing between two low peaks. The small hills had once served alternately as Karen and Burmese outposts. A few thatch-roofed shelters stood off to one side of the road. Two platoons of troops gathered in groups in the fine morning mist waiting for the order to move. Some smoked while others were finishing off their breakfast. The men had been at the assembly point since the night before, and most had spent a miserable time weathering the evening rain.

The Karen officer who brought us up quickly introduced us to the column commander, a middle-aged major who was also the deputy commanding officer of 17 Battalion of the 6th Brigade of the Karen National Liberation Army (KLNA). The major made sure we got a breakfast and assigned one of his men to generally look after us and serve as interpreter.

Our helper/interpreter was a 26-year-old

hill Karen with the tattoo of a serpent coiling up one of his arms. But what set him apart from the other Karens was that he wore glasses for his poor eyesight. When complemented by a growth of beard, Burmese army field cap, Burmese cigar and Kalashnikov, he was the spitting image of the young Fidel Castro.

As we waited by the road, some Karen villagers drove their cattle past on the way to Thailand. There they would get a good price for the animals and be able to bring back consumer goods to sell in Burma. It was all part of the underground economy that helps the people of Burma survive their government's dilapidated socialist system.

Our column's mission was to walk into Burma, link up with other units already operating in the interior, and act as a covering force for a raid on the headquarters of the Burmese 44th Division at the town of Thingannyinaung, about 17 kilometers to the northwest of our jumping off point. With us would go two 81mm mortars of Karen manufacture to shoot up the division headquarters.

### FORGOTTEN WAR CHRONICLER

Tom Peterson has traveled extensively in Burma, Thailand, and Southeast Asia covering the region's forgotten wars. This article on the long struggle of the Karens to establish their homeland, the Republic of Kawthoolei, is his first contribution to SOF. We are looking forward to carrying more of his work in future issues.

The battlefield situation along the Thai-Burma border added an element of urgency to the task. Soon after Rangoon installed the military junta of General Saw Maung on 18 September 1988 the Burmese army launched what has become its most concerted offensive against the Karens in recent years. In 1987 the Burmese had boasted that they would crush the Karens in two years. With the two year deadline coming around the Burmese seemed to be going for broke to achieve the goal.

The focus of this offensive has been against the string of Karen bases located along a more than 100 kilometer stretch of the Moei River opposite Thailand's Tak province, about 500 kilometers northwest of Bangkok. The Burmese opened their drive by attacking Mae Taw Waw, the northern-most camp on the border opposite Tak. Mae Taw Waw had been taken by the Burmese in an earlier offensive then retaken by the Karens after 17 days of hard fighting on 13 October 1988. But after another three months of heavy fighting the camp fell again on 22 December.

The Burmese carried on with their push to the south by taking Kler Day (19 January 1989), Maw Po Kay (26 March 1989) and Htee Ger Nee (18 April 1989). Even the Burmese air force made an appearance, after an absence of several years, to make an ineffectual high level bombing run against Maw Po Kay with its Swiss made PC-7 prop training aircraft rigged for close air support.

Added to this was the fact that the Burmese were using Thai territory to outflank Karen positions. During the attack on Htee Ger Nee about 300 Burmese troops crossed over into Thailand to dig in



blocking positions. The Karens were then forced to pull out of the camp. From then on such violations of Thai soil became a standard feature of nearly every attack on the remaining camps that followed. Just as troubling to the Karens was the weak Thai reaction to these incursions, especially after senior political and military leaders in Bangkok secured lucrative trade deals with the Burmese.

By the time we found ourselves waiting to set out on our journey, on 16 May 1989, the Burmese were already shelling Vang Kha and Kawmura and had launched a number of failed infantry assaults on both camps, which were the next two bases south of Htee Ger Nee. The Karens were understandably eager to hit back and take some pressure off of their friends under attack in the camps.

By 0745 all the troops had arrived and the major gave the order to move. We set off down a rocky track on the left of the road. An 81mm tube and base plates were carried slung on bamboo poles. One hardy porter insisted on humping the other tube all by himself. In a commendable display of endurance he carried it everywhere we walked until we came back to Palu more than a week later. The 81mm and RPG rounds were spread out among the rest of the troops and our 10 or so porters, who also carried our extra rations.

The troops were mostly young kids

**Karens, armed with hodgepodge of weapons, have been fighting for freedom for 45 years. Photo: SOF staff**

ranging in age from what looked like 12 to late teens or early twenties. The platoon and section leaders were older, more experienced men. I later learned that most of our troops were fairly inexperienced and had not been through much previous combat. But still they reacted quickly to orders and kept their weapons well-maintained. Their good physical fitness and morale also carried them through the events of the coming weeks and months.

All the men wore a variety of uniforms ranging from Thai pattern fatigues and camouflage to captured Burmese old Brit type uniforms. Foot gear consisted of Thai jungle and Burmese canvas boots plus rubber sandals, while some simply went barefoot. Their web gear was also a mix of Thai/U.S. and Burmese patterns. Even though we were going on an extended operation few of the troops carried rucksacks. Those who did carried the small Brit World War II type pack that's still used by the Burmese army. Nearly all the troops had small field pouches slung at their sides to carry miscellaneous items. A few of the officers and NCOs used the prized U.S. Claymore mine bag for the same purpose. For protection against rain and for sleeping

each soldier had a green plastic sheet and a hammock. The rice to sustain them was carried in cloth rice tubes slung across their chests.

Weapons were also varied. About half carried AKs, mostly of Chinese make. A few used the Czech VZ58, which the Karens refer to as the "Woman's Gun" because of its supposedly feminine features. The rest carried some very old M16s plus the odd Chinese SKS, Thai-made HK-33 and U.S. M1 carbine. For heavier fire there were a few Thai-made M79 grenade launchers, RPGs (2s and 7s) and a West German-designed MG-3 GPMG captured from the Burmese. The basic load for most of the troops seemed to be about 100 rounds, with two to three mags per rifleman, plus the occasional U.S. or Chinese fragmentation grenade. The final odd weapon was a .22 cal. rifle carried by the major for shooting game to supplement our diet.

To communicate among ourselves and with Palu, the platoon and section leaders carried walkie talkie radios. All troop leaders also carried photocopies of old British army maps, edition 1943. Since the Burmese countryside hasn't changed all that much since then, the maps are still usable. Still, some of the features on the old map, such as certain roads, no longer exist, having been neglected and eventually reclaimed by the jungle. The maps appeared



to be used more for general reference than for actual navigation, since the Karens mostly used their inherent knowledge of the terrain when moving.

I was later to learn while listening in on an intercept of the Burmese mortar and artillery fire net that they were still using the same old Brit maps as the Karens.

Our walk became a standard hill hump of up one side and down the other along well-travelled trails. Although the hills were not the tallest or steepest in Burma, the hourly rest stops were welcomed by all, and especially by the men humping the tubes and base plates. We usually took our breaks at small way stations consisting of trailside shelters and benches. Since these trails were also trade routes the shelters served as rest stops and food stalls for the weary traveler. At one of the stops I noticed

that the trail they're on isn't the killing zone for an ambush. This in turn forces them to operate in large, cumbersome units that the Karens can easily avoid or deal with when the opportunity arises.

From our rendezvous at Bata we once more resumed our move to the northwest. We crossed more hills and streams through the afternoon as the sky clouded over and pelted us with rain. The troops unfolded their green plastic sheets and tied them around their shoulders as the column kept moving. Along the way we walked past small rice fields left fallow and fairly wide hard packed stretches that were the remnants of the old colonial road network.

Finally, soaking wet with rain and sweat, we stopped at the village of Kwingale at about 1545. Thingannyinaung, our target, lay about 7 kilometers to the northeast.

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## **A radio report from the ambushing force said that they had destroyed three trucks loaded with 76mm rounds for the Yugoslav mountain howitzers shelling Vang Kha and Kawmura.**

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that one of the troop leaders had a deformed foot which was twisted at almost a right angle with his leg. Yet it didn't seem to hinder or slow him down in the least as he walked the hills.

At about 1020 the column stopped at some market stalls near the village of Bata. There we had some hot tea while the troops engaged in their favorite pastime — eating. Bata was our rendezvous with two other platoons, which added a 57mm recoilless rifle and an old Brit 2-inch mortar to our support weapons.

The villagers at the market stalls said that four years ago the Burmese had come through the village and started shooting at the people, sending them fleeing into the hills. In contrast to this was the relaxed and friendly rapport between the Karen troops and their people. To the villagers the Burmese were an army of occupation, but the KNLA was clearly their army. The troops and the villagers behaved towards each other as might the members of a close family. The troops paid for what they received, the villagers in turn often refused to accept their money.

This fact explains why the KNLA can move rapidly at will through its operational areas without much danger of being surprised or of revealing much to the Burmese. The vital intelligence and support the Karen people provide for their troops keeps the KNLA a few steps ahead of the Burmese army. If that were not the case we certainly wouldn't be so confident walking the trails and making contact with the locals.

The Burmese of course can move anywhere they want to, with their greater fire power and logistics. The difference is that they're walking blind, without the certainty

Although we were fairly close to the DIV HQ, the major felt confident enough of our security to stay in the village. The column was spread out among the various houses on the edge of the village, while a platoon of local guerrillas provided a protective screen around us.

After a meal of rice, curried pork and some sort of jungle rodent we crashed for the night.

When we woke early the next morning the major talked on the radio for awhile and then told us that we'd be staying put until we could move up to launch the raid. After breakfast we went for a walk around the village escorted by our interpreter and a wiry old man with an M79 bloop. The old man was actually a "retired" soldier who decided to come along on the trek and help out where he could. Two of his sons were soldiers back at Palu.

The village was situated in a small valley surrounded by jungle covered hills. It was an even quieter place than it probably was in the past, since many villagers had fled over the years. About half the houses were vacant; others had been burnt down by the Burmese on their periodic sweeps. One pleasant feature of the village and the surrounding area was that it had no mosquitoes, because there was no stagnant water in which they could breed.

The villagers were hospitable and friendly, offering us betel nut to chew and cheroots to smoke whenever we stopped for a chat.

On the way back to the house we stopped for a visit with the second lieutenant who commanded the platoon with the 57mm recoilless rifle. He was 38 years of age and had been a soldier for 18 of them. He spoke

fairly good English, which he had learned during his schooling in Burma. His beard, Burmese army sweater and bush hat made him look like a Chindit from the Burma of another war.

Back at the house that evening, as the light faded we settled down for a night of quiet conversation by torch light. This was suddenly interrupted at 1845 by explosive crumps followed by concentrated small arms fire to the north. The distinctive sound of a machine gun firing a steady pattern of bursts could be heard above the rest of the noise.

Everyone reacted immediately. We were all packed and ready to go in no more than a couple of minutes. Below the house we sat quietly, waiting, our eyes and ears turned to the north.

After some talk on the radio the major said some of our troops had just ambushed a Burmese vehicle column on the Kawkariek-Myawaddy road. The small arms and RPG fire continued off and on until about 1930. Shortly after that the Burmese at Thingannyinaung finally began reacting with 81mm and 120mm mortar fire along the road. But by that time the Karens were long gone.

The troops who staged the ambush were now on their way back to Kwingale. Since the Burmese neither knew our location nor were likely to come chasing after the ambushers in the dark, the major said we would remain in the village.

We spent the rest of the evening sitting around in the torch light. The Burmese mortars soon trailed off. A radio report from the ambushing force said that they had destroyed three trucks loaded with 76mm rounds for the Yugoslav mountain howitzers shelling Vang Kha and Kawmura. They also estimated that nine Burmese were killed in the ambush. A radio intercept later revealed that 410 76mm rounds were destroyed that night.

The following day began with the distant rumble of explosions to the northeast. The Burmese were hitting Vang Kha again. Later that afternoon the men who led the ambush force the previous night dropped by. They were from the KNLA's General Headquarters Commando Forces. The commandos had been operating out here quite awhile before we arrived on the scene and would remain long after we had left. They were one of the units that had been through a training program conducted by French army veterans serving as volunteer trainers and advisers with the Karens.

The commando leader was a stocky young man, who with his light skin and facial features looked more Chinese than Karen. His crew cut and military bearing gave him the look of a new sub-lieutenant just out of Thailand's Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy. One of the men accompanying him carried a folding stock AK with a rare 20 round magazine. On his field hat was the Commando Forces cap badge featuring a commando dagger and the motto "United We Conquer."

The commando leader had barely finished telling us that last night's ambush destroyed three trucks of a six-truck convoy when his radio broke with an urgent message. The Burmese had guessed that their recent tormentors had fallen back on Kwingale and were now heading towards our ville.

The commandos laughed and went off to deal with the situation.

We all got ready for a quick move, but the major said the Burmese were still some distance out, near the Kawkariek-Myawaddy road. About 20 minutes after the commandos left, a single round went off in the next field further to the north in the village. An accidental discharge. Now the Burmese would certainly know something was in our little ville. The Karen officers weren't exactly overjoyed with the new development.

At the same time the major was repositioning our platoons. The platoon with the 57mm RCL was moved up into the hills to the west to cover the village below. The platoons with the mortars were moved further back behind us to the south. One kid with an RPG-7 stayed behind to provide us with some extra fire power.

By now a number of villagers were also packing up and heading for the hills, carrying what possessions they could on their backs and herding their livestock before them.

But there would be no battle that day. The probing force of some 50 men came near the village, then broke into two groups. One cautiously approached Kwingale while the other began moving around to set up a block. Then the Burmese suddenly stopped and began pulling back. Perhaps it was the realization that the ambush last night was conducted by a force packing some punch. That combined with the fear that the accidental discharge was intended to lure for them into a trap. At any rate, they changed their minds about entering the village.

Even though the Burmese were going away, the villagers weren't taking any chances. They were still heading for the hills. It wasn't just the fear of being caught in a battle that made them continue their flight. Their memories of the Burmese army were still too painful for them to be easily reassured. The major told us that four years ago the Burmese came to Kwingale and took away three village girls to Kawkariek. They raped the girls then severely beat all three, killing one. It was simply better not to be around if the Burmese were nearby.

As we drifted off to sleep that night we could hear the Burmese shelling Vang Kha again.

By our third day (19 May) in Kwingale we were beginning to learn the guerrilla's patience. It was clear we weren't about to hit anything until the Karens were certain they'd make a clean shot of it. Which meant more waiting.

The commandos weren't waiting though.

They were preparing to go out to the road again that afternoon and set up another vehicle ambush. They had received a report that a convoy had left Pa-an and might be passing by here on its way to Thingannyin-ang on 22 May.

We asked permission to go along but were politely told it was not possible. But after a while the major and the commando leader reconsidered. The commando said he would send someone for us if the convoy really started heading this way.

That afternoon at about 1430 I heard faint but familiar noise to the north. Under other circumstances the noise would be reassuring but in our present situation it was anything but. It was a helicopter, an American Huey to be precise. Forty minutes later we could hear the distinctive sound of a Huey's rotor blades more clearly. It was flying from north to northwest of us, towards Myawaddy. The major said it was probably flying some senior officers around and maybe taking back some wounded from the Vang Kha/Kawmura battles. These Hueys had been given to the Burmese by the U.S. government specifically for anti-narcotics operations. In reality they were used mostly for operations against the ethnic resistance.

The radio started getting busy again while the slick flew back and forth. To provide the commandos some extra punch for their ambush the major had given them some of our column's PG and M79 rounds.

That evening the major told us that the Karens had pulled out of Vang Kha on 16 May.

We started the following day, 20 May, to the sound of constant shelling to the northeast. This began at about 0600 and continued until nearly noon. The beat of heavy caliber weapons, probably Burmese 20mm Oerlikon cannons, could be clearly heard. The Burmese were going up against Kawmura.

We all sat listening silently to the flurry of radio traffic and the frantic tone of the operators. Later we learned that the Burmese had again crossed into Thailand in this latest attempt to take Kawmura, but had failed and pulled back across the Moei River.

At about 1315, after the firing died down, the Huey started flying back and forth between Kawkariek and Myawaddy again. It was presumably being used to ferry supplies forward and move casualties back. This went on until about 1500. The slick always seemed to fly along the Kawkariek-Myawaddy road. This was probably for easier navigation and to insure the crew and passengers would be near other Burmese units in case the helicopter had to let down.

Closer to our location a couple of rifle shots rang out to the northwest. No one could say whether they meant anything, adding a measure of uncertainty to our situation.

At 1620 hours the Burmese opened up on Kawmura again, but this became intermit-

tent after about 20 minutes.

During this time a radio report told us that the Burmese had been probing near another village, Ale Mekane, about 5 kilometers to the northeast. As evening approached one of the platoons with one of the 81mms moved back to our location led by their clubfooted commander.

In the receding daylight the major came back from the village with a man bound by a rope in tow. At first we thought he'd captured himself a Burmese soldier. But it turned out to be one of our own Karen porters. Being out here was too much for him, so he cracked up and started running aimlessly about. He rambled on incoherently when asked simple questions. The major put him under the house where he could be watched.

A couple of hours later at 1940 we got the word to pack up again. The major then left to check up on reports that the Burmese were probing into the nearby hills to the north, northeast and east. While we waited for the major to return, a resupply arrived from Palu. A short written message told me that one of the Frenchmen fighting alongside the Karens at Kawmura had been killed.

After an hour or so the major returned and decided that we would remain here another night in spite of the reported Burmese troop movements. Just as we went back up into the house our cracked up porter took off into the night again. The traditional village doctor had given him some medication to calm him down but I guess it didn't work.

The major then had to run out after him again. Maybe the run did the porter some good. He came back quietly with the major and said he was OK now. He wanted to stay on, but the major didn't want to risk him cracking up again so he handed him over to the village doctor to be taken back to Palu.

Next morning we finally rucked up and moved out of Kwingale. Staying there any longer would have really been pushing our luck. The next visit by the Burmese would have likely involved more than just a reinforced platoon.

We walked about 2 kilometers south, further back into the valley where the hills were closer in. One platoon with an 81mm was dug into a partially bare ridge line to the east. The troops up there had dug shallow fighting positions and put up hooches to shelter from the sun and rain. It was a good thing for us the Burmese never seemed to use their helicopters and planes for reconnaissance. An observer couldn't fail to spot an exposed position like that from the air. And fortunately for the Karens, the Burmese do not operate long range reconnaissance patrols or special operations units that could seek, interdict and attack KNLA forces in the interior with greater effectiveness than the lumbering columns they now employ.

As at our last location, we moved in with a Karen family. This time the hut was a lot

smaller and got a lot more crowded that night when everyone who could moved in to take shelter from the rain.

Early next morning we ate a good breakfast and were moving out by 0800. It turned out to be a day long hump, part of it through a hard rain. We were finally making a stab for Thingannyinaung. The roundabout route took us north, then south, then east and then north again. This brought us to Ale Mekane, a village about 3 kilometers southwest of Thingannyinaung by 1500.

The hills were further out here, and the terrain consisted mostly of rolling flat ground. We settled in with another family while the platoons moved into some low hills about 100 meters to the north of our house.

It was starting to get dark when a villager came in and told the major that maybe up to 500 Burmese soldiers were in the hills nearby. When the major asked him which hills and how near he pointed out the back of the house at some hills to the west and northwest. They were at least 2-3 kilometers away but looked like they were in our backyard. The major evidently felt the same way. We packed up and moved to a new house, putting the platoons in between the Burmese and our new location.

Before we went to sleep that night a light flashed for about two to three seconds from the hills where the Burmese were reported to be.

Everyone was fairly subdued as the next day began. The major woke up and kept eyeing the ridge lines to the west. From 1000 to 1130 we could hear the slick again to the northwest.

At 1130 a single shot rang out to the south. This was followed by four more over the next 20 minutes. Our interpreter told us that staying here was "mai sabai" (not comfortable). I don't think he was talking about our living conditions.

The commando leaders found our new location that afternoon and immediately began conferring with the major. As the officers talked the Huey sounded like it was flying closer to us. The major quickly ordered everyone to stay under cover. The commando leader crouched at the side of the house next to us and pointed it out, "There, do you see?"

And there it was. A green Huey 2-3 kilometers away flying from the northwest to northeast of our position at about 1,000 feet. It was probably on its way to Myawaddy.

After the commandos left the major informed us of some new developments. The Burmese were making preparations to attack Palu. About 300 to 500 Burmese troops were getting ready to move out towards our base camp with 81mm and 120mm mortars and 76mm howitzers. At the earliest an attack was expected within a week, the major told us. With this new information our column was ordered to march back to Palu immediately. That and the Burmese waiting for us in the hills



**Karen trooper in front of perimeter defense of Kawmura enclave in Burma where SOF staffer Lance Motley was KIA on 29 May 1989. Photo: Alain Haas**

nearby added a measure of haste to our actions.

By 1420 we were on our way. The local guerrillas and the two platoons we rendezvoused with at Bata broke off and headed away in their own directions. We took a direct southeasterly route at a very fast pace. The major wanted to make it back to our 16 May assembly point before dark. No one looked forward to tackling the rocky trail up the final slope to the old assembly point in the darkness. The rains would have made it slick with mud by now and extremely difficult for the porters and the men with the tubes and base plates to negotiate.

The further we walked the faster the pace got. As we kept passing further up the column, I wondered who was setting the pace in front of us. But before we realized it we ended up right behind the point man of our column.

He never once slowed down as we speed marched our way over the hills. At one

point some movement caught his eye to the right of our trail. Fortunately it was only some jungle fowl. If it had been Burmese we probably wouldn't have had much energy to do anything except tumble down the side of the hill.

The light was starting to dim as we arrived at the rocky trail up to the assembly point. Even with some light it proved to be a very slippery climb.

By 1930, as complete darkness set in, the last man in the column made it up to the place where our journey had begun eight days earlier. The bright lights of Mae Sot shone to the east in Thailand. In Burma there was only darkness. Next morning we would walk the final leg into Palu.

We were back in our safe harbor. But the storm now followed in our wake. ☒

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*A report on the desperate fight for Palu will appear in a future issue of SOF.*



**ABOVE:** Many Karen combatants are 13-14 years old. Photo: SOF staff



**ABOVE RIGHT:** M60s are highly prized by Karens. Photo: SOF staff

**RIGHT:** Burmese students, who fled oppressive tyranny in Rangoon, have joined the Karens. Photo: SOF staff



**BELOW:** CO of Karen forces, General Bo Mya, fought Japs in WWII. Photo: SOF staff

**BOTTOM:** Karens depend on captured and field-modified weapons to supplement black market purchases. Photo: Alain Haas





Brown and author Williams observe high ground held by Burmese prior to crossing Moei River into besieged Karen position later in the evening.



Ex-French Legionnaire Paul Fanshaw stands in Karen command bunker in Kawmura. Note four feet of reinforced concrete that covers "bomb shelter." Karen positions resemble those built by Japanese in Pacific during WWII.



Karen 40-year insurgency against Burmese tyranny has been ignored by outside world including the private sector. Here, SOF Publisher Brown, left, stands by medical supplies purchased with \$1,000 from Refugee Relief International, Inc. (RRI). Cash donations for Karens specifically can be made to RRI and will be used only for Karens. RRI is a 501 C (3) Corporation; donations are tax deductible.



Major Mike Williams and Kawmura commander discuss circumstances of Lance Motley's death inside Kawmura command bunker on Burmese Thai border. Motley was hit with fragments from Burmese mortar round on 29 May and died from wounds on 30 May 1989.



Photo, left, was provided by Karens at Kawmura. It was captured from Burmese on 27 May 1989. SOF Technical Editor Peter Kokalis' analysis follows:

Dear Bob:

I can provide the following information concerning the grenade launcher shown in the photograph enclosed, here-with:

This appears to be a weapon cobbled together in a field armory from bits and pieces. The pistol grip and rear trigger housing are from a Heckler & Koch G3 (7.62x51mm NATO) or HK33 (5.56x45mm NATO) rifle. The wood forearm, trigger mechanism, action and chopped barrel are clearly those of a British SMLE bolt-action rifle. The .303 British caliber has been retained as the

# GUTSY KARENS CONTINUE TO BLOODY BURMESE BUTCHERS

by Mike Williams

**E**IGHT hundred meters from Karen bunkers at Kawmura, Burma, is a large hill mass. It is high ground, covered with heavy, green vegetation that conceals a force of 5,000 Burmese troops. From its military crest the Burmese literally look down the throats of the Karen defenders.

From time to time throughout the day and late into the night the Burmese forward observers call for H&I fire, dropping occasional mortar and artillery rounds on the Karen positions. But the H&I tactics change when the Burmese decide to mount an attack and attempt to overrun the Karens.

Normally around 0200 hours in the morning the Burmese begin preparatory fire: 75 and 76mm artillery, 81mm, 82mm, and 120mm mortars, 20mm Oerlikon, tanks and pack howitzers pour round after round of HE onto the small Karen compound. After the supporting fire lifts, a few minutes before dawn, 900 Burmese troops attack. Crossing the Line of Departure, using assault fire, they run, scramble and crawl attempting to cover as much ground as possible before the defenders recover from the thunderous concussion of the barrage.

Before the front ranks reach a complex of concertina and trap ditches they're cut down by a hail of Karen artillery, mortar and small arms fire. Machine guns, firing Final Protective Line sectors, rake the following ranks of Burmese slamming them into the tearing barbs of tanglefoot wire. Grazing fire cuts the legs from under those attempting to find a way around the wire on the flanks and that area is soon littered with wounded and dying men.

ballistite (blank) cartridges shown loaded in the SMLE magazine are of that caliber. Origin cannot be determined from the photograph. The case mouth has a rose crimp closure and a red color code, but I would need the headstamp for a positive ID. The tubular buttstock, recoil pad and ventilated front sleeve are undoubtedly of indigenous origin. The sight is masked by the sling and I cannot identify it, although it does not appear to be that of either the M203 or M79.

I cannot identify the grenade. It would have been useful if the photographer had made note of the grenade markings and the markings on the left side of rifle's receiver. Technical intelligence starts with accurate field data.

Peter G. Kokalis

Bogged down, broken at the wire, the attack flounders and turns into a rout; the attackers run back into the jungle.

The most bizarre aspect of this action is the fact that it's been attempted repeatedly by the Burmese since 13 November 1978! Always with the same results!

Today the Karens still occupy the same two defensive positions: Wang Kha at Kawmura and the nearby camp of Pa Loo, some 13 kilometers south of the Thai border town of Mae Sot. They're still outnumbered three to one by the Burmese ... and they're still killing the enemy. As one Karen commander recently put it, "They're coming, yelling like crazies, and we're killing them like pigs."

Initially our SOF team efforts to go inside Burma and conduct an on-the-spot investigation of the death of SOF reporter Lance Motley were unsuccessful. At the time of our arrival in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, the garrison commander was anticipating a major attack by the Burmese and didn't, understandably, want to take responsibility for the lives of three Americans, particularly in view of the death of Lance Motley. Lance, a West Point graduate and former Ranger, had been an SOF correspondent for several years writing under the name of Gene Scroft prior to coming to Kawmura and linking up with the Karens.

He was there only one day before being hit by fragments from an incoming Burmese mortar round. Despite a four-hour operation by Thai surgeons in Mae Sot 12 hours after he was hit, Lance succumbed to the effects of severe trauma and a massive loss of blood.

After speaking with a Karen liaison officer near Mae Sot we were told their estimate of the situation had changed and we could go into the Karen position at Kawmura. It would have been tragic to have traveled half-way round the world and not be able to meet with the people who'd last seen Lance.

Accompanied by Karen guides we took a concealed route into the position. It was difficult to maintain contact in the dark with the indistinct figures of the Karen moving silently ahead of us through heavy bush. The only sounds were the occasional wet "pop" as their feet pulled free from the muddy ground.

Once inside the camp we were led to the command post bunker. The commander, who'd been a schoolteacher before joining the resistance, motioned for us to find a seat

among the scattered AKs, grenades and spare magazines stacked around the candle-lit bunker. His English was good, and the first part of our conversation concerned Lance Motley; he'd made a deep impression on the garrison personnel during the short time he'd been there. He had instructed them in how to emplace tangle-foot wire barriers and where to place their land mines. The commander had nothing but praise for his bravery and professional abilities.

When I asked the CO where he'd gotten his military education and how long he'd been fighting, he grinned and answered, "In the jungle ... for 24 years!"

When we moved from his bunker forward to the fighting positions the area we traversed looked like the surface of the moon. There were so many shell holes from incoming Burmese rounds that the Karens had been forced to lay a twisting series of wooden planks that offered footing around the holes.

Faint moonlight from a sickle moon afforded limited visibility of the Burmese firing positions. Strangely, it was quiet: no incoming rounds, no prep or H&I fire to drive us into nearby bunkers. The CO walking with us commented on how quiet it was because normally at that hour they'd all be hunkered down, bracing for incoming fire.

Near the right flank of the bunker line the CO stopped and pointed to a muddy spot near heavy bush. "That's where Motley was hit," he said. We stood, silent for a few moments, then turned and started back to the C.P.

A few meters back along the line, we stopped to shake hands with individual soldiers who were sitting outside their bunkers, grabbing a breath of fresh air.

Looking at the little group of tired, wiry men dressed in muddy shorts and tire-tread sandals but carrying immaculately clean weapons I recalled a Chinese military maxim: "The combat efficiency of an army is in inverse ratio to the gaudiness of its uniforms." That could have been written for the Karen.

We shook hands with each man in turn and I wished there had been some way to have captured on film the courage and determination on the faces of that ragged little group of riflemen.

A parting statement by the commander summed it up for all of them. When I asked him how long they could hold out he said, "Until we win!"

# GRINGO MERC

## Contras, Cammies and Pinstripes in Central America

by John Prester



SOF staffers explain H&K flare gun to contras somewhere in Central America. A number of Vietnam vets have freelanced with the contras—for no pay. Photo: SOF staff

**S**OME regard the CIA as America's primary bastion against the encroachment of communism. If this is true, then it leads one to wonder if the commies have really earned the image they like to encourage of their being awesomely effective revolutionaries. I've had opportunities to observe some of our "professionals" at work in Vietnam with the Phoenix Pro-

gram, in Africa and, most recently, in Central America ... in Honduras to be specific, and in a contra camp during 1986 to be precise. Some individuals whose paths I've crossed struck me as inept on their best day.

I had been working with the Nicaraguan *contra revolucionarios* off and on since '85 on a week-here and a month-there basis. I

first worked with the MISURA (Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian tribe's counter-revolutionary organization) but although these brave people are willing, they are not very effective. "Flash in the pan" is the phrase that comes to mind. As an example, one time I accompanied a group of 10 MISURA warriors on a cross-border raid into Nicaragua from the MISURA camp

near Rus Rus in the Honduran department (province) of Gracias a Dios. There were three firearms in our little band and my Browning pistol and CAR15 were two of 'em. They were also carried by me. The sergeant in charge of the group was carrying a rickety S&W M10 with only four rounds of suspect .38 Special ammo. The rest carried knives and machetes. Our target, a Sandinista border camp near the town of Suak Suak, a 15-minute canoe ride from Rus Rus, was manned by one Sandinista regular NCO and 21 irregular "milicianos." We found them all sound asleep except the sentry.

The sentry had his throat slit in a trice and in 10 minutes of industrious and artful chopping by the good guys, and bleeding and gurgling by the bad guys, the sentry's comrades had quickly joined him wherever it is people of this ilk go at death. The losses on our side? One numbnut cut his hand with his own knife. No one has yet figured out how. The take consisted of 22 Soviet AK-47s, one 9mm Makarov, 48 Soviet F1 grenades, web gear with personal equipment, magazines, canteens and about 3,000 rounds of ammo. Good coup! Of course everyone was proud of this achievement and justifiably so. This, of course, necessitated the arrangement of a party to celebrate the victory. The party took two days to prepare and an equal time to run its course. At the end of the festivities all of the MISURA soldiers were hung over and not one single firearm could be found — they had been sold for money to finance the victory party. Every one!

This sort of bullshit went on for six or eight months. All we had to eat on a regular basis was rice and a hard soy-flour cake called *lengua* (tongue). This was probably because it looked like a dried beef tongue, not because it was appealing to the consumer's.

In '86 I left the MISURA faction in mental self-defense and made contact with the FDN in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital.

### GLOBAL SOLDIER

John Prester was raised an Army brat in Panama, where his father was a career officer in the U.S. Army. Prester enlisted in '60 and served in RVN as an airborne Ranger attached to an SF "A" Team, returning CONUS for SF training and subsequently serving in the Belgian Congo and again in Vietnam. Leaving the Army in 1969 as an E-7, Prester was in Israel for the Yom Kippur War in '73, and with Honduran disaster relief in '74, where he stayed to train Honduran troops. He was in Nicaragua '76, Africa '78, Guatemala '81, and trained contras from '85 to '87. He holds an honorary captaincy in the Honduran army and presently lives in New Mexico with his wife and children.



**TOP:** Former SOF editor Dale Dye gives class to contras in southern Nicaragua in 1985. Photo: Topaz

**ABOVE:** Private sector help, like this load of medicine from Refugee Relief International, kept contras going when U.S. Congress cut off aid. Photo: Topaz

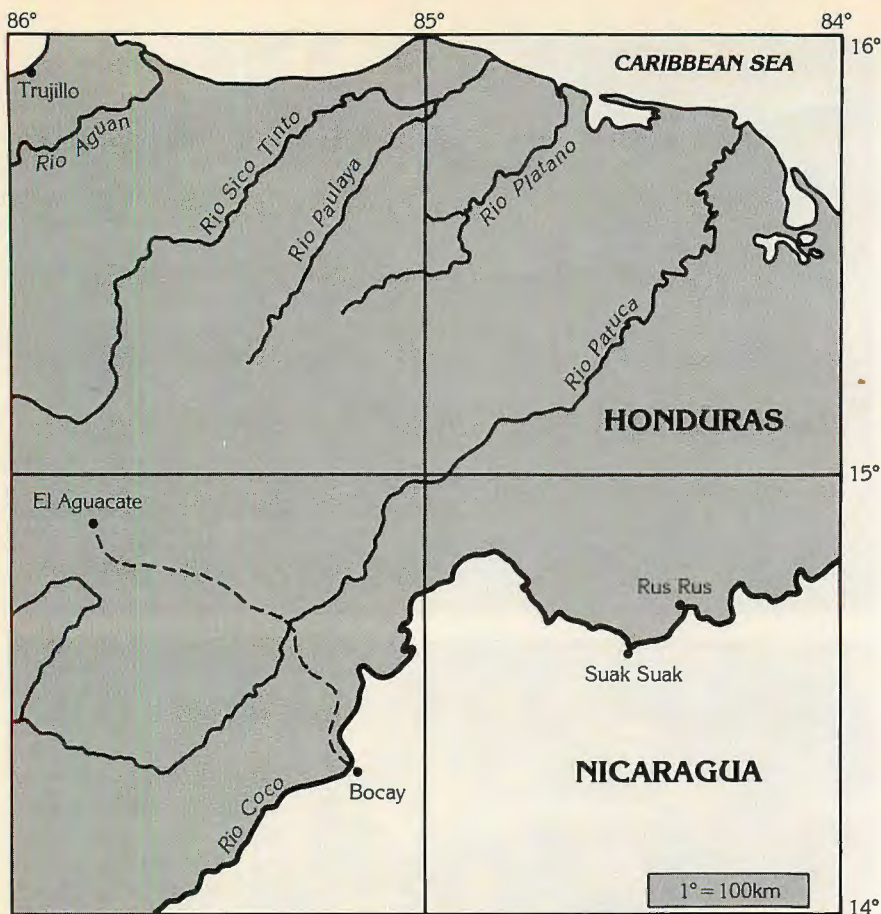
**BELOW:** Harry Claflin, left, repairs 12.7mm DShK HMG while Colonel Enrique Bermudez and SOF Publisher Brown observe at FDN base camp, 1985. Photo: Topaz

They contracted me to train troops in marksmanship and small unit operations. Under no circumstances was I to cross the border into Nicaragua itself. I only disobeyed twice. The first time was a three-day recon patrol through local villages about 30 clicks across the border, which involved no "contact" other than the uproarious welcome we got from the campesinos, and the only bad guys we saw were a considerable distance away in trucks.

The second "incursion" happened about three months later, and was about 10 clicks from the border in the vicinity of Bocay. Bocay is about 90 clicks from El Aguacate as the crow flies. If the crow is on walking patrol, you can double it. Responding to intelligence that a Sandinista convoy was to travel a certain road on







Author's area of operations when he trained contras.

a given day, we planned an ambush. The size, makeup and purpose of this convoy were unknown to us, but bad guys are bad guys and you take them where you can. It turned out to be a supply convoy, consisting of two East German trucks, followed by two East German "jeeps" and an old Ford LTD. The ambush site was carefully selected, and a classic L-shaped ambush set up.

At the ambush site the road went downhill, and we selected a point past where the road came through a small pass and angled down along a side cut. The portion where the road came through the pass was paralleled by a steep 150-foot dropoff.

We situated opposite the drop-off on the downgrade, 2 or 3 meters above and about 8 meters off the road. When the lead truck came within range our RPG gunner center-punched it with a Soviet-made PG-7: to my surprise the missile struck the bodywork which goes around the bed of the truck, passing cleanly through the near side, exiting the far side, and only incidentally breaking the leg of a soldier who was unfortunate enough to have been sitting in the way. The round then rebounded off the far shoulder of the road, bounced into the air and tumbled down into the ravine on the far side, where it exploded as the self-destruct delay ran out. The AG slipped another round into the muzzle of the launcher and it was sent on its way to impact with the engine block of the truck. This one went off as it should and the truck

came to an abrupt halt. The ambush, now properly initiated, erupted into a storm of bullets which tore into the Sandinista troops, who, giving the devil his due, responded properly by unassing their truck on the ambush side and attempting to stage a counterattack.

The driver of the second truck tried to bulldoze the hulk of the first vehicle off the road, but succeeded only in turning it athwart the road, with its wheels locked in the ditches on either side of the narrow track. The men who dismantled the first truck were cut down where they stood before they could return fire. The two men in the second truck — which carried supplies — didn't even get to dismount. For some reason, the driver of the first "jeep" simply followed the second truck, while his passenger tried to return fire with his AK. Both were dispatched within seconds.

The driver in the second "jeep" backed into the grille of the Ford, which was spinning its wheels in a desperate attempt to retreat back up the muddy track. They didn't get anywhere either. The passenger of the Ford got out and tried to push against his door frame to get it to move back, but to no avail. All were cut down in the fusillade which lasted less than 10 minutes.

All in all, it was something of a disappointment from the booty standpoint. The supply truck was loaded with nothing more than second-hand Cuban uniforms. All we got out of the whole ambush were

the individual weapons and web gear of the Sandinistas. The uniforms were picked over for the most serviceable pieces and everything else, including the bodies, was doused with gasoline and set afire.

We never understood what the old Ford was doing there, because the driver and his assistant were just ordinary troops and since they were dead they could hardly give us an explanation. Presumably the vehicle was personally owned by some Sandinista officer and was being delivered to him, but we can only speculate.

Other than these two brief incursions for purpose, I stayed where we were based in the Department of Olancho, in the beautiful cattle ranching region of Honduras. There, near the town of El Aguacate, I learned that putting cammies on a foggy-bottom pinstripe doesn't change him much.

I had been running ops out of "Campo Libertad" (Camp Liberty, some 12 clicks from the city of Catacamas) for five months on a four-week-in, one-week-out basis, when one day I stepped out of my hooch on my way to take the troops to the rifle range. To my surprise, I was greeted by someone screaming obscenities in English. I mean this guy was really going berserk. I turned around and found myself about 10 meters from a sawed-off little asshole in brand new cammy jungle fatigues and equally new web gear. I don't recall his boots, but I do remember carefully examining the inside of the flash suppressor of his CAR15. Nearly foaming at the mouth, describing me in terms which implied an improper liaison with my mother and worse and a mercenary to boot, he announced that he was going to blow my ass away. To emphasize this proclamation, he put his CAR15 on rock and roll. Oh, shit!

About this time, another figure eased its way into my vision as the muzzle of the carbine was firmly pushed aside and down. It was the figure of an older, larger (very large) man also wearing "jungles" and web gear - but not so new. He was equally armed, but his piece was pointing at the ground, thankfully, and he was deferentially but firmly advising this miniature Tasmanian Devil to cease and desist all of the above.

My benefactor took this frantic wildman aside, and after calming him (sort of), he walked over to me and somewhat unnecessarily explained that his associate was pissed off. He identified himself as a Special Forces trooper on loan to the CIA, and announced that the blond lunatic was his case officer and the man now in charge of ops in this AO!

I ID'd myself and, much to my surprise, the SF guy smiled and shook my hand, explaining that he had friends from the old days ('60s & '70s) who had spoken of me. One recently had mentioned that I was living down in Honduras and that he

*Continued on page 83*

# BARGAIN BOLO

## Philippine Chopper Cuts Through the Competition

by Chuck Fremont

**L**ONG on utility and short on sex appeal, the Philippine bolo knife probably won't be carried by John Rambo in his next feature film. But that doesn't concern the people who depend on these rugged, short machetes for day-to-day survival: the Negrito Indians of Luzon Island. In rain forest and jungle terrain, where these Austronesian tribesmen have lived since they settled in the Philippines, a sturdy working knife is an essential survival tool — and, when necessary, a weapon.

Heavy knives and short swords made of mild steel, designed for slashing and chopping more than stabbing and thrusting, are common to most Third World agrarian nations where they are used primarily as agricultural tools. The African *panga*, Central American machete, and cutlass of the Caribbean islands and Guyana coast of South America are all examples of such edged weapons.

Designs vary according to local uses. Machetes and cutlasses see a lot of service cutting sugar cane, so they are relatively long and thin. Pangas are used for clearing land in slash-and-burn farming, so they have strong, fairly heavy, sword-like blades. But all are formidable weapons as well. Such knives aren't just limited to use in the tropics. I've found a sturdy machete to be the ideal tool for cutting snow blocks for igloos.

The subject of this discussion, the bolo, is used largely for cutting and shaping bamboo, so the knife has a heavy blade weighted to the front and curved inward like a Gurkha kukri, though not as pronounced. This gives the knife a good balance for chopping with short, controlled strokes, the best technique for cutting bamboo.

An extremely long blade isn't necessary for such work, and the relatively short — just under 12 inches — blade of the bolo allows it to be used for finer work such as shaping cut bamboo for snares, cooking and eating utensils, triggers for mantraps, and other needs. Preferred technique for Negritos is to do heavy chopping with the broad curved section of the blade, near the top, and then use the narrower section near the grip for fine work.

I acquired my test bolo while going through an extended version of JEST (Jun-



This Philippine bolo won't win awards for aesthetics, but can help keep you alive and working from jungles and rain forests to arctic snow fields. Photo: M. Reid

gle Environmental Survival Training), a course run by the U.S. Navy near Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines (see "Survival at Subic," Sept. '88). Many Negrito scouts, who are the primary trainers at this excellent school, recommend bolos to arriving students. And, of course, they happen to have a supply on hand and are willing to sell them at "special prices."

These entrepreneurial Third World capitalists scrounge leaf springs from heavy trucks — 5-ton military trucks are preferred sources — which they then forge and grind to shape in local workshops. Don't ask me how Negritos made these knives before the arrival of U.S. Army trucks.

### SF SCRIBE

Chuck Fremont, his *Soldier of Fortune* nom de guerre, is assistant operations and intelligence NCO of his Special Forces "A" Detachment. He has served on a number of overseas missions and mobile training teams, and has previously written on topics as varied as minefield recording and survival sidearms.

Blades are heated and quenched, but not enough to over-harden the steel; they can be sharpened easily with a file or whetstone. The full-tanged blades are drilled for three rivets and fitted with handle scales carved from water buffalo (known locally as "caribou," rhymes with "wow") horn. The horn can be scraped into a powder and used as an emergency coagulant, according to my instructor. He had a few knife scars that indicated he knew what he was talking about.

To U.S. military types who are used to thinking in terms of Rockwell hardness ratings, exotic stainless alloys and so forth, leaf springs may not seem like very sophisticated material from which to craft utility/combat blades. However, this typically high-carbon manganese steel is actually an excellent material for the bolo. According to a U.S. Special Forces captain who went through the JEST course with me, and who apparently had stayed awake during his metallurgy class at West Point, leaf-spring steel has a fairly high carbon content, desirable for edge holding, plus some chromium for corrosion resistance, and the manganese

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**SOF SOUTH AFRICA**

# RECCO COM



# MANDOS

World's Toughest Train to Kill Swiftly,  
Efficiently — and Often

Text & Photos by Hilton Hamman





**RIGHT & TOP:** The infamous “Iron Cross,” a small piece of malicious mischief and masterpiece of awkwardness devised by an ex-Rhodesian sergeant major, weighs in at 100 kilograms —220 pounds. It must be carried 15 kilometers along with the prospective Recces’ full kit and rifle over roads sometimes ankle deep in sand and mud.

**ABOVE:** Color-coded chains. Straight after lugging the Iron Cross, recruits have to sort out an intricate puzzle in which these chains have to be threaded through three logs in a particular sequence. The problem is, once the puzzle has been solved the logs have to be carried another 15 kilometers.

**T**HEY are the silent warriors — men of the night, with an arm that can reach into any part of Africa and strike at any foe.

They are acknowledged by friend and enemy alike as without equal — anywhere — when it comes to bush warfare.

They survive by subterfuge and secrecy — men of the shadows, reluctant to be seen.

They are the South African Defence Force’s legendary Reconnaissance Commandos. The Recces.

They are normally publicity shy — for almost 10 years no one but a Recce was allowed into their base in the Caprivi strip.

Now, the powers-that-be in Pretoria have decided to lift the covers and let us take a limited peek into their activities.

The motivation behind this move is simple. This is not some sudden benevolence toward the media; no softening of attitudes — God knows, during the three months it took to put this story together, I was told often enough what scuzz-balls we journalists are.

The reason, in fact, was much more basic... “We’re sick and tired of people believing we eat puppy dogs,” growled a Recce colonel. “We want to set the record straight

once and for all.”

He was referring to the appalling story that states that every recruit who joins the Recces is given a puppy at the time of his intake. According to the story it is the soldier’s duty to raise and feed the young animal, and when man and dog have formed a close bond, he is forced to cut its throat and eat it. The story is complete and utter rubbish, but it has persisted and has begun to get under the skin of the men with the maroon berets.

The ground rules for our story were simple: no names, no pictures showing faces,

no details about operations. Aside from that there were no restrictions. All the same, it is important to understand that this article gives only a very brief look into the roles and activities of one of the world's most elite fighting forces. I saw, heard and photographed a number of things which, in terms of my agreement, I am unable to show. There was, I believe, nothing anyone would be ashamed of, nor anything that would unduly shock anyone; but a deal is a deal.

Make no mistake — these people are no Sunday school teachers. They are highly trained professionals who can and have killed South Africa's enemies swiftly and efficiently...and often.

They are keenly honed professionals —but before you begin dialing Amnesty International's number, bear in mind that the objective of every soldier in every army in the world is to kill his enemy. That applies to every National Serviceman as well as every Recce — it's just that some do it more efficiently than others. Or, as General George S. Patton once put it: "The aim is not to go out and die for your country; the aim is to make some other dumb bastard die for *his* country."

South African special forces cannot boast a long history. Compared to other regiments they have little historical tradition, and their origins can be traced back to the late '60s when, after meetings with foreign special forces, the military brass saw a need for uniquely skilled professional soldiers who could operate deep behind enemy lines.

In 1970, the Army established a group under the administrative command of the Infantry School at Oudtshoorn. It was known as the Operational Experimental Group. Success was swift and on 1 October 1972, 1 Reconnaissance Commando was created under command of the legendary Colonel Jan Breytenbach.

During Operation Savannah in 1975, the Recces supported various army units, but did not undertake any classical special forces operations because other commanders did not understand the unique role of such troops.

After Savannah, it was clear there would have to be further specialization, and a full-time seaborne sub-unit was established. At about the same time, another sub-unit specializing in operations with black soldiers was founded.

In July 1978, 4 Reconnaissance Commando was established as a permanent seaborne force, based at Langebaan. Six months later, a specialist black unit — 5 Recce — was born, while 1 Recce continued as a specialist airborne unit based in Durban.

At the end of the Rhodesian war in 1980, a number of ex-Selous Scouts and Special Air Service (SAS) members moved south and helped form the nucleus of 3 and 6 Recce regiments in Phalaborwa and Durban. For many of the ex-Rhodesians, however, the SADF was merely a stepping stone to a work permit and after a year most

of them drifted into other employment. In 1981, both regiments were disbanded and the remaining members absorbed into the other Recce units.

Around this time, mainly because of manpower shortages, the Army began training National Servicemen as special forces operatives and, in July 1981, the first batch of NSM volunteers began training at Dukuduku in northern Natal.

The Recce club is an exclusive institution and entrance qualifications are among the

never make it to the selection phase.

"We set a basic physical fitness standard that candidates must meet before we'll even talk to them," explained a major in charge of recruiting. "That way we stop the overweight and out-of-shape from wasting our time."

Tests during pre-selection include the following:

●20-kilometer (12-mile) route march with 25-kilogram (55 pound) kit in 3 hours and 15 minutes.

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## The Recce Club is an exclusive institution and entrance qualifications are among the toughest on earth.

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toughest on earth. The act of joining the Recces is purely voluntary. Stringent criteria have to be met before a recruit is even allowed to begin the selection phase.

To be considered for the basic selection course, candidates must:

- Be between 18 and 28 years of age.
- Have completed one year of National Service training.
- Be in possession of a matric (roughly equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma) certificate. (Certain exceptions may be made.)
- Be a South African citizen.
- Be bilingual.
- Have no criminal record.
- Be prepared to sign up with the Permanent Force for a minimum of three years, after completing two years of National Service.

On top of this, extremely tough physical requirements must be met. About 75 percent of applicants bomb out at this stage and

●5-kilometer (3-mile) cross-country run in 20 minutes.

●10 non-stop pull-ups.

●75 sit-ups in two minutes.

●50 non-stop press-ups.

●18x25-meter shuttle runs in two minutes.

●200-meter fireman's carry, without kit — one minute.

●170 non-stop shuttle kicks.

This is simply the *pre-selection* phase: the candidate who gets through this part only earns the right to go on to the selection phase.

The selection phase is held in northern Natal, in the dank, gloomy depths of the mangrove forests of Dukuduku. The name, by the way, is local black vernacular for "the place of groping in the dark."

Conditions are terrible. Humidity soars into the 90s. Daytime temperatures often hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) while at night, if the clouds drift in from the sea and the wind begins to blow, it can become decidedly chilly. Swarms of mosquitoes and biting flies lurk in the damp undergrowth and poisonous Gaboon vipers lurk in the long grass.

This is the scenario that awaits the prospective special forces soldier. Compared to what is to come, it is a piece of positive paradise.

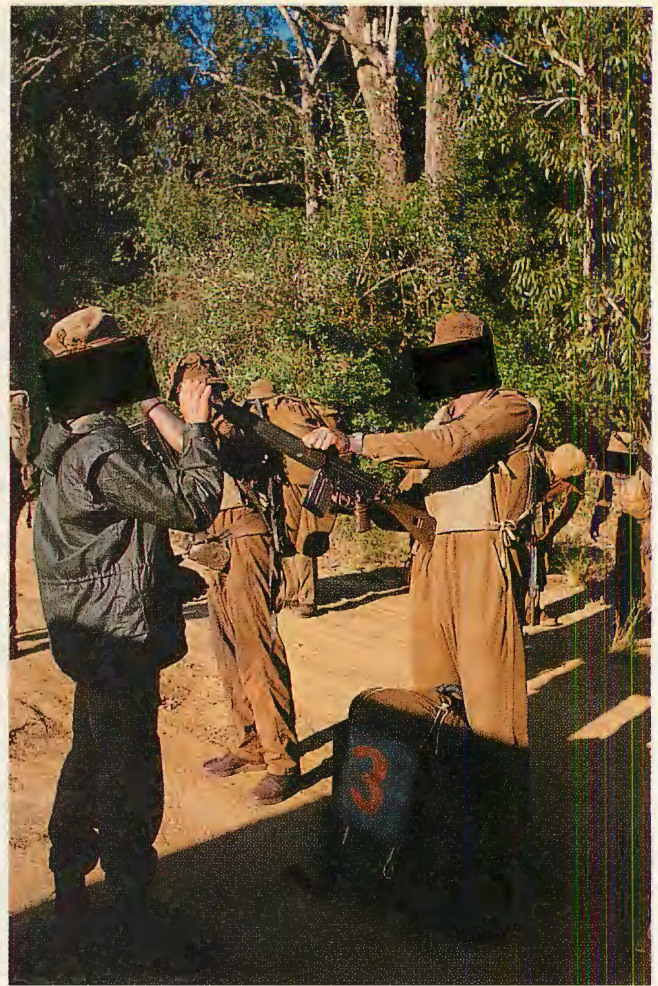
The final selection takes place over three days and items making up the program are written on a single sheet of paper. It looks simple: a few route marches, a puzzle, an exercise with Lego building blocks.

Yet on a recent muggy Monday, when 40 candidates assembled on the parade ground at Duku, and an ex-Rhodesian SAS sergeant major, sporting the scar where a communist bullet broke his jaw, points to a bucket of "black is beautiful" cammo paint, the Recce candidates have little idea they are about to begin a journey that will lead them to hell and back.

To the recruits, this is just the start of a program that, a year later, will give them the right to wear a badge with a laurel

### BUSHMASTER

Hilton Hamann is a freelance journalist based in South Africa. He specializes in military writing and has extensively covered the wars in southern Africa. He has traveled with UNITA forces in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique, and South African forces in Namibia. He saw combat duty in Namibia and Angola with a specialist SADF unit, and was part of the South African invasion force into Angola in 1975. He is a former bureau chief of the *Sunday Times*, South Africa's largest circulating newspaper, and has published in excess of 500 articles throughout the world. Hamann is considered an authority on weapons and is the author of a book on firearms to be published in April and distributed in South Africa, England, and the United States. We welcome his first feature-article contribution to SOF.



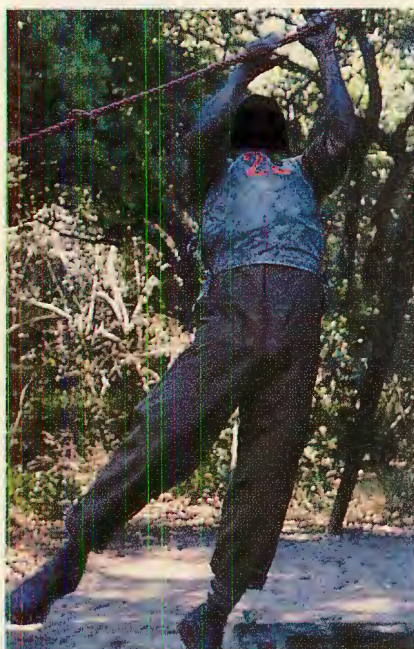
**LEFT:** "Letra" obstacle course, an exercise in problem solving for Recce recruits. Typical problem would be getting a wounded man, his kit, and a few ammunition cases over a 4-meter-high obstacle without touching the sides.

**RIGHT:** Rifle inspections are carried out throughout the selection course. The penalty for a dirty weapon? More physical torture.

**LEFT:** One more obstacle to overcome en route toward becoming a Recce, but the pain and suffering endured during selection only earns them the right to join the year-long Recce course.

**CENTER:** "Prisoner" exercise, designed to give recruits a taste of the treatment they might expect if captured. Here, a bit of ice water wakes recruits up to the realities of life in the Recces.

**RIGHT:** Aggression training during Recce selection course.





After 104 kilometers — 60-plus miles — of carrying weights up to 220 pounds plus normal kit, feet begin to crack up. Doctors are on hand at all times, and recruits can drop off selection whenever they want.

wreath encircling a dagger — the mark of a special forces soldier.

“Don’t be shy with the ‘black is beautiful.’ There’s more than enough to go around,” the sergeant major barks.

White candidates smear it on their faces with an encrusted rag that has almost set solid. The black guys just smile.

“Black is beautiful” is fiendish stuff. It cakes to your skin, clogs your pores and when you sweat, runs in rivulets and sets your eyes on fire. This is definitely one occasion when it is an advantage to have a black skin in South Africa.

First on the program is the “Vastrap,” a 45-kilometer (27-mile) route march with kit weighing some 40 kilograms (88 pounds). The time limit for the exercise is 15 hours and the route winds through the forests and over roads thick with sand.

When this is accomplished, the prospective Recce goes straight into the casualty evacuation exercise — a 4-kilometer (2.4-mile) trek in which he has to carry a buddy, his own kit, as well as his comrade’s kit and rifle. Rifles are expected to be spotless at all times, and instructors carry out random inspections.

No food is provided during these three days of torture, but recruits are given as much water as they want and doctors, experienced Recce men, and psychologists monitor every step. At the start of the phase there is one operator and one psychologist to every four men, but this ratio improves as guys drop out. By the third day there are

more evaluators, medics and shrinks than candidates.

The shrinks check the guys all the time. Watching and monitoring; seeing who is a potential leader and who is a shirker; or just watching for the guy who is about to come apart at the seams.

Candidates can give up at any stage, and give up they do. The guys who joined because they wanted to impress a chick or were looking for a way to dazzle their drinking mates with war tales soon fall by the way.

There is no time for sleep — you’re racing the clock all the time. But at 2100 on that bitterly cold Monday night — just when the guys who made it through the first day are beginning to congratulate themselves — they are called on to look deep into their mental reserves and face the most extreme physical horrors.

The exercise is simply termed “Prisoner” on the program sheet, but behind that one word lies five hours of literal torture and the need to look fear in the face — and overcome it.

“You will be taken from here and treated as though you have been captured by the enemy,” explains a disarmingly good-looking major to the band of weary recruits whose eyes are fixed in the familiar “thousand-yard” stare.

“There will be no talking. You will not move. If you want to give up, you will call to one of the evaluators. Is that understood?”

Thirty-four candidates nod blankly. One by one they are frog-marched behind a line of parked trucks. There they are stripped to the waist, their hands cuffed tightly behind their backs, and a canvas hood is pulled over their heads. It is secured by two thongs looped around the chest and under the arms. They stand there like prisoners awaiting an old-time execution; their only means of identification, the crimson numbers on the bib of the hood.

Bam! Their feet are kicked out from under them. “Keep your legs straight and sit upright, you jackass!” snarls a corporal.

It’s probably just as well the candidates can’t see the drum of water filled with blocks of ice.

Candidate Number 2 begins to scream as the evaluators douse him with iced water, throwing it up under the hood so it fills his nostrils and mouth. He is jerked forward and the icy liquid gushes down over his trousers. This will be repeated every half-hour. His teeth chatter. He whimpers like a puppy separated from its mother, then begins to sob as terror engulfs him, driving out rational thought.

“Be still!” An evaluator slaps him on the back.

Seventeen minutes have passed since the exercise began — 283 to go.

“You’ve got to understand what we’re trying to achieve here,” explains an operator. “We’re looking for the kind of person who may be called upon to face great fear. To come out alive, he has to control that



fear. That's the ability that brought Wynand du Toit back in one piece. (see "Recce Commando," SOF, January '89 and Bulletin Board, January '88.)

"These guys are here because they want to do a specialized and dangerous job. They're not your run-of-the-mill youngster, and we need to be sure they've got what it takes."

Evaluators begin decanting iced water into buckets. Twenty-eight minutes down.

The sound of the water being poured gets Number 2 screaming again. This time they do not quieten him. They begin at the other end of the line, letting him hear the gasps as the icy shocks splash across his buddies.

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**"These guys are here because they want to do a specialized and dangerous job. They're not your run-of-the-mill youngster, and we need to be sure they've got what it takes."**

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"We all went through this," says the operator, unmoved by Number 2's screams. "This is purely a mental thing. There's no pain involved here. It doesn't hurt; it's just uncomfortable and unpleasant. The way you handle this is by hanging on to the thought that you're not going to be harmed and it'll be over in a few hours."

Number 2 calls out. "Sir!" His voice trembles through his chattering teeth. "I've had enough. I want to give up!"

"You sure?"

He nods.

"Loosen his hands and take him to the truck."

Candidates who decide to pack it in are never ridiculed. They are interviewed and debriefed by the psychologists and then returned to their regiments with dignity.

"Just getting this far puts them in a class of their own," says the major in charge of recruiting. "Only a tiny percentage of people make it past the pre-selection phase."

At the end of the Prisoner exercise, 28 candidates are left and after a 10-kilometer (6-mile) speed march and a trip over the "Letra" obstacle course, they are ready for the granddaddy of shit-off tests — the Iron Cross.

The Iron Cross is a masterpiece of frustration; a small piece of malicious genius. Designed by that same ex-Rhodie sergeant major, it consists of a square metal frame shackled to four arms fashioned from railway rails. It is so designed that when it is picked up, the hinged center collapses inward; it's like trying to pick up two pieces of railway rail that are joined by a length of chain.

Each arm of the cross weighs 25 kilograms (55 pounds) and each is cut short so its bearers are forced to walk shoulder to shoulder without being able to carry it on their backs. There are no handles, and the

contraption has to be carried by a team of four; each lugging their own kit and rifles, which have no slings or carrying handles.

The jaunt with the Iron Cross takes the candidates on a 15-kilometer (9-mile) hike over roads where, at times, they are ankle-deep in sand. How they carry it and who carries it is their problem. The only rule is that it may not be dragged.

"This is a valuable piece of equipment and the State doesn't want you to stuff it up," glowers its designer. "Come on; why are you all standing around like a bunch of bloody old women? Pick that damn thing up and get going! You've got seven-and-a-half hours!"

As the hours go by, the candidates try every possible way to carry the cursed thing. They try to sling it using their utility ropes, but it keeps falling off. They try to carry it in a ground sheet, but it is just too wide and the nylon ground-sheet straps cut their hands.

There is only one way: pick it up and stumble along — make like a mule. As a guy drops out, the Iron Cross arm he was carrying is removed and his buddies continue.

It is beginning to get dark in the forest. Number 37 has been having a hard time with his three teammates. They have stumbled and fallen and they want to rest every 200 meters or so. The group is at the rear, about 3 kilometers behind the rest of the field. They are falling farther and farther behind in their race against the clock.

"Come on guys," pleads 37. "We've got two-and-a-half hours to go and we're only just over half way. I don't want to come this far and then bomb out because your okes can't hack it!"

It's a tough world. This is a team exercise and that goddamn Iron Cross has to be carried as a team.

"I don't think they're going to make it," says one of the psychologists. "The other three have lost their motivation."

It's a no-win situation for Number 37. He's stuck with his team. He's going to go down with them — and because of them. His anger and frustration are as tangible as the .38 Special tucked into his waist band. He wants to lay into them, kick the hell out of them, but the presence of the psychologist and evaluators stops him.

No one offers him any help. This is his problem; he must sort it out.

"OK you bastards," he curses through tight lips. He flings his kit at their feet. "See if the you three can carry this!"

Then he hoists the cross on to his shoulders and, with his jaw locked like a Boer farmer facing the British, sets off alone.

"You buggers better keep up," he shouts over his shoulder as his team mates share out his kit and stumble after him.

"He won't get there on time," says an evaluator, glancing at his watch.

But they have underestimated Number 37's desire to be a Recce. He makes it with time to spare — and with that 100-kilogram (220-pound) weight on his back. And he overtakes three other teams in the process.

Maybe that's what it's all about. You've got to want to be a special forces soldier stronger than the pain you feel. The glory boys and the guys who "just wanna kill" simply don't make it — the Iron Cross usually sees to that.

The Iron Cross is followed by a mind-bending puzzle that requires candidates to thread colored chains through color-coded holes in poles. Fresh, fed and alert, it's no picnic — but when you've just covered 74 kilometers (44.4 miles), loaded like a pack mule and not eaten or slept for two days, it's worse than trying to reconcile your credit card statement while smashed.

What's worse is that you know once you've solved the problem you're going to have to pick up those poles and hump them another 9 miles.

Selection takes three days to complete. The guys walk and carry until they no longer know their own names. By the end of the final day they have covered more than 110 kilometers (66 miles) on their feet.

It's tough; perhaps the toughest selection course in the world, and only the strongest make it. About 120 started the pre-selection phase; at the end of it, only 19 remain.

But the news for those 19 is that they haven't even got out of the starting blocks in what may be likened to a 1,000-mile race. The pain and suffering they have endured has merely earned them the right to join the year-long Recce course. If they don't meet the standards required they can be thrown off at any stage, and the hard times they went through during selection will seem a walk in the park compared with what they will face during the coming year.

There have been calls to make the training and selection easier, but the Recce authorities will have none of it.

"We make no bones about it; we're looking for the best," said a colonel at SADF special forces headquarters. "We're only after the top one or two percent of the population."

At one of the Recce training grounds an ordinary recruit has echoed the same thought in chalk on one of the walls. It is not quite as eloquent a statement as that of his senior officer, but the sentiment is the same...*If you ain't a Recce, you ain't worth shit!* ☠

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*Next month, SOF has a look at life beyond selection. Want to become a Recce operator? If you can pass this sort of training, mate, you'll have earned the title.*

# FROM RHODESIA, WITH BRUSH

**A Letter From Wales and a Painting From the  
War Turn Up to Haunt SOF Editor**

by John Coleman  
Art by John W. Hopkins



**A**S the saying goes, when you're running down life's path don't look back because something might be gaining on you. In my case, that something was a painting that at one time hung on the wall of the officers' mess at Cranborne Barracks, just outside of what was then Salisbury, Rhodesia.

Attached to that painting, by virtue of being its creator, is a gentleman by the name of John W. Hopkins who currently resides in Wales. In 1980, John Hopkins was a newly commissioned officer in the Rhodesian Army; he was also commissioned by the then commander of the 1st Battalion, Rhodesian Light Infantry, Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Aust, to produce a painting of a typical fire force callout. This, in excellent style, he did.

Longtime SOF readers may recall one of the first articles I ever produced for this

magazine — "LALO Jump" — back in the January '84 issue. Therein, I described a fire force para jump we carried out during the waning days of the Rhodesian war. Magazines, being what they are and this one no different, require as much art — photos, drawings, *photographs of paintings* etc. — as they can get to illustrate their articles, so I duly submitted artwork and photos I'd acquired during and after the war — one of which was a photograph of a certain painting that hung in the entrance foyer of the RLI officers' mess.

At the time, the only two combat artists recording the Rhodesian scene (at least as far as I knew, which shows how much I know) were Peter Badcock and Craig Bone, both brilliant, both producing some of the best visual records of the war. Knowing that Pete didn't paint the painting in question I assumed Craig did, and duly

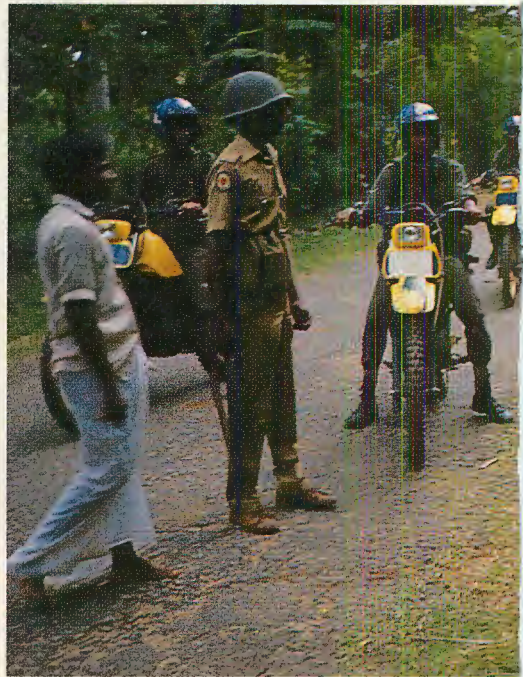
attributed the fire force painting that opened my article to him.

We all know what happens when you assume something, don't we?

On 27 October last year, an envelope with letter and these photographs landed on my desk, from none other than John W. Hopkins. In the most friendly of terms he outlined the painting's history, and asked if we could find some space to reproduce his work in the magazine in order to set the record straight.

I am more than happy to do so as it gives me a chance to steal a page out of our editorial well to again (this time with the correct signature) show you this superbly crafted depiction of a typical Rhodesian fire force contact.

I wouldn't mind admitting my mistakes nearly so often if the end result always turned out as well as this did. ✕



**TOP:** Soldier patrols through Buddhist temple. When Sri Lankan politicians made Buddhism the official religion, it incensed the Tamil minority, most of whom are Hindu.

**ABOVE:** Sri Lankan troops on Japanese dirt bikes (bikes are left factory yellow to aid the good guys in identifying fellow good guys) are able to outmaneuver insurgents in the bush. But as effective as such Special Forces Sections (squads) may be, author notes the solution to the Sri Lankan situation must be political.

**LEFT:** The regular military, since they must hold the line against the insurgents, receives better weapons, gear, and vehicles. Weapons and web gear are Chinese, helmets American and Israeli, vehicles Japanese.

## SOF ANALYSIS

# CHAOS IN COLOMBO

## Sri Lanka's Army Awaits Its Marching Orders While Politicians Dither

Text & Photos by Tom Marks



VERY few things in life can be done without planning. True, there are those rare individuals who can avoid this chore. I know an artist, a friar at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, who turns out the most incredible works of art without recourse to sketches or prior detailing. Done with stitches and cloth, they're indescribable. Often I hear the murmur of visitors, gazing into eyes so real they pierce right through you: "How does he do it?" The answer is that, clearly, the man has a gift. God — or whatever force you choose — speaks to him.

The rest of us, though, are less gifted: what has to be done won't just leap out at us and become concrete. We must painstakingly make it so, detail by detail. War is like that.

It is a point I could never get across to the powers-that-be in Sri Lanka. The friar-artist is rendering a version of reality, interpreting it. In art, reality lies only in the eyes of the beholder. The soldier, in contrast, is *reacting* to reality, seeking to overcome the complexities of the battle-

field situation. He can't rely on inspiration for survival; he must move according to some overall purpose, following when possible a pre-determined plan.

His purpose, of course, is embodied in "the plan." There must always be one. It is drawn up in response to objective circumstances. Naturally, interpretation of those circumstances is subjective, and therein lies the rub. If the artist's interpretation of reality is fanciful, no harm is done. He may, in fact, be heralded for his unique perspective. But if the soldier takes the same license, he dies. Unfortunately, most of the actual blood is shed by those at the bottom of the heap. Those at the top in the art of war, rarely pay the ultimate price.

### Meeting "the Man"

I said as much that night, years ago, when I met with the Sri Lankan president. At the end of every paragraph I came back to it: you've got to have a plan. It's axiomatic. Working one up isn't that difficult. Any American officer, regardless of rank, could do it. Any Sri Lankan officer could do it. But someone has to be *told* to do it!

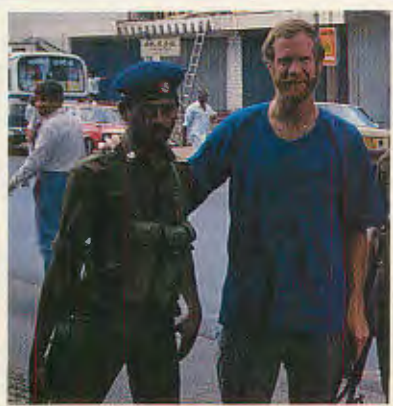
His Excellency had called me late one evening and asked if I would mind coming over to talk. "Mind coming over." That's rich. What was I supposed to say? "Well, no, actually, I can't; I'm reading a good comic book right now." Still, that's the way he was. Always the gentleman.

Actually, the call came at a welcome moment. After weeks in the field, I had come down with a nasty eye malady and had been lying in bed for days, compresses covering my eyes. With sight returning but still too weak to get back into the bush, I was restless to be doing something, anything.

When the president greeted me, he held in his hand a paper on the insurgency I'd been asked to write. He wanted to

### ANALYTICAL MARKS

Last month Tom Marks provided an overview of the maturing Sri Lankan military (see "Professionals in Paradise," January '90) and this month continues his analysis of the Sri Lankan situation with an insightful review of the political background which has led to strife on this once-peaceful island. Marks is a frequent contributor to *Soldier of Fortune* and has filed stories from the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, and several from Sri Lanka. He is a West Point graduate and former infantry officer who lives and works in Hawaii when not on assignment.



discuss it.

Our first half hour was strained beyond belief. He rambled; I dutifully took notes. He painted a rosy picture so out of touch with reality that I finally stopped writing and just stared. My companion, a Sri Lankan exceptionally well versed in the intricacies of the system, sank deeper and deeper into his chair, a look of profound despair on his face. The country was in turmoil, and we were talking to a doddering old fool.

Or so it seemed. Finally, I could restrain myself no more. "Sir, with all due respect," I interrupted, "I've just been all over the country, and what you're saying doesn't jibe with reality. The situation out there is serious. And it's going to get worse if we don't do something. Now, bad as it is, considered from any objective vantage point, this is a pretty small war. We can win it."

He sat bolt upright. "Now that's what I want to talk to you about!" He leaped forward to the silver service on the table. "Tea?" Before I could answer, he was pouring some. My companion, older than I and startled by the sudden explosion of action, was struggling to avoid a heart attack. But for the turmoil, it could have been a scene right out of *Ghandi*.

In the hour and a half that followed, the President was a different man. He was animated. He was lucid. He was dynamic. And we got down to brass tacks.

"Sir," I implored, "you've got to have a plan. You've got to make some hard choices about change in this system. Then, at a minimum, you all must decide which areas of operation are to have priority. You can't attempt to hold everything at once. You don't have the resources."

"So the problem is that we don't have a plan?"

"No sir, you don't."

"Why not?!"

"Sir, don't ask me. You're the president!"

"We'll see about this!"

He picked up the phone to call the Minister of National Security. I winced. The man was a friend of mine. He, too, knew there wasn't a plan. We had talked about it endlessly. Yet every time he tried to come up with one, he found himself blocked.

Finally, in one of his more desperate moods, he asked me to write one. At first, I begged off, pointing out that it was their war and that there were innumerable Sri

Lankan officers who could do the same thing. I had even seen marvelously complete, simple and elegant, documents sent up the chain of command anonymously by frustrated junior officers. Still, it was obvious that there was glue in the works somewhere, that a Sri Lankan officer would never have been given the chore of formulating an overall plan.

Systemic gridlock had set in. When the Tamil insurgency exploded full-force in the aftermath of the bloody communal riots of July 1983, the security forces were sent to deal with the problem. Conducting military operations in a vacuum, without



**TOP: Life goes on under the watchful and competent eye of the Sri Lankan military. Author noted that indigenous security forces — as opposed to outside assistance (such as Americans in Vietnam) — were able to immediately defuse tense situations because they can talk with the people.**

**ABOVE: Sri Lankan soldiers retire from an operation. They may be professionals who can hold the line, but if they are to retire for good there are political and social problems feeding the fires of insurgency which must be corrected.**

accompanying socio-economic-political reforms, they floundered. No one seemed to have any concept of what the troops were being deployed to do, save to bash

heads. And that doesn't work in dealing with an insurgency.

By the time I had my talk with the Minister, the situation was very bleak. Large areas of the Tamil-populated north and east were in guerrilla hands, and a looming insurgent offensive appeared to threaten the government stronghold which prevented the two guerrilla-held areas from linking up. That stronghold was the superb port of Trincomalee, the former British headquarters for the entire region during World War II.

The moment was critical. Thus I stayed up all one night — he wanted the plan the next day — and wrote the thing. It was 10 pages of scrawl on a yellow legal pad. Nothing fancy: analyze the situation; establish priorities; apply the resources. In substance it reiterated what many of his army officers had been saying. But a prophet hath no honor in his own country, so this same advice reiterated by a so-called outside "expert" gave these proposals added weight.

In short, the minister actually did have a "plan" of sorts in his files. But it wasn't one anyone was following; and a phone call in the middle of the night from the President asking, "What in hell is going on?" is not what is needed to end a busy day. Mercifully, the Minister was out.

At least that's what I thought at the time: oh thank goodness, he's not home. In retrospect, perhaps it would have been better had he been there, as a confrontation might have had a catalytic effect.

The President returned to his chair.

"You know, I have a real problem here. We're politicians. We don't know about these military things. Yet look what we're stuck with. We have the only Sandhurst-trained military in Asia which has shown itself completely incapable of doing anything. All over the world there are Sandhurst graduates deposing governments. But the one time our military tries it, they fail. They couldn't even overthrow us! And now I need them to fight a war, and what have I got...?"

We both laughed at the absurdity of it. He was referring to the abortive 1962 coup attempt by disgruntled officers of the small Sri Lankan army. It had collapsed amidst Keystone Cop-like bungling.

I protested that he was selling his military short, that there were plenty of people who could analyze the situation and deal with it. Why, I knew of any number

"Echo?" he asked.

Instantly I was on my guard. It's a simple rule — never give names if you want to keep your sources.

"This is a plan done by one of your general officers," I replied, drawing from my bag a photocopy of some sketches. "He doesn't know I have it. It only deals with the defense of Trincomalee, but it's sound. Further, it makes clear that you do have people who know how to do these things."

He asked the name of the author. I took a gamble and told him, for the man had a better grasp of counterinsurgency than any other senior Sri Lankan officer with whom I had dealt. I found out later that the general, in fact, subsequently was offered the command of the Trincomalee sector. He declined, for reasons which were logical and cogent, setting forth an alternative means by which he could accomplish the same ends.

That was a mistake. Logic and cogency were not the weapons to use in Sri Lanka's bureaucratic wars. He should have taken the assignment, then fought from within. The moment passed.

But all that happened later. For the moment I was dealing with "the Man." He asked me when I was catching my flight out (it was the next day) and if I couldn't delay my departure (I couldn't; I had to go get fired from the job I was working).

"But after you've been fired, can you come back," he chuckled. I said I could.

"When would you like to see me?" I asked.

He spread his hands and smiled, "I'm always here."

"Well, those are the burdens of being President. Someone has to be in charge."

Again we laughed. He held my arm as we walked towards the door. The stage seemed set. He called for an assistant and issued a series of orders he wanted carried out as a result of our conversation, requests for information and so forth. He also issued instructions for my return.

My companion and I left, got around the corner, then nearly hugged each other. We had made the breakthrough! Now we'd get some direction. "The Man" was taking charge!

I flew back to Hong Kong, was fired, then waited. The weeks rolled by. Nothing happened. I put in a few calls. There has been a glitch, I was told. In the end,

nothing changed. The war went on, growing ever larger. India intervened on the side of the Tamils; insurgency flared in the Sinhalese-majority south. Killings reached a thousand a month. During one mind-boggling five-week period they hit a thousand a week, all in a country of 16 million — the size of Ireland!

I did get back but not for anything "real." Time and again I was out in the bush. Three years after my late-night meeting, the advisers to the new president asked me again to write up a plan. I scribbled down an abbreviated version of the earlier document based on the new set of socio-economic-political circumstances. I never heard back. Older and wiser, I wasn't

injustices or the perception of it; political action must be taken to end the crisis. Security force operations are necessary components of any counterinsurgency campaign, but they will have effect only if carried out within a context of political action.

Why is that so difficult to put across? Because, in so doing, you're messing with people's games, with their action. What exists benefits some, marginalizes others. Along comes the adviser with his solution. It may make perfect sense, but if those who have all the marbles can keep you from taking them away, they're going to do it. That's Sri Lanka in a nutshell.

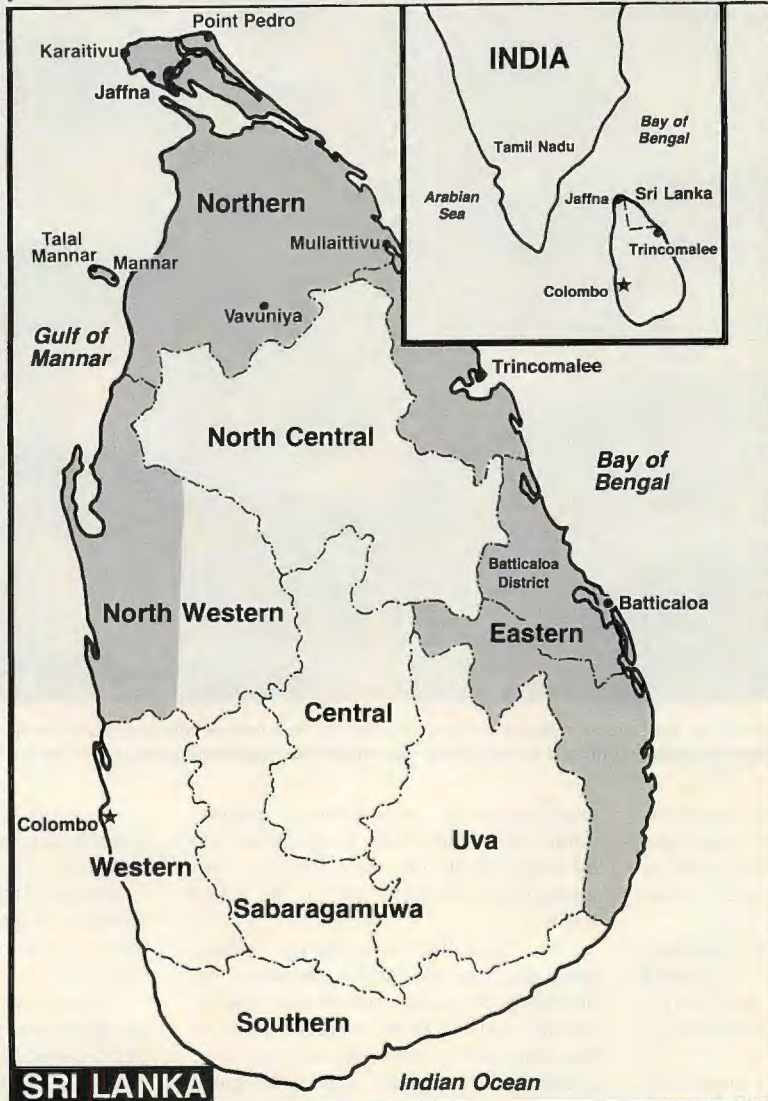
At the time I talked to the president, Sri

Lanka's strategic problem wasn't particularly difficult to figure out: a 13 million majority, the Sinhalese, had driven the three million minority, the Tamils, to the ropes. Put in a corner, the Tamils hit back.

In drafting a plan explaining what to do, I simply looked at the grievances which existed: Sinhalese replaced English as the national language and was made a requirement for government employment (thus, few Tamils could work in the most lucrative sector of the economy); university admissions had switched to district admissions rather than order-of-merit (since Tamils lived in very localized areas, they were demographically prevented from competing to fill most vacancies); Buddhism was made the national religion (most Tamils are Hindu); and on and on. Not all the grievances were valid. But the main ones were. That the majority had adopted its discriminatory practices stemmed

from the Sinhalese perception that, under the British colonial government, the Tamils had been disproportionately favored. Once in charge of their own country again, the Sinhalese had instituted their own version of "affirmative action."

What gave these steps a pointed edge was the limited nature of the economy. Post-independence socialist solutions caused economic chaos, thus greatly reducing available employment and avenues for upward social mobility.



Shaded areas show land claimed by insurgents.

surprised.

#### Revolutionary War Basics

Revolutionary war is political. The easiest definition of politics is that it is "the business of deciding who gets what." Hence, the roots of insurgency rest, objectively, in the division of society's resources, and, subjectively, in the popular perception that the division is unfair. Political actions have created



As noted in last article, Marks found the Sri Lankan military to be motivated, fit, well-trained and moderately well-equipped. The missing number in the Sri Lankan equation is a political infrastructure which will address the legitimate grievances which feed the fire of insurgency.

Society, in other words, came to be seen as a zero-sum game: what I need, I must take from someone else. That someone else, as far as the Sinhalese masses were concerned, was the Tamil minority.

Ultimately, this outlook bred violence, violence which the authorities seemed either unable, or, more seriously, unwilling, to control. Tamil guerrilla bands were the predictable result.

Neither should it have been a surprise to the government that the leadership of those groups was communist. It's pretty much a standard sequence of events these days that those who seek to exploit the weaknesses of the status quo offer leftist solutions. One of the most fruitless debates which filled the corridors of power in Colombo was whether the guerrillas were "really" Marxist. Who cared? They said they were and they indoctrinated their troops accordingly. "Eel Am," or the independent Tamil state, was to be "socialist."

Of course, troops rarely believe the

claptrap they're fed by their superiors. Tamil foot soldiers were no exception. But they didn't call the shots, so the rebel leadership's ideology had to be taken seriously.

Once the ball of insurgency is rolling, however, this distinction between the motives of the leaders and the foot soldiers becomes crucial. In an insurgency most of the manpower is made up of "grievance guerrillas." Somebody raped the guy's sister, so he joined the insurgents. Somebody beat up his parents. Somebody offered him a chance to be somebody when he had nothing else going for him. He wants land. He wants an education. It follows, that the man can be reached by addressing such grievances.

Leadership, in contrast, is overwhelmingly motivated by ideology. The bosses give shape to their followers' grievances; they put them into context: That soldier who beat up your parents is a representative of a repressive capitalist state which behaves the way it does because

it serves the Western Imperialists. Now, let me tell you about imperialism ....

Rarely can such ideologues be converted. They must be neutralized, either through death or capture (the latter is preferred due to the information which results).

Elimination of grievances, then, drives a wedge between the guerrilla followers and their leaders. The catch is that people aren't fools. Reform must be genuine. And genuine reforms mess with peoples' games.

When Sri Lankans asked me for "a plan," what they had in mind was a military plan, something which would tell them what to do with their troops against the guerrillas. What I kept responding with was the reality that *what you should do with your troops is protect your reforms*. Yet your reforms can only come about through political decision-making. If no one will decide to do anything about the problems which have punched a hole in your boat, so to speak, your troops, in conducting operations, are doing nothing



**TOP RIGHT:** Two Buddhist monks discuss with local police chief their desire to be exempted from screening process. Earlier, the might have received a sympathetic ear, but insurgents have taken to dressing their men in saffron robes, which nicely hide an AK.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Cargoes in commercial vehicles are searched for weapons. An efficient military is now keeping the peace, hut earlier uprisings cost tens of thousands of lives in a country the size of Ireland. Author predicts the trouble will continue until social issues are addressed and corrected.

save attempting to bail out a perpetually leaky boat. Eventually, as the water continues to pour in, the soldiers will become exhausted. Someone has got to make permanent repairs to this ship of state. That someone is the politicians.

What happens when the politicians refuse to do so, when there is, if you will, an absence of politics? Visit Sri Lanka and you'll find out.

The bulk of my original 10-page document was devoted to outlining the reforms which had to be put in place. The remainder was a military campaign plan for systematic reclaiming of areas. It called for securing the most important areas in the Sinhalese heartland first, then using clearing operations in the Trincomalee area with a naval cordon to insure that the insurgency remained split in two (see map). Subsequently, the east (centered on Batticaloa) could be cleared, followed by

the north-central portion of the country (using operations pinching in from Mannar, in the west, and "Trinco" and Mullaittivu, in the east, towards Vavuniya, in the center). Finally, the insurgent heartland, Jaffna, would be taken by splitting the peninsula itself in two by targeting Point Pedro; the eastern portion of the peninsula would be captured to isolate Jaffna town; the town itself would be seized in urban fighting.

Not surprisingly, this is precisely what the Sri Lankans did. I rather doubt that they followed *my* plan per se, for the same approach was on the lips of many officers. One evening I queried a retired brigadier on what military approach he would adopt, and he had, without even stopping to think, outlined the same scheme of maneuver in less than five minutes at a map board. It really was the only logical course of action.

What was essential, however, was that

which I made clear in my pages: military operations were meaningless without accompanying political action. Since such action was never taken, India — the guerrillas' mentor (insurgent base areas were in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and the Tamils received many of their weapons and much of their guidance from Indian intelligence agencies) — was able to justify its summer 1987 intervention as "protecting" the rights of the Tamils. Once New Delhi entered the war, ostensibly on the side and at the invitation of Colombo, the entire nature of the conflict altered.

With military control of the north and east, the Indians conducted operations against the principal Tamil insurgent group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), because it refused to toe their line. Simultaneously, it set up and armed a quisling Tamil regional



government. Despite Sri Lankan demands, New Delhi refused to withdraw its forces so long as Colombo did not grant to this puppet Tamil state a requisite degree of "autonomy."

Even if this were all there was, the situation would be complicated enough. Strategic misapplication would simply have begat tragedy. More crucially, the Indian presence inflamed the nationalist passions of the Sinhalese majority in the south, where the once-moribund Marxist *Janatha Vimukthai Peramuna* (JVP or "People's Liberation Front") gained a new lease on life by portraying itself as an anti-foreign standard bearer. Since its

with an enormous MP (Member of Parliament) margin during 1970-77 despite losing the popular vote. Both parties have used this statistical gift to centralize decision making and authority, roundly abuse opposition voices, curb individual freedoms, and censor the media. Rules were even pushed through allowing the replacement, by party officials, of any MP who had the courage to criticize the party — this for MPs who, in any case, were not required to reside in the districts they represented.

Some two decades of such actions resulted, predictably, in a political system manned by individuals owing their

and privileges. Faced with a system unwilling to provide for their well-being or even to protect them, the conservative Tamil populace turned to the only viable option championing their interests, the Marxist guerrilla movements (the resistance was never a unified force).

Steadily escalating fiscal and manpower demands of the campaign to fight Tamil separatism further curtailed Colombo's human and economic development efforts. Yet, in another of Sri Lanka's many ironies, the Tamils earlier had become so prominent in business and government service precisely because of their need to escape the structural conditions which were different only in degree from those afflicting the Sinhalese majority. Tamil areas were the poorest of the island, with limited carrying capacity. Hence, migration to and employment in the larger Sri Lankan community were imperative. Driven back into itself, Tamil society had little choice but self-defense.

Similarly, the factors discussed above have driven the Sinhalese community to self-defense. Contrary to a view fashionable in many circles of the Colombo elite, the JVP has not caused the present insurgency. Neither can it even be said to be leading it: it is racing to keep up with it! What the JVP has demonstrated is a tactical sophistication which has allowed it to ride each wave of discontent as it has surfaced.

In this sense the JVP has learned a great deal from its earlier lack of success in 1971, when the insurgency briefly threatened the survival of the government only to collapse under crushing government blows as the guerrilla cause moved too far ahead of its popular base. The JVP has worked hard to avoid repeating this earlier error. Previously sympathetic to the Tamil cause, for instance, the movement flip-flopped and adopted a hardline pro-Sinhalese stand when it became clear that such was to its advantage.

This served it in good stead when the Indians entered the picture, because it allowed the party to wrap itself in the mantle of nationalism. Indeed, JVP documents say virtually nothing of its ideological stance (hardline Marxist), instead concentrating on the betrayal of the country by its rulers. It is but a logical next step to advance a simple connection: the same people who sold you out are responsible for the poor conditions of life in which you find yourselves. Yet this linkage is so far reserved for instructions to JVP cadres. It will be introduced to the masses only when the party feels it is safe to do so.

Predictably, a government which has steadily isolated itself from the people is not likely to recognize the root of its problems. As violence has steadily escalated, the administration has reacted in fumbling fashion. Security forces have been deployed, but because their presence does not protect socio-economic-political measures designed to deal with the structural basis for the problem, their

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**In the absence of politics — the resolving of grievances through political decision-making — there is nowhere else for popular discontent to go save the streets or the ranks of insurgents. Yet Colombo did not understand it then; it is doubtful if they understand it now.**

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unsuccessful attempt at insurgency in 1971, the JVP had been active but a spent force, all but ostracized for the 12,000-20,000 deaths and the suffering its earlier effort at insurrection had caused. Suddenly, it was again respectable. And as such, it could pretend to be many things to many people:

#### **Dark Side of Paradise**

Exploding nationalist passions exposed the dark side of what the world saw as an island paradise. Power grows from the barrel of a gun, opined Mao Tse-tung. And in the absence of functioning politics, he might have added, there is no recourse save the gun.

That much should have been clear to Sri Lankan decision-makers following the Tamil insurgency. In the absence of politics — the resolving of grievances through political decision-making — there is nowhere else for popular discontent to go save the streets or the ranks of insurgents. Yet Colombo did not understand it then; it is doubtful if they understand it now.

That politics could be assessed as dead in Sri Lanka seems a contradiction in a nation which since its independence in 1948 has maintained a functioning parliamentary democracy (it is now headed by a French-style president rather than a prime minister). But if politics may be further defined as shaping the human environment, Sri Lanka's system has been a failure — not just for the Tamils, but also for the Sinhalese. Behind the facade of democracy, successive governments have taken procedural steps that have severely restricted representation of the popular will.

Recent electoral mechanics have seen a nearly 50-50 split in the popular vote reflected in lopsided parliamentary majorities for either of Sri Lanka's major political parties, the United National Party (UNP), in power since 1977, or the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which ruled

allegiance not to their constituencies or higher principles but to their parties. Electoral corruption, intimidation, and manipulation of voting rules prevented popular discontent from fielding alternate representatives. Rather than see its four-fifths majority endangered in 1982 — a crucial level because it allowed the amending of the constitution at will — the UNP simply held a referendum to extend the life of the parliament another term. Though it won the vote, the narrow margin of victory reflected the true polarization of the electorate.

Fueling popular resentment was the increasing isolation of the government bureaucracy from the population. Without the political system acting as overseer (it was too busy looking after its members' own needs), the permanent cadre in government positions turned to their own concerns. Corruption reached monumental proportions even as basic services deteriorated island-wide.

The worsening lives of the people escaped notice in many quarters, foreign and domestic. Progress in economic macro-indicators served to conceal serious problems in the micro-world of Sri Lanka's majority: problems of health, nutrition, livelihood and opportunities for advancement. Large segments of the population had limited access to health care, malnutrition was widespread, un- and underemployed were rampant. Educational attainment frequently proved a dead end due to the unavailability of suitable employment.

Discriminatory legislation and regular episodes of anti-Tamil rioting, culminating in the nationwide explosion of July 1983, were passed off by the world as communal conflict. Actually, as noted earlier, they reflected attempts by the Sinhalese majority to claim from the successful Tamils their slice of what increasingly was viewed as a zero-sum distribution of rights, resources

activities can only place a temporary damper on the violence.

In their rear the insurgency gains strength. Whole areas of the country have effectively become “no-go” areas after dark, and urban unrest has grown dramatically. Anonymous “struggle committees” now function in virtually all businesses and close them down at will simply by posting notices instructing work to cease lest reprisals be taken. By murdering prominent examples of those who do not comply with their demands, the insurgents have gained authority far beyond their numbers. Consequently, sources state, the industrial sector is functioning at what appears to be merely 20 percent capacity.

Such economic paralysis, in turn, feeds the JVP cause. Already, many businesses report they are unable to meet their loan and tax obligations. They had concentrated only on at least paying their workers. As this, too, becomes impossible, the ranks of the unemployed will provide fertile ground for JVP recruiters.

#### First Priority — A Plan

There is a recognition of these realities in some quarters, though in not nearly enough. For most it is business as usual. In this regard, a confrontation between the president and his minister during our much earlier conversation might then have been the best thing for the country. At least it would have forced the issue of “no plan” onto the table. At this writing there remains no such document, written or unwritten. Neither at this point in time does there seem to be an appreciation of the essential nature of moving the counterinsurgency out of the realm of the ad hoc.

“There is no plan for dealing with this situation,” says a leading adviser to the president himself. “You can’t just think the Indians going home will solve matters. But the system is incapable of recognizing the structural/systemic nature of the problem. They (government officials) continue to feel that all is fine. Most alarmingly, they cannot even see the decline in the economy.”

Echoes one of Sri Lanka’s highest-ranking military officers, “They (the government) must understand clearly that the military is but a facet of the solution, that the essential thrust must be political/socio-economic.”

Remarkably, in pursuing this point, it would be noted that Sri Lanka has one of the most highly developed statistical bases of any Third World country. Hence, there is more than enough data around to define the nature of societal problems. Further, there are numerous think tanks which have been doing just that for years — and offering viable solutions. What clearly is lacking is the political will to force through the solutions.

“We had great hopes when (Ranasinghe) Premedasa became president,” says



**TOP:** Police make up the bulk of Sri Lankan armed forces. Incidents of corruption and brutality have sullied their reputation, but most are solid.

**CENTER:** An anxious family waits at the gate of a screening compound for a detainee. Most screened out are released within a matter of hours; those with serious explaining to do are passed on to police after being questioned by army and national intelligence people.

**BOTTOM:** Sri Lankan troops on a cordon-and-search operation in a rural area. The countryside is more easily managed, and once the military has established a presence and illustrated to the locals that they will be even-handed, they usually enjoy good support and more volunteer intelligence than they know what to do with. Although classified as a “rural” nation, the urban areas of Sri Lanka, beset with the same socio-economic problems, require the same stabilizing influence of the military as does the countryside.

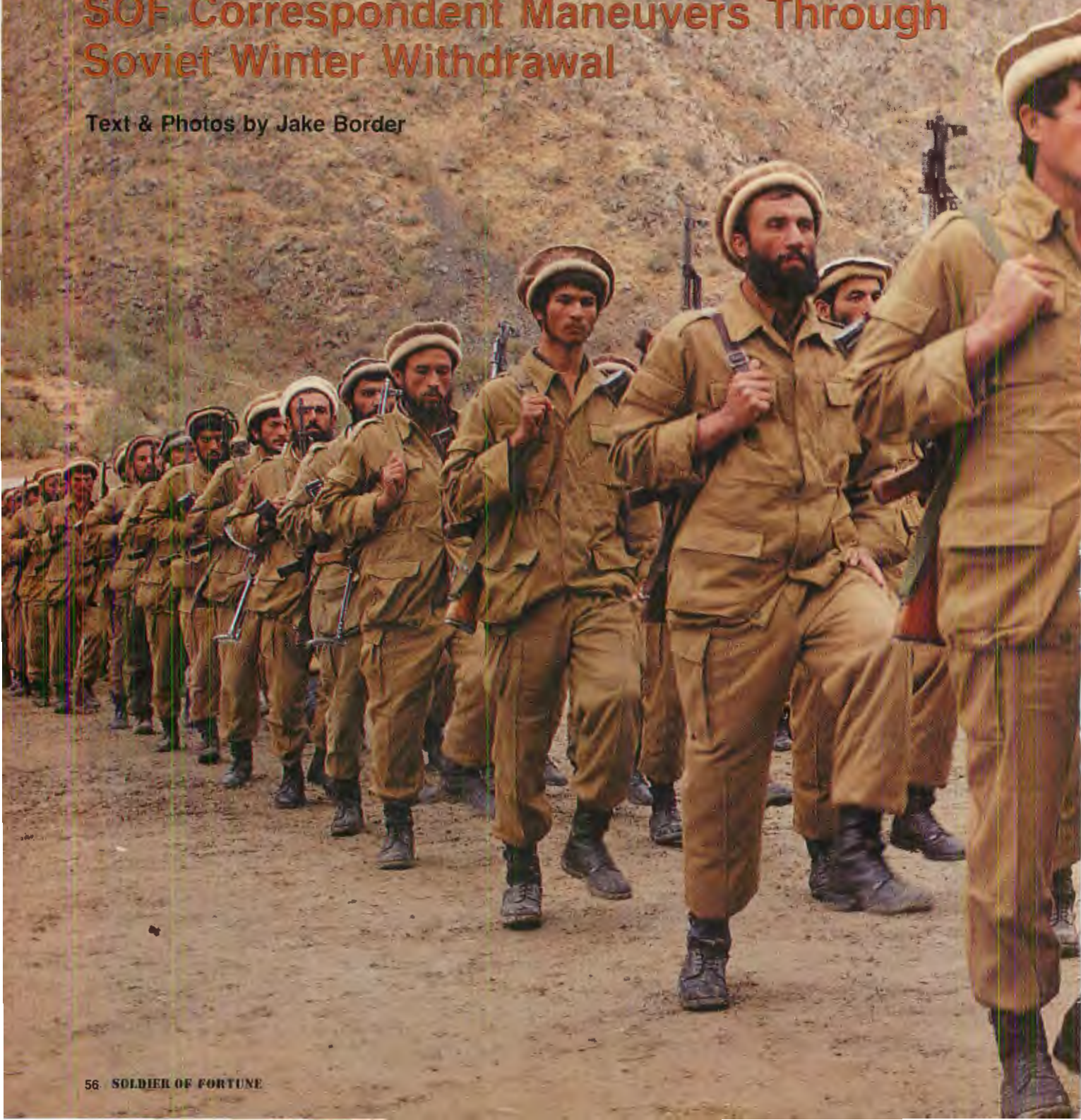
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**SOF ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

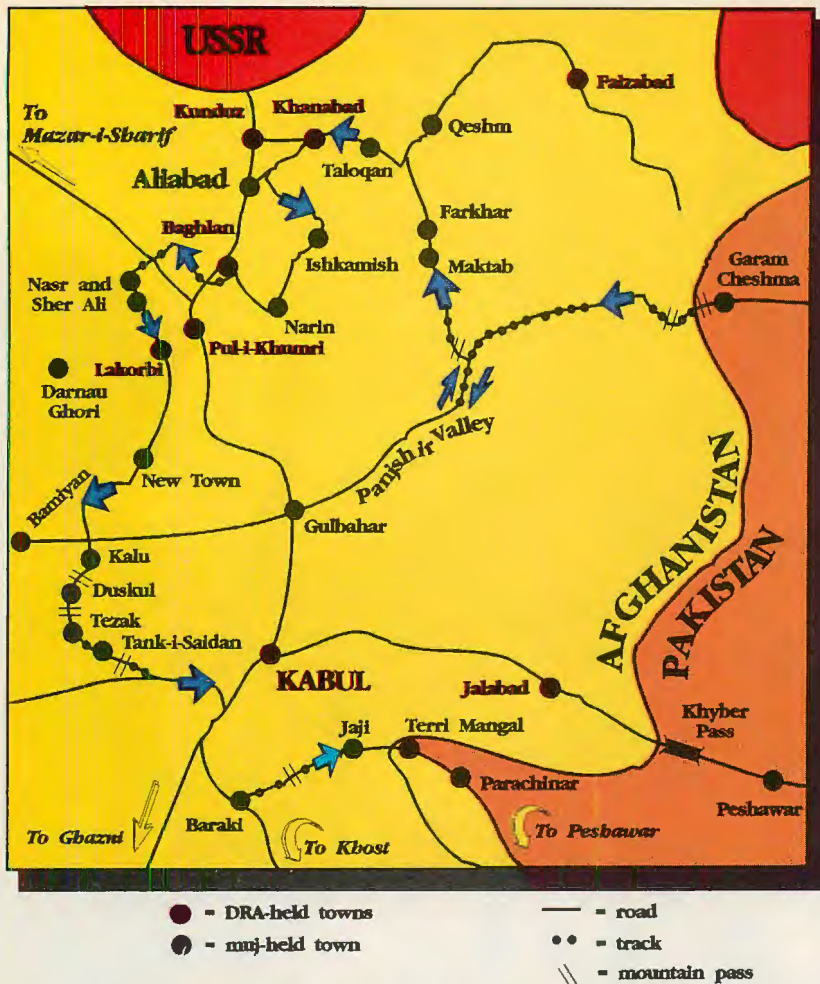
# AFGHAN WALKABOUT

**SOF Correspondent Maneuvers Through  
Soviet Winter Withdrawal**

Text & Photos by Jake Border







Route followed by Jake Border in his three-month journey throughout eastern Afghanistan. His trek from Garam Cheshma to Taloqan is detailed in "Bagh-i-Zaqira Garden Party" (December '89). This story follows his roundabout winter passage from Taloqan around Kabul and back to Peshawar, Pakistan.



Ex-Soviet post south of Kunduz. Muj rests next to APFSDS tank shell.

## BORDER ON THE BORDER

Jake Border, who turns up all over the near and far east, is a frequent SOF contributor who has recently spent many months trekking around Afghanistan. For more on Jake's most recent adventures with the mujahideen, see "Bagh-i-Zaqira Garden Party," December '89 and "Bizarre Bazaar," January '90.

As the late afternoon sun crept through the conifers that ringed the park Afghan King Zahir Shah had built to relax in after his hunting forays into the surrounding mountains, the mujahideen kicked a football around chasing goals using techniques that were light on skill but loaded with enthusiasm.

I jumped off the truck I'd hitched a ride on from Taloqan city to join them as they trooped off the playing field at game's end, meeting my friends Commander Muslim of the Central Units and his bodyguard Islamuddin, an ex-Soviet army conscript captured by Jamiat-i-Islami at Bagram airbase. Islamuddin was one of seven former Red Army soldiers I had met on this trip, all of whom had converted to Islam and never wanted to return to the USSR.

We'd just settled down inside their billet, and were in the process of demolishing a magnificent specimen of that truly delicious wonder of Afghan agriculture, the melon, when — CRASH!

We were on the deck as the shock wave buffeted the room, then up and running in a mad dash to the bomb shelter dug deep in the mountainside. The jets made more passes, terrific blasts thundered above us and the granite walls of the tunnel shook like vibrating strands of rubber.

The first wounded was carried in drenched in blood and deep in shock although in fact he had only received a small splinter in his upper arm. Commander Muslim had sent him up the road to fetch our evening dinner from the cookhouse of the *maktab* or military training school that Ahmad Shah Massoud had set up here to train Jamiat's incipient Islamic Army of Afghanistan.

We never did get any rice that evening — the cookhouse had taken a direct hit, being totally demolished along with the mess hall. Miraculously the adjacent bakehouse was untouched although the bomb blast had wrenched off the wooden door drawing 6-inch nails out of the hinges like a giant claw hammer.

This jet strike was the culmination of an all day operation against the *Shura-i-Nazar* or Supervisory Council of the North — the Jamiat governing body of liberated areas — based in the Varsaj Valley southeast of Taloqan.

Sixty four bombs were dropped that day, although most were from high altitude so casualties were light. Turan Hussain, a defected Afghan jet pilot who had been trained in Soviet Kazakhstan, identified the raiders as Su-22s originating in the USSR. Where were the Stingers? Answer (later confirmed by Massoud): they were not effective. Apparently many suffered defects (whether from manufacture, transportation or storage) in the guidance system.

Waiting for Commander Massoud to arrive from his lair in the Piu Valley, which was also bombed, I observed the training program for the raw recruits in his new Islamic army. The latest batch, about 50, came from Samangan Province and the dis-

trict of Rustak north of Taloqan.

At this time of the year they were up by 0530 hours and following morning prayers spent 30-40 minutes in Koranic study. Then it was 45 minutes of physical education before breakfast. The trainees jogged from the maktab to the sports ground where a broken-nosed instructor ran them through calisthenics and the rudiments of boxing. Central Units' muj trained by themselves, hammering each other in the boxing ring, working out on parallel bars or refining martial arts techniques. They were good.

The rest of the morning was spent in military training — drilling, small arms and heavy weapons. In addition to being proficient with their Kalashnikov assault rifles, Massoud's mujahideen are trained to handle the favored 7.62mm PK light machine gun, the 40mm RPG-7, the 82mm mortar and the 82mm recoilless rifle.

Most of the instructors had received their basic training at special camps in Pakistan. I watched as Zohbet Abdul Hai rapidly detailed the procedure of optical sighting on the mortar. "Do you understand?" followed each staccato delivery. Dull nods. I doubted it myself. But Abdul Hai had done it all before. In a trice he hauled one poor bugger out of the ranks and ordered him to repeat the demonstration. That seemed to sharpen attention. He repeated it all again.

After lunch it was into the classroom where the recruits sat, not crosslegged on the floor but on individual chairs with tables. With the aid of a blackboard instructors teach the history of the Afghan resistance struggle, political indoctrination and military "stratageki" and "taktik." Questions are expected from the class.

Most groups spend 30 days training before returning to their home bases. Eventually they will be dressed in the uniform of the Islamic army: beret, boots, and cammies based on the U.S. Army BDU. Each of the men in the initial 9,600-strong army will carry an AK-47, 300 rounds of ammo, two grenades and a bayonet in addition to his pack, sleeping bag and a spare change of Afghan clothes. Officers will in the main be drawn from the Central Units' forces.

Massoud arrived from Piu to disappear into private conference "with an important visitor from Kabul." What was discussed? Who knows? The talks were secret, but with the Russians leaving in two months perhaps some Afghans were re-appraising their allegiance. In any event, Massoud's aides spoke openly of Kabul not falling from a frontal military assault, but from an inside coup.

Massoud gave me a "letter of the road" by way of introduction to groups I might encounter on my way, and recommended that I get the same from other political parties. Never in one place for more than one night, Massoud was on the move again.

So was I. For three months I'd been tramping around the Panjshir Valley, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Tarkhar provinces in the north of Afghanistan, and now I was cut off from Pakistan by the winter snows. The return route I chose back to

civilization was long and circuitous but guaranteed me, so I had been told, transportation out.

It was all very straightforward in the telling. Local transportation to Baghlan city, from where muj would guide me across the Soviet-Afghan army-patrolled Salang to Mazar-i-Sharif highway, and then muj munitions truck all the way to the border. A matter of days. A piece of piss. How wrong could you be?

Nevertheless I confidently said my farewells in Taloqan and pushed off on the first leg to Khanabad. Having missed the regular Mercedes-Benz bus service I was obliged to jam into a private pickup which was heading to Kunduz city. Close enough.

The trip from Taloqan to Khanabad takes less than an hour since the road is asphalt and in near perfect condition. Exiting Taloqan we passed a cemetery with small red flags marking the graves of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) soldiers and

would gawk at me and murmur: "Shuravi" — Russian.

Khanabad was a city on the map but there was not much left of it on the ground. The substantial environs were reduced to rubble. Only the central bazaar was standing. From the upstairs floor of a kebab shop that advertised "ice-cream" in English on the front windows (the Russian-made machinery was still inside) I used to delight in watching the yellow and white taxis pull up at the main square and call for passengers.

"Kunduz, Kunduz!" they cried. I could scarcely believe it. Mujahideen-controlled Khanabad was linked by a 50-cent public service to DRA-controlled Kunduz; two inimical adversaries co-existing in a communion of convenience. There were no roadblocks or checkpoints on entering Khanabad; the opposition could have and probably did send in Khad agents to freely snoop around.

Kunduz was different. One day we had



**Khanabad Commander Gholi Mali says his prayers alongside two Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.**

then Bagh-i-Zaqira, the DRA stronghold still holding out against the muj siege that I'd witnessed for the first two weeks. Here the muj who had hitched rides stashed their guns out of sight as the communists could fire on this section of the road at will.

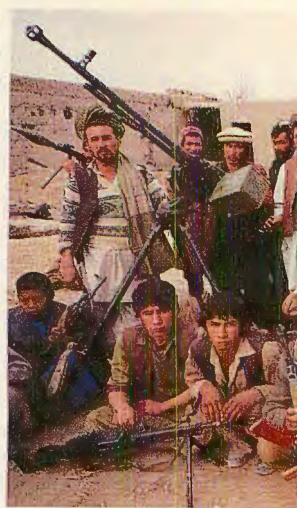
About midway between Taloqan and Kunduz there is a turnoff which leads to Khanabad. I got down there and paid the fare — 150 Afghanis (about U.S. \$.75). Across the road was the site of an evacuated Soviet tank base which I'd explored on an earlier visit, turning up some tasty canned beetroot, fish and potatoes, and among all the discarded and sophisticated ordnance, a hand-loaded .577 Snider round in brass cartridge case.

I had first arrived in Khanabad about two months previously and spent two weeks there and around the DRA-garrisoned city of Kunduz. At that time the muj said I was the first Western journalist to arrive since the Soviet pullout 60 days before. The Ivans had made an impression in Khanabad. In a bombed out school I discovered Russian lessons still written on a blackboard and as I walked through the bazaar the children

cruised in the direction of that city in a battered old Volga sedan without brakes and had been obliged to stop 10 klicks short because army checkpoints blocked the way. Kunduz airport was clearly visible however and we were in time to witness two Mi-8 choppers low level flying and landing near the control tower.

Part of the Khanabad Khad complex had been sequestered by Jamiat Commander Gholi Mali for his men but he himself was not present when I rolled in after walking up from the turn-off. He was probably overseeing his land holdings around Kunduz where several weeks back a multi-party push against the city stalled even before all the muj groups had assembled for the attack.

That had been a balls-up typical of Jalalabad. Lack of coordination. As I understood it two main DRA bases of *kandak* strength (about 300 men each) were to have come



under simultaneous attack. Instead Mahazi-Milli (or NIFA) made a pre-emptive attack, lost a number of men, then pulled out. Meanwhile our group was floundering around with Stingers providing an air defense against an objective not yet under fire because the Jamiat commanders hadn't held their war council yet.

Anyway the Jamiat Amir of Kunduz Province, Kori Rahmatullah, happened to be visiting Ghola Mali. A Koori is someone very learned in the Holy Koran, who can quote long passages from memory. We had met several times and he had escorted me on a trip to Aliabad district just south of Kunduz airport.

On that trip the Afghan driver of the captured Russian Gaz truck astonished me by asking: "Do you have a wife in Moscow?" Afghan ignorance of the outside world can be appalling but this verged on lunacy. Still, I had seen German license plates on a Russian taxi in Khananbad. . .

We stayed with Commander Panji in the village of Madrassa on the Kunduz-Baghlan highway. The giant electricity pylons without their cables looked like mechanical monsters marching alongside the road. Off to their right were a string of DRA military posts overlooking the highway and one abandoned Soviet observation post which we were able to investigate.

This post was surrounded by a 2-meter-wide minefield and barbed wire perimeter, with most of the anti-personnel trip-mines still strung together in pairs. Inside the barracks were many discarded letters from families and lovers in the Soviet Union. One letter actually began in English: "My dear Sasha, how are you getting on?" Also there was a poster showing departing Russians receiving flowers from tearful Afghans. The Farsi inscription read: "Goodbye Dear Friends."

Next morning we waited on the asphalt highway in the shade of giant mulberry trees

which line the way. I was surprised by the volume of civilian traffic. We hitched a ride in a Mercedes-Benz bus which was on its way to Kunduz from Kabul, but we had the driver let us down at a place called Angur Bagh just opposite the Kunduz radar station.

The passengers on the bus — especially children — had gaped at me in bewilderment. If there was a Khad agent on board as rumored he would have had an interesting report to file in Kunduz. At Angur Bagh it was my turn to gape — we got down from the bus 200 meters away from a Sarandoy checkpoint. They seemed to be building new bunkers; a truck arrived from the airport with supplies while a BRDM scout car was parked under a tree.

Fascinating stuff. Then 100 meters in front of me two soldiers in black uniforms wearing tank helmets emerged from the tree line. They carried AKs and seemed at ease as they casually waved down trucks and vans and opened back doors or peered under tarpaulins to ex-



**ABOVE:** At town of Lakorbi, Jaglan Seraj-AI Haq of pro-DRA militia mans 12.7mm DShK HMG.

**LEFT INSET:** Sher Ali (second right), renowned buzkashi player, and men with 75mm recoilless rifle.

**RIGHT INSET:** NASR (Shi'ite) mujahideen group. Gholi Mali (in green, immediately to the right of the DShK) was just released from Soviet jail.

amine the vehicle's load. Meanwhile, totally oblivious to all this, the muj sat around eating kebabs and drinking tea.

A pistol shot could have dropped these two. Why didn't the muj open up on them, you wonder? The usual story — for fear of civilian casualties in reprisal bombardments.

But now it was time to press on to Ishkamish and Kori Rahmatullah sent a muj with me to the Khanabad bazaar to help find

transport. We located a Zil truck which was mostly full of women so I was put in the front cabin with the driver. Others clutched onto the running boards — like the man and boy who shared a wad of chewing gum between them — or perched on the front fender.

The road from Khanabad to Ishkamish was a gravel track at best, a river bed at worst. That left little room for comfort or speed but at least I had a firm seat — the Afghan on the right front fender was tossed clear during one altercation with a giant pothole. Later that afternoon we stopped for prayers and then crawled over a small mountain pass. Then we stopped again to top up fuel.

Walking up the hill toward us came a squad of fully armed mujahideen, who had appeared out of nowhere. They marched past the truck then turned their guns on us and demanded money from the driver. I was staggered. The passengers were apprehensive. The gunmen waited; the driver was cool. Perhaps he'd dealt with this situation before.

Refusing to be intimidated, he outright refused to pay. "These are poor passengers," he said with finality. Incredibly the would-be highwaymen backed down without taking a penny. "They call themselves Jamiat," he said in answer to my question, "but they are just thieves." Later I was told that this group had formerly been Afghan government militia that had surrendered to the Jamiat and now, at least in name, they were muj too.

One of Commander Muslim's Central Units men had given me a letter of introduction to his brother in Ishkamish and there I stayed. Since 1983 Ishkamish has been free of Soviet or DRA military outposts, and by 1985 the muj had taken over the town. All seven muj parties are present there but the Jamiat and Hekmatyar's Hezbi groups dominate, with Hezbi controlling the main bazaar.

Ishkamish is an important trading center in the north — for arms. Here you can buy or sell any guns ranging from hunting rifles to sophisticated war weapons. This is a lucrative albeit sensitive business, as I was to discover. Formerly all parties were involved in this free trade but today some leaders have banned the sale of their own group's weapons, although members are still allowed to operate shops in the bazaar, buying and selling from others.

Here is a stock list with prices. The weapon in most demand is the Soviet-made AK-47/AKM and prices vary according to age: about 100,000 afghanis (\$1 U.S. = 200 afghanis, or about \$500) used (less for folding stock) and 120,000-180,000 (\$600-900) afghanis new. Chinese-made Kalashnikovs even in new condition are less favored than the reportedly "better-made" Soviet models. They sell for 100,000-200,000 afghanis new (\$500-600).

The much rarer 5.45mm AK-74, the so-called Kalakov, fetches double the going AK rate when available and the miniatur-

ized AKR version called the Krinkov is most prized at three times the cost of an AK-47.

However, the most common weapon I saw was the World War II-vintage PPSH-41 "burp gun" selling for a mere 9,000 afghanis (\$45). Another Russian relic there was the bipod mounted DP LMG at 50,000-60,000 afghanis (\$250-300). The modern squad gun equivalent, the 7.62mm PK GMPG often referred to as "the best Russian machine gun in Afghanistan" by the muj, can fetch as much as 2 million afghanis (\$10,000) if offered. I saw none.

Many RPG-7 rockets were available but launchers were rare and expensive — 250,000 afghanis (\$1,250). Soviet hand grenades were common (type F-1, 500 afghanis (\$2.50); RGD-5, 400 afghanis (\$2.00), as were antipersonnel mines (400 afghanis, \$2.00). Antitank mines cost only 800 afghanis (\$4.00).

There was no shortage of Chinese or Russian-made 82mm recoilless rifle ammo (1,800 afghanis, \$9.00) but no launchers. Two models of Soviet pistols were common: the army-issue 9mm Makarov (90,000 afghanis, \$450) and the Tokarev (80,000 afghanis, \$400), cheaper because ammo is harder to find for the latter.

Among the oddities were Egyptian-made bayonets (1,400 afghanis, \$7.00), English-made .303 Lee Enfield rifles (16,000 afghanis, \$80), and the 64mm RPG-18, the Soviet equivalent of the U.S. Army M72 LAW rocket, in a fiber-glass launcher (500,000 afghanis, \$2,500).

Naturally I was having a ball rummaging around the stalls but some of the muj were getting testy about my taking photographs. There might have been two reasons for that. First the moral question of muj selling arms intended for the resistance struggle; and second, what use has a civilian for grenades or an assault rifle?

In answer to the first point, the muj and shopkeepers (often one and the same) insisted that all material sold in Ishkamish derives not from aid shipments but is stock captured from the Russians and the DRA — only supplies in excess of their current needs are sold to raise cash to meet the day-to-day running expenses of the group. Using the rule of thumb that Chinese-made weapons represent aid sent via Pakistan, then I can say that in the main Ishkamish is selling captured stock as claimed.

As for the future of Afghanistan it is true that many a family feud could be settled with weapons purchased here as no credentials other than cash are needed in order to buy. Indeed, any aspiring warlord rich enough could equip a band of thugs with quite an awesome arsenal from Ishkamish and present a credible challenge to law and order agencies anywhere.

Ironically Ishkamish also acts as an arms bazaar for those mujahideen groups who, due to an irksome rationing of supplies from Pakistan, cannot maintain stocks. Furthermore, the fact is that traditionally Afghans and guns have always been inseparable, and



whereas in the past a man may have been satisfied with a rifle he now wants a machine gun. Ishkamish provides it.

Local Afghan authorities were not immune to these criticisms, as I experienced later that day. I was sipping green tea in a stall after purchasing three Russian bayonets for souvenirs when a Hezb patrol descended on us and brusquely demanded that I get up and go with them.

I was alone — my host was elsewhere in the bazaar — and had no one to appeal to for support. Technically I may have been a guest in the stall but no one was standing on ceremony when guns were being waved about. I was definitely uneasy; Western journalists incurring the wrath of the muj had already been murdered in Afghanistan.

I was taken by the arm and escorted out of town to a Hezb post where I waited with some guards while others conferred inside. The guards made no secret of the fact that they hoped for a shooting party though they may have been seeking amusement at my expected discomfort. I endeavored to give them no satisfaction but made preparations for the worst: in my jacket pocket I had a fragmentation grenade I'd bought in Khanabad as a contingency against just such a fuck up as this. I wasn't being histrionic either — that sucker was fused and I was ready to use it if necessary.

Inside I began a palaver with the commander who, to his credit, was just a little more genuinely curious about me than he was interrogative. However I still had to answer why I took an interest in the gun sales and why the photos? I stuck to Afghan etiquette, was polite, and struggled to maintain linguistic fluency, but the upshot of it all was that I should now consider myself a "guest" there for the night. No way. I argued that I was already a guest elsewhere but my protest was casually ignored.

I played my last card. Following Masoud's advice I had taken the precaution of getting a "letter of the road" from Said Jamal, the top Hezb commander from Taloqan city. That, plus the fact that I had seen action with Hezb muj, swung the case in my favor. The commander relaxed and personally poured my tea, a signal to the others that the traditional Afghan grilling could begin. Soon we were mates and they were back on the offensive again — about prayers!

The commander still insisted that I stay but allowed me the privilege of refusing — I had a ride to catch to Narin the next morning. Armed with a letter of introduction to the Amir of Narin, Abdul Hai, I set off in a Russian van with a bunch of Afghan civilians.

South of Ishkamish local commanders of both Hezb and Jamiat mujahideen stopped the van and demanded small payments of money — "road tax" — merely enough for a meal of kebabs and tea, barely extortion at all, but our driver balked at handing over his keys.

The Hezb commander at this checkpoint explained with plausible justification that the van was urgently needed to transport a wounded member of his group to hospital.

We could have the van back "in half an hour." The driver wasn't buying it.

"I have to transport this important foreigner (me!) to meet your senior commander," he bluffed. "Wait for another car, one follows behind."

Torn between conflicting loyalties the commander hesitated, then capitulated. Our driver explained that he was not callous but cautious. "They were lying," he said. "If I gave them my car they would disappear for several days. Perhaps my car would disappear too!"

We arrived in Narin without further mishap and I paid the fare, found a shop run by Abdul Hai's men, was fed lunch and spent



Ishkamish arms bazaar has RPG-18 for sale, as well as AK-47s and cases of ammo.

the rest of the day drinking tea before being ushered to his camp. The Amir was out but I was fed again and bunked down for the night in a warm room.

0530 hours — still the middle of the night by my reckoning — and one idiot has not only lit the lantern but has his radio on full blast. I ask him to turn it down. "It's day-break — time for prayers!" he replied, spiking my guns. The fact that neither he nor any others had started praying didn't mean diddly squat. He was up, and wanted the radio on. Another arsehole!

I was up at 0730. Breakfast finally came by 0930. The day was saved by the announcement that "my friend" had ar-

rived. Turned out to be Pierre, a photographer, a Frog, but a good man. Pierre, a well-experienced Afghan hand, had traveled on horseback all the way from Badakhshan unaware that road transport was available in these parts now.

The sole mujahideen occupants of Narin were Jamiat-i-Islami who had been there since its liberation in 1983. Pierre and I wandered the extensive bazaar where every kind of consumer goods were available with one exception — cigarettes! As he had done in the Panjshir Valley, Massoud had banned their sale here.

All this abundance in the hands of the mujahideen ironically came via the Soviet Union and was a fraction of the price of the same goods sold by the DRA in Kabul. For example: Wheat flour 250 Afs (\$1.25) a seer (7kg unit) in Narin, 600 Afs (\$3.00) in Kabul; rice 700/1300 Afs a seer; cooking oil 5500/7000 Afs big tin; sugar 110/145 Afs a kilogram.

Amir Abdul Hai arrived that day with Commander Arianpour and Mullah Shams, Jamiat commander of Baghlan city. This was a stroke of luck as Shams, my contact in Baghlan, was (*insha'allah* - God willing) returning home in the afternoon. Well, either by will of God or through mismanagement, no transport could be found, so it was: "We go tomorrow — *insha'allah*."

I joined Pierre as he waited patiently to interview Arianpour and Abdul Hai. Their bodyguards, lounging aimlessly, took us for amusement bait and began pestering. We'd both had a gutful of this behavior. Pierre exploded with a marvelous salvo of choice Gallic epithets. One fool persisted in pretending that he could speak English, and that he had even been to Japan, so I set him up by asking if he had bent over for the Japanese men. "Yes," came the expected reply in English, to which Pierre and I collapsed in raucous laughter, much to the devastation of the muj concerned. Many muj were vulnerable in this way, their tough exterior easily shattered exposing a brittle pride.

Pierre's plan was to cross into the Anderab Valley, on to the Panjshir Valley and then to Paghman on the outskirts of Kabul, so we farewelled at 1500 the next day when I pulled out with the Mullah Shams and his boys. We passed through Hezb turf without hassles and over a small pass on a dusty road that all but obscured the spectacular panorama.

By 1730 the city of Baghlan was in sight. At dusk we encountered tracer across our bow. We stopped. DRA? I queried. "No — Hezb," came the reply. No problem then, I probed. You have unity among the parties. "What unity," the muj snorted. "We fight!"

Baghlan city was in government hands but its three component parts — old city, new city and fabrique — were surrounded by Hezb under Amir Rasul and Jamiat under Mullah Shams. Hezb outnumbered Jamiat.

It took three hours from Narin to Shams' base at the fabrique as the new industrial quarter with geometric grid of interlinking



At the Ishkamish arms bazaar you can buy guns ranging from hunting rifles to sophisticated war weapons. Displayed here is a PPSH 41, on sale for about \$45.

roads is called. A Soviet-built sugar factory now stood idle there.

A generator provided light which illuminated the captured Russian world map on the wall. It was massive, and proved a valuable conversation prop. Seated around the room were some interesting men, including three Arabs and an ex-Saza commander of the fabrique bazaar, who had defected with 30 of his militiamen. A rather glum looking Tajik, he still shaved and sported a well-trimmed moustache.

The Arabs, two Algerians and a Palestinian had been four months in Baghlan and seemed to be on a religious crusade. Hamid, their spokesman due to some mutual fluency in French, harangued me at length about the coming Islamic revolution from which Afghanistan (admired for its defeat of the godless Russians) would be the springboard for the rest of the world. A new economic order would be established based on Islamic law . . . his fervid eyes told it all.

On a quiet morning I listened to the top ten of the hit parade of eight years ago on the BBC, then toured the area with Mullah Shams. The city was dominated by a DRA artillery base on a hilltop to the west where four 76mm field guns could be seen in profile.

The big guns pounded away for the rest of the day at the Hezb, who eventually took exception and began shooting up a government post in the old city. Soon the air was alive with the crackle of small-arms fire underscored by the resonant rattle of HMGs. A 14.5mm ZKU round landed in a field 50 meters from us and set fire to the grass, something I refused to believe until

the muj putting out the blaze dug out the still-hot round.

We were entertained that night by a video movie, a Hollywood production starring Anthony Quinn as Omar Mukhtar, a Libyan freedom fighter during Italy's conquest of that country in Mussolini's time. Apparently it was the first use of tanks and airplanes in desert warfare. The muj were enthralled and easily translated the good guys and bad guys into themselves and the Shuravi.

At 1630 the following day Mohammad Qadir and two of Shams' muj were guiding me under the noses of the 76mm field guns out of town. The next stage could be tricky — I had two government-patrolled highways to cross before reaching the truck depot that would be my jumping off point for a sprint to Pakistan. So I believed.

Out of sight of the enemy guns we climbed a valley which quickly became a defile. With no muj between us and the DRA posts it was an ideal spot for an ambush. What do we do if an army patrol is out? "We shoot." Quite. Night fell without incident and the muj busied themselves banging off tracer just for the hell of it. We reached the top of the pass. Way in the distance the lights of army posts were strung out along this section of the Salang to Soviet Union highway, and a large blaze indicated a successful ambush.

Below, in darkness, was the road linking Baghlan with the Soviet garrison town of Pul-i-Khumri. We crossed in silence. Here the other two muj split and Qadir took me on to a safe house where we spent the night. A two-hour walk brought us to Hezb Commander Tor Haji Karim's camp. It was clean, and quiet — the commander and most of his men were away. While Qadir disappeared for shopping I crashed out. I was starting to get travel weary.

Qadir reappeared with his purchases: two Soviet F-1 frag grenades at 500 Afs (\$2.50) each and two 20-round boxes of the favored AK tracer ammo at 15 Afs a round. Soviet and Afghan soldiers would trade munitions for consumer goodies (food and drugs) with Afghan merchants who in turn would sell

the ammo to the muj.

We had lunch (rice, meat and carrots) with one of Tor's men who claimed responsibility for the ambush-fire we had seen the previous night. A brother had been married just two days before and naturally the conversation turned to sex: "Do you wash afterwards?" This is a ritual obligation for Muslims. When I explained to disbelieving ears that in the West women are free to go shopping in the bazaar unescorted by their menfolk they demonstrated their rakish urges by grabbing each other's tits, asking: "This is allowed?"

By 1630 Qadir and I were stranded a klick from the highway, unable to approach because a Hezb group under Dr. Ismael was shooting up a Soviet post and the road was alive with armored personnel carriers. Hezb Commander Ghulam Habib came to our rescue.

Ghulam Habib had his shit together. Scouts were sent forward to secure the road front and when all was clear we were taken up. Qadir and I dashed across. Habib's men faded away in the darkness. I remember stepping over the aviation and tank fuel pipelines. They were smaller than I'd expected.

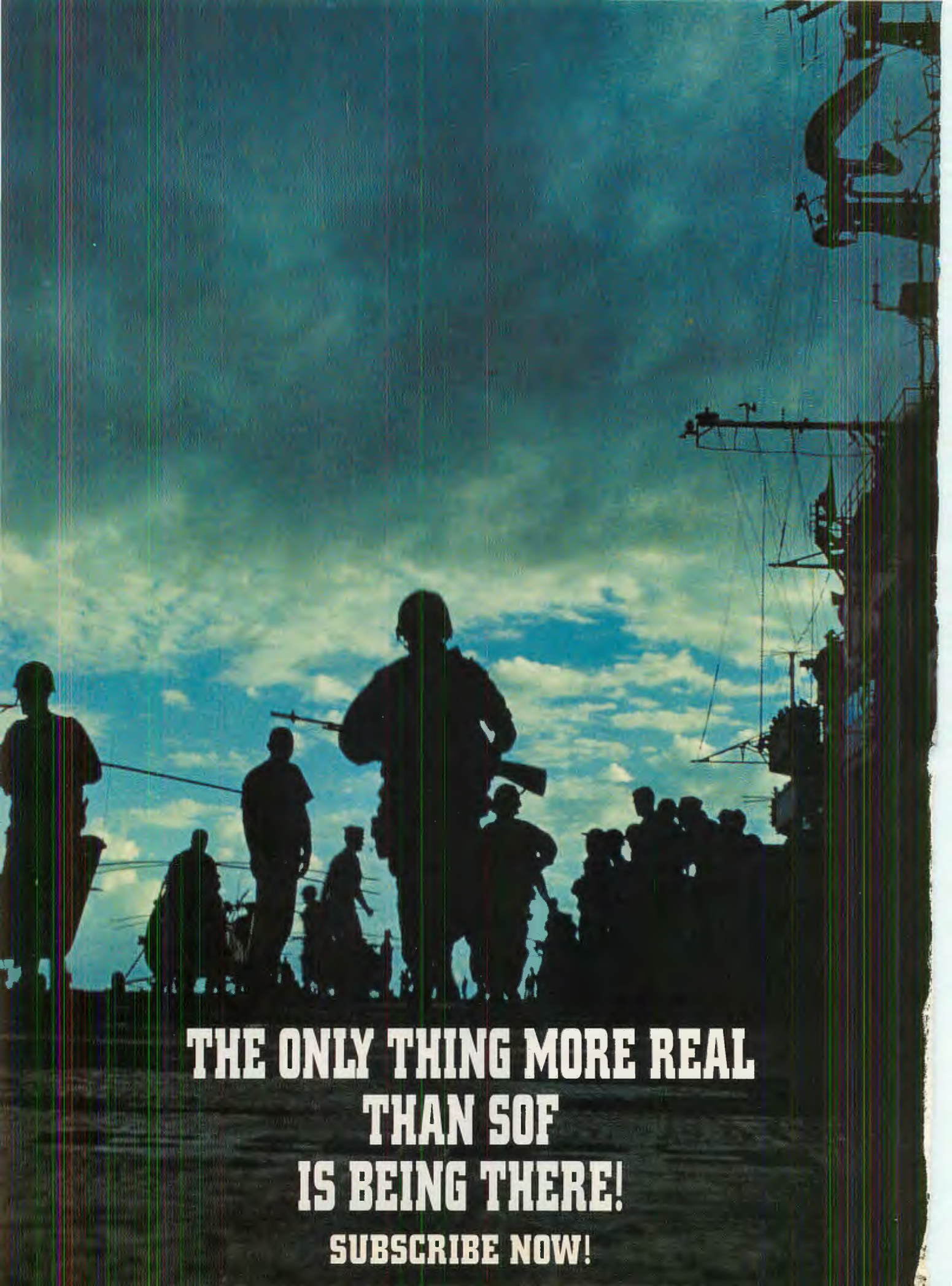
There was no difficulty observing highway traffic in daylight, nor the army posts. Traffic was heavy — army trucks, passenger buses, fuel tankers, taxis, BRDMs, and finally one good tank column. Heading north they were probably part of Gorbachev's celebrated pull-out from Afghanistan.

From behind the mud wall of an enclosed orchard I could observe Soviet soldiers clambering over their tanks and standing on the turrets. Entranced, I watched a BMP-1 crew until I realized the swinging 70mm gun was moving in my direction. Time to move. For the most part the muj seemed to be ignoring the Soviet-manned posts in order to facilitate their pulling out. My lasting memory from there will be observing a Khaki-clad soldier in the upper floor window of the post, as he slowly lifted a pair of

*Continued on page 73*

#### Mujahideen stinger crew looks for a target near Kunduz.





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# TIMBERWOLF



## SOF Tests and Evaluates Israeli .357 Magnum Carbine

**A**LMOST exclusively an American innovation, the first successful slide-action system was the Spencer shotgun, introduced in 1884 by Francis Bannerman of New York. Often referred to as "pump" or "trombone" actions, shotguns of this type have remained popular for more than a century. Witness the now-departed Winchester Models 97 and 12 and the venerable Remington Model 870, still the scattergun of choice for a majority of U.S. law enforcement agencies.

Although Colt brought out its Lightning Model 85 in caliber .32-20 just one year after the Spencer, slide-action rifles are today few and far between. Long gone are the rimfire Winchester Models 61 (hammerless) and 62 (exposed hammer) and the centerfire Remington 14/141 series (designed by John D. Pedersen). Until recently, the Brazilian Rossi 62 SA (a copy of the Winchester Model 62) and Remington 572BDL, both .22 rimfires, were virtually the only rifles available in this action type. Enter the Timber Wolf, designed by Evan

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### Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

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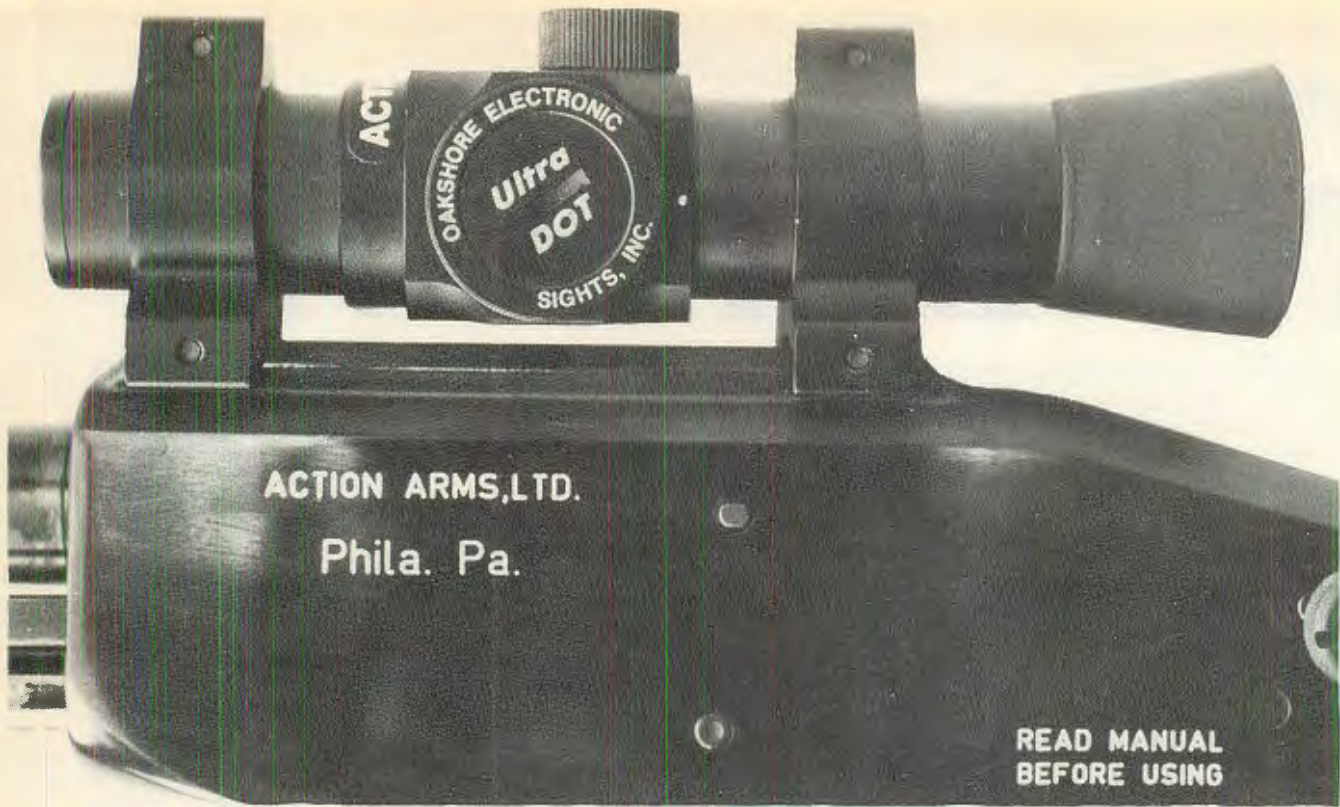
Whildin of Action Arms, Ltd. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124, phone: (215) 744-0100) and manufactured by Israel Military Industries (IMI).

Chambering "saddle" carbines for a handgun cartridge is another American tradition dating back to the Old West, cowboys and Indians and John Wayne. It's hardly surprising, then, that the Timber Wolf's initial chambering is for the .357 Magnum/.38 Special rimmed revolver cartridges. Other calibers will be forthcoming, the first of which will be a limited run in .32-20, followed by a .44 Magnum. Although semi-obsolete, the .32-20, introduced by Winchester in 1882 for their Model 73 lever-action rifle, still enjoys modest popularity and will more than do for small game out to 100 yards.

The most obvious feature of any slide-action firearm is the streamlined appear-

ance of its receiver and the sliding forearm mounted around a tubular magazine. A so-called "action bar" extends from the Timber Wolf's forearm on the left side and backward through a slot in the receiver to the slide under the bolt. A lug on top of the slide fits inside a cavity in the bolt body. The pivoting locking block, with both locking and unlocking cams machined onto its bottom surface, also rests in this cavity. When the forearm is jacked rearward, the action-bar drives the slide back and its lug down and out of its recess in the top of the receiver. As the rearward push on the forearm is continued, the bolt travels to the rear to extract and eject the fired case, cock the hammer and raise a new cartridge from the magazine by means of the lifter. total length of the rearward stroke is only 2½ inches.

Moving the forearm forward pulls the bolt and slide forward and drives the cartridge off the lifter into the chamber. The slide moves forward to strike the locking block's front locking cam and push



the locking block's lug upward and into its recess, completely chambering the round and locking the breech. This is substantially the method of operation employed in the Remington Model 870 shotgun.

While slide actions are simple, sturdy and reliable, all work is performed by the force exerted on the forearm in a line parallel with the axial line of the barrel, without benefit of the added leverage provided by lever-action or turn-bolt systems. As a consequence, slide-actions have often been criticized for weak extraction. However, the Timber Wolf's slide movement both disengages the locking lug and provides primary extraction.

The weight of this carbine, empty, is a comfortable 5 pounds, 9 ounces. Overall length is 37 inches. When the buttstock is removed that shrinks to a mere 24 inches. The receiver is a milled forging fabricated from ordnance steel. Both the lifter and loading gate are sheet-metal pressings. The ejection port is on the right side of the receiver. A pivoting ejector rests in a channel on the left wall of the receiver's

interior. A projection midway along the ejector's length protrudes through a hole in the receiver. A Weaver-type scope mount base has been made a part of the top of the receiver. All of the carbine's metal components are blued.

The untapered, heavy barrel, only 18½ inches in length, has 10 grooves with a right hand twist of one turn in 20 inches. It is threaded to the receiver and is not of the take-down type. The barrel blank is also forged from ordnance steel.

The trigger mechanism also resembles that of the Remington Model 870 shotgun. There is an action-bar lock (also referred to as a "bolt release") at the front of the alloy trigger guard on the left side, and a conventional crossbolt safety. Push the crossbolt to the left to release the safety. The disconnecter is part of the action-bar lock and can be actuated both manually and by the fall of the hammer. It operates when the action-bar lock button is depressed to release the action bar so the forearm can be reciprocated and also when the hammer spring plunger contacts it during hammer

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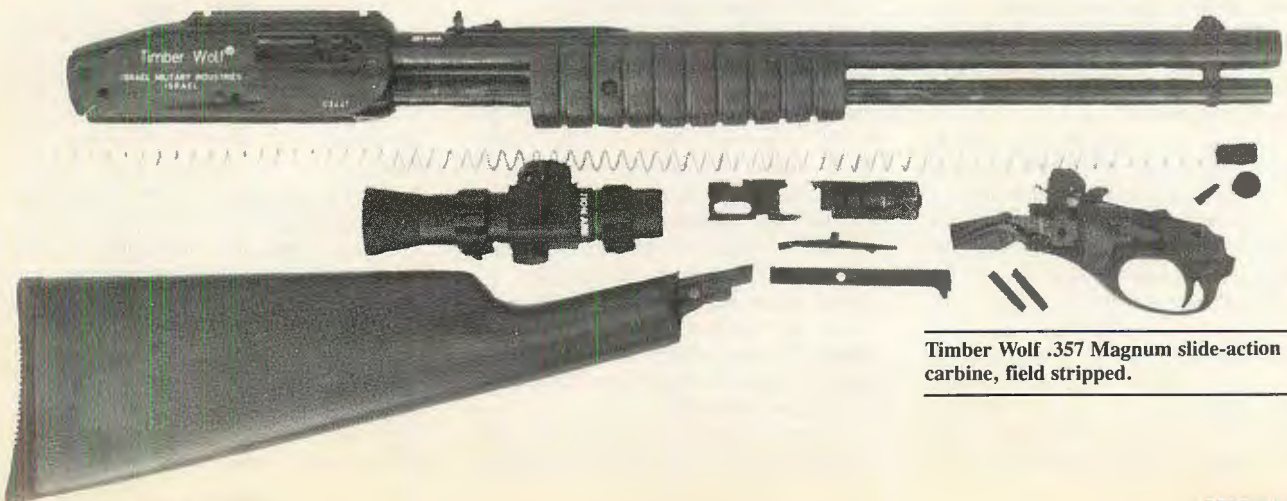
**The Ultra Dot™ optical sight features an illuminated red dot and is the smallest and lightest of its type. Powered by a small lithium battery, the intensity of the red dot can be adjusted by a potentiometer on the left side of the scope tube.**

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fall. Functioning of the disconnecter requires the trigger to be positively released between each shot in order to reset the trigger mechanism. Of the single-stage type, the trigger pull weight on our test specimen was a somewhat spongy 3¾ pounds.

Both the forearm and buttstock are fabricated from European walnut with a semi-gloss finish. With nine grooves and a tapered cylindrical shape, the forearm's appearance is traditional and reminiscent of the early Winchester slide-action shotguns and rimfire rifles.

Equipped with a black rubber buttplate, the buttstock has no Monte Carlo comb or cheekpiece and is also somewhat 19th century looking. However, the Timber Wolf's drop at the comb can be adjusted




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**Timber Wolf .357 Magnum slide-action carbine, field stripped.**

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through a range of approximately an inch to accommodate both optical sights and the standard iron sights with which it is equipped. For purposes of adjustment, maintenance and reducing its carrying envelope, the buttstock can be removed by loosening the slotted and knurled take-down screw on the left side of the receiver. The retaining screw of the buttstock's steel attachment tenon can be loosened to move the tenon up or down on its steel base on the receiver. Both the tenon's and base's interfaces are curved and striated for positive retention once the screw has been re-tightened. The length of pull is 13½ inches.

The tubular magazine holds 10 rounds of .357 Magnum or 11 rounds of .38 Special ammunition and extends the length of the barrel. There is about 0.2 inch of clearance between the barrel and magazine tube. The magazine's front attaching band is dovetailed to a slot on the underside of the barrel, directly under the front sight, and pinned in place.

The forearm must be fully retracted to load the magazine and both the lifter and loading gate must be pushed upward before cartridges can be fed into the tube. To chamber the first round, the action must be closed, then opened by depressing the action-bar lock and finally, pushed forward into battery once again. This is a tactical defect as the magazine cannot be re-charged, or "topped off", with the weapon in the firing mode. A model will be available in the near future — to law enforcement agencies only — that permits loading with the action forward. The magazine tube's aluminum alloy follower has been anodized a dark plum color which somewhat enhances its visibility. Cartridges must be inserted with vigor or their rims will catch on the cartridge stop.

The fixed front sight blade is dovetailed to the barrel directly above the magazine tube's attaching band. It's sloped at the rear with a single white vertical bar. The "buckhorn"-style rear sight has a U-notched plate that can be crudely adjusted for windage zero by loosening its two retaining screws. Elevation adjustments are performed by lifting the spring-steel rear sight base and sliding a stepped bar forward or rearward. There are five steps in 50-meter increments, commencing with 50 meters at the lowest position. There are no elevation or windage index markings on the rear sight. The sight radius is 15 inches. These iron sights will do for informal target shooting, but the Ultra Dot™ electronic sight distributed by Action Arms Ltd. provides a more precise aiming system.

The Ultra Dot™ sight features an illuminated red dot similar in concept to that of the Swedish Aimpoint. It is the smallest (5.1 inches in overall length) and lightest (4 ounces) sight of this type. Powered by a small lithium battery, the intensity of the red dot can be adjusted by a potentiometer on the left side of the scope tube. It's adjustment knob, which can be rotated in

either direction, permits settings from "0" (off) to "11." Bright daylight conditions require the most intense setting, "11," unless you employ the polarizing filter which is also provided, along with a rubber eye piece, trim and extension rings and two 1-inch rings for attachment to the Timber Wolf's Weaver-type base. Elevation and windage knobs, on the top and right of the scope tube, respectively, allow the unit to be zeroed in the conventional manner. Each mark on the adjustment dials will move the point of impact a half inch at 100 yards. Battery life varies from 20 to 4,000 hours, depending upon the settings most often employed. At 50 yards, the red dot covers a circle approximately 4 inches in diameter. Suggested retail price is \$195.

Timber Wolf Disassembly procedures,

fired during SOF's test and evaluation of the Timber Wolf carbine. A 4-inch Ruger GP100 revolver was used for control and this provided an opportunity to observe the effect of substantial velocity increases on bullet performance.

Lightweight 125-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) ammunition is popular in this caliber, principally because its high velocity has been hyped by gun publications. Samson's version travels at almost 1,500 fps, 10 feet from the Ruger revolver's muzzle. At this velocity, when fired into soft tissue, it will invariably shed its jacket, lose 40 percent of its original weight to small fragments (leaving an end weight of only about 65 grains) and expand to .60 caliber. Penetration is below the desired minimum of 12 inches. When fired through

## TIMBER WOLF SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Caliber:</b> .....	.357 Magnum/.38 Special; also limited runs in .32-30 and .44 Magnum.
<b>Operation:</b> .....	Slide-action. Pivoting locking block operated by slide cams.
<b>Feed mechanism:</b> .....	Tubular magazine; 10 rounds .357 Magnum, 11 rounds .38 Special.
<b>Barrel:</b> .....	Un-tapered. Ten grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 20 inches. Length: 18½ inches.
<b>Sights:</b> .....	Fixed front sight blade with single white vertical bar. Buckhorn-style rear sight with U-notch adjustable for windage and elevation in 50-meter increments. Optional Ultra Dot™ illuminated optical sight with red dot mounts on receiver's integral Weaver-type base.
<b>Finish:</b> .....	Blued.
<b>Furniture:</b> .....	European walnut buttstock and forearm with semi-gloss finish.
<b>Price:</b> .....	.\$475.
<b>Manufacturer:</b> .....	Israel Military Industries, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1044, Ramat Ha Sharon, Israel.
<b>U.S. distributor:</b> .....	Action Arms, Ltd., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124; phone: (215) 744-0100.
<b>T&amp;E summary:</b> .....	Sturdy and reliable. Lightweight and handy. Greater accuracy potential than any handgun of the same chambering. Take-down buttstock. Reasonably priced. Will appeal to a diverse market.

in general, follow those of the Remington Model 870. First, clear the chamber and magazine tube by depressing the action bar lock and jacking the action until the weapon is empty. Remove the buttstock. Remove the two trigger housing pins with a small punch and withdraw the trigger group from the receiver. Remove the cartridge-stop bar from its channel in the receiver. Pull the forearm and action bar back and remove the slide. Push the forearm and action bar forward and remove the bolt group. Drop out the ejector. Remove the magazine-plug screw and pull out the magazine spring and follower. After cleaning and lubrication, re-assemble in the reverse order. When installing the cartridge-stop bar, make sure the diagonal notch on the action bar is aligned with the top projection on the cartridge-stop bar.

Three different loadings of Samson .357 Magnum ammunition, manufactured by IMI and distributed by Action Arms, were

the Timber Wolf's 18½-inch barrel, velocity increases by more than 600 fps. Performance in soft tissue is then even worse. Almost 65 percent of the bullet is lost to fragmentation, expansion of the now paper-thin bullet is to about .70 caliber and penetration drops to totally unacceptable levels. This almost matches the dismal performance of frangible ammunition like the Glaser Safety Slug and just won't do for shooting at human targets that will be shooting back at you.

However, more often than not the Timber Wolf will be used for nothing other than informal target practice. Thousands of rounds will be fired through this slick little carbine at targets no more dangerous than empty beer cans (This Bud's for you, Howard Metzenbaum). Without adequate backstops, frangible performance can reduce the danger of ricochets. Samson's

*Continued on page 78*

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#113 March 1987: COMBAT —On the front lines in Mozambique; SOUTH AMERICA —Peru's elusive Shining Path guerrillas; VIETNAM —Lam Son 719, ARVN solo op; WEAPONS —Colt's SMG; Smith & Wesson's big bore .45.

#114 April 1987: MERC OPS —American mercs target Ghana; DOMESTIC AFFAIRS —Bounty hunting in the USA; AFRICA —Elite police units tracks SWAPO; WEAPONS —Galil's new sniper rifle; ComBloc bayonets; Arcane weapons shoot-out.

#115 May 1987: MERC OPS PART 2 —American mercs set sail for coup in Ghana; USA —Modern-day Minutemen battle bureaucracy; VIETNAM —Submarine surface ops support special units; WEAPONS —Colt Cobra .357; Benelli's Super 90.

#116 June 1987: MERC OPS PART 3 —Busted and jail bound in Brazil; SOUTH AMERICA —Merc work in Suriname; VIETNAM —POW/MIA private citizen rescue attempts; WAR IN THE SHADOWS —Running guns to Khadafi; WEAPONS —Hungarian High Power; Fighting with folding knives.

#117 July 1987: USA —Police battle border bandits; ELITE UNITS —Britain's Gurkhas; Royal Marines hit the beach in Norway; COMBAT REPORT —Walking through Cambodia's killing ground; WEAPONS —Assault rifle look-alikes; Israeli Sirkis 9mm.

#118 August 1987: COMBAT REPORT —Burmese attack Mon army; SOUTH AMERICA —SOF at rebel HQ in Suriname; CENTRAL AMERICA —On patrol with Guatemalan army; HISTORY —The making of America's 10th Mountain Division; WEAPONS —Ruger's P-85.

#119 September 1987: COMBAT REPORTS —Contra Redeyes down Sandinista

chopper; SADF Pathfinders shoot it out with SWAPO; Brit officer corners Omani rebels in Dhofar; WEAPONS —Brits new SA80; SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 1 —Small arms.

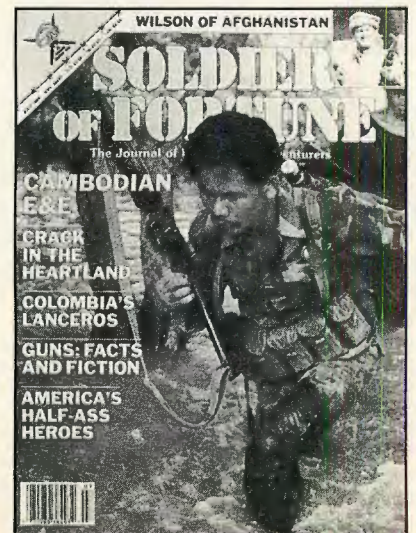
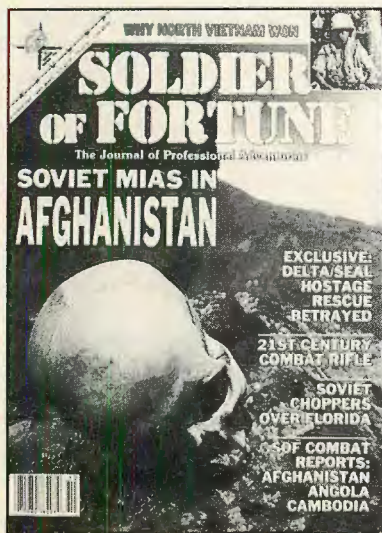
#120 October 1987: COMBAT REPORTS —Deep desert raid in Ethiopia; MIDDLE EAST —Motley trains Christian commandos; CENTRAL AMERICA —Guatemalan paras; U.S. Army reserve in Honduras; Invading Nicaragua; WEAPONS —Reeve's superknife; SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 2 —Heavy machine guns.

#121 November 1987: COMBAT REPORTS —Soviets destroy Afghan village; Rhodesia Fireforce callout; USA —Drugs, feds and freelancers in California's emerald triangle; Police battle Indians at Wounded Knee; WEAPONS —Ruger 77/22 with sound suppressor; SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 3 —Submachine guns.

#122 December 1987: USA —Ollie North's secret slide show; ELITE UNITS —British SAS; Spike team in Laos 1968; SOUTH AMERICA —Legionnaires AWOL in Suriname; WEAPONS —Colt .45; Chinese knife pistol; Mossberg M500 shotgun; .38 Specials.

#123 January 1988: USA —Spetsnaz invades America; U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division; VIETNAM —America's missed opportunity to invade the north; BURMA —Open season on Duck Mountain; SOF correspondent jailed; AFRICA —SOF rescues missionaries from Mozambique; WEAPONS —SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 4 —Tank killers.

#124 February 1988: AFRICA —Eritrea's



fatal females; ELITE UNITS —U.S. Navy SEALs in Libya; VIETNAM —Spike team shot out of Laos; SPAIN —'Foreign' legion for nationals only; WEAPONS —Sandinista foot-poppers; Army's M9 bayonet; SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 5 —General purpose MGs.

#125 March 1988: CAMBODIA —Walking through two ambushes; Living off the jungle; SRI LANKA —Indian troops fail to keep the peace; VIETNAM —NVA meets American secret weapon; Little Larry Dring, the great scrounger; WEAPONS —SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 6 —Type 63 rifle and new grenade launcher.

#126 April 1988: AFGHANISTAN —U.S. media spreads disinformation; Four battles that turned the tide; Endgame: Soviets and muj jockey for position; ARABIA —Royal Marine leads Omanis through ambush alley; VIETNAM —Two-tour vet flies his last mission of North Vietnam; WEAPONS —SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 7 —Pistols.

#127 May 1988: COMBAT REPORTS —Siege in Angola; On patrol in Philippines; Night battle in Afghanistan; DRUG WAR —Soviets import drugs to western Europe; Bekaa Valley drugs fuel endless conflict; USA —Bragg's Scout Recon and Surveillance Course. VIETNAM —Spectre gunships over Laos.

#128 June 1988: COMBAT REPORTS —Direct attack on Afghan militia fort; Cleaning up Philippines murder city; American adviser with Salvadoran paras during strike on Guazapa; VIETNAM —Ia Drang aerial ambush; WEAPONS —Most often used handguns; .45 vs 9mm; Last chapter in SOF's look at Chinese weapons, Pt. 8 —Hand grenades.

#129 July 1988: COMBAT REPORTS —SOF editor chases terrors in Angola; Afghans fire up fort at Shah Kabul; ELITE UNITS —Sri Lanka's Special Force; Philippine Scout Rangers in training; VIETNAM —Deadly day for Aussies; WEAPONS —Remington M24 sniper weapon system.

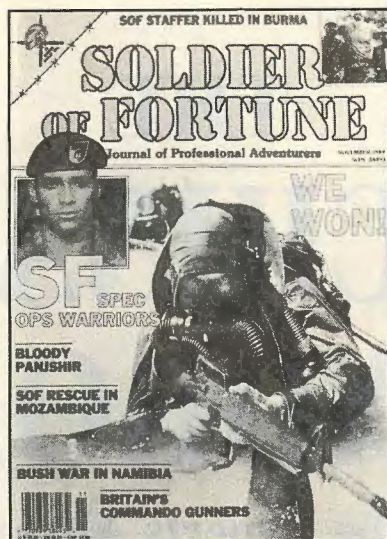
#130 August 1988: COMBAT REPORTS: SOF staffer spends five months inside Nicaragua; DEA, U.S. Army and Bolivian Leopards on drug raid; ADVENTURE —Hunting for Japanese war booty in Philippines; WEAPONS —Glock's compact 17.

#131 September 1988: AFGHANISTAN —SOF team in-country to witness Soviet withdrawal; FALKLANDS —Charting the invasion beaches; POWS —Japanese holdouts on Guam after WW II; WEAPONS —South Africa's SS-77 GPMG; South Africa's R4 rifle.

#132 October 1988: AFGHANISTAN —SOF team joins muj in attack; DRUG WAR —A look at U.S. Customs Air Branch flying aces; ELITE UNITS —Marine's 3rd Force Recon; SRI LANKA —In the field with insurgent Tigers of Eelam; WEAPONS —Complete guide to AK imports.

#133 November 1988: GRENADA —Part One of the real story behind the invasion; CENTRAL AMERICA —Winning hearts and Mayans in Guatemala; AFGHANISTAN —With muj convoy in bandit country; WEAPONS —Remington's Model 870.

#134 December 1988: GRENADA —Part Two, the 82nd Airborne's role in securing the island; MIDDLE EAST —Israeli commandos kill Abu Jihad; Next target —Abu Nidal, called the most dangerous man in the world. AFRICA —20th century's most successful merc, the Robert Denard story; WEAPONS —Knives for



combat; wound ballistics.

#135 January 1989: SPETSNAZ —SOF hunts Soviet elite in Alaska; HISTORY —U.S. plans to strike Japan before Pearl Harbor; GRENADA —Marines' role in Op Urgent Fury; ELITE UNITS —SOF with Salvador's Atlacatl; Irish Rangers; Jerusalem's sappers; WEAPONS —Wound ballistics part two.

#136 February 1989: MERCS —The Barry Sadler story; Merc bar in Guatemala City; AFRICA —SOF in Chad; HISTORY —Brits face Afghan death march; PHILIPPINES —Government victory on Panay; WEAPONS —Guns of Ovamboland; Ruger mini thirty; Swedish Ks.

#137 March 1989: AFGHANISTAN —SOF debriefs four Afghan helicopter pilots; SOUTH AMERICA —SOF staffer wounded during Peruvian live fire; WEAPONS —Taurus .357 Magnums; Today's surface-to-air missiles keep aircraft at bay; U.S. Army sniper rifle specs ill-conceived.

#138 April 1989: MIDDLE EAST —Golani Brigade's battle at Beaufort Castle; Beirut's forever war; DRUG WAR —SOF in Peru's cocaine valley; AFGHANISTAN —Muj fighting to win the peace; WEAPONS —10mm handguns; Demented inventions; UZI caliber conversions.

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# THE CHINA SYNDROME

## Why are the Experts Always Wrong?

by Jim Scott

Illustration by Ralph Butler

**T**HEY were wrong again. America's so-called China watchers and academic Asia experts and the State Department pundits lined up uniformly to make wildly incorrect declarations and prophecies on just what the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China would do about the student democracy movement. Somebody even convinced President George Bush to make kindly statements about Deng Xiaoping and to express doubt about his responsibility in the slaughter in Tiananmen Square. Bush spoke at almost the same moment that Deng was congratulating the "People's Liquidation Army", as it is now called here, on its good work of liquidating the democracy movement. The American public was confronted once again with the fact that the government and academic experts very simply didn't know what they were talking about. That, nevertheless, didn't prevent them from talking and predicting and then explaining away their errors in the likely expectation that they would be asked to predict what would happen again and again explain away their errors.

Even after it was clear that a massacre of horrifying proportions had been carried out by the People's Liberation Army in Beijing, some American experts simply refused to believe it. On a CNN interview broadcast here, former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, in the guise of a China expert as well as business journal editor, was deeply saddened that the United States had suspended arms sales to the PRC. He very simply refused to concede that the Communist Party of China had carried out some act that might be unforgivable or that should elicit some firm response from the free world. He only hoped,

he said, that the situation could be stabilized in China swiftly so the arms sales could be resumed. Mr. Weinberger also referred euphemistically to the 27th Army, which carried out the mass murder that millions of people throughout the world witnessed on television, as "troops that fired into the crowd." No doubt the PLA will need to buy more arms quickly if they are to liquidate all of the champions of democracy in China and Weinberger wants to make sure, it seems, that they buy those arms from the U.S. rather than the USSR. Mr. Weinberger appears to believe that what happened was a total aberration and that a kindlier and more westernized China will emerge again after the current paroxysm of mass murder has ended. We can be friends again, good friends, armed buddies, tennis-playing partners once the dissident students are all dead and buried.

Not only were the academic and governmental examiners and experts and watchers wrong in their predictions about China, they were also irresponsibly short on historical perspective. In 1976, following the death of Zhou Enlai, the Communist Party ordered and carried out a similar massacre in Tiananmen Square. It is today estimated that on the orders of the Communist Party, nearly 300,000 people were liquidated in and around Tiananmen Square at that time. In 1982 and 1983 in a purge in northeast China in the name of "spiritual purification" an estimated 10,000 Chinese were murdered by the government. The rebellion in Tibet against Chinese rule was brutally crushed by the PLA, an interesting recent parallel to the crushing of the student democracy movement, but nobody among the watchers and experts seems to remember that example of Chinese brutality. And so it was disconcerting to hear commentators in

the American media inform their listeners that this was the first time such an outrageous event had happened in China. Indeed, it was not. But the American public and the China watchers find a good memory quite inconsistent with their happy hopes for a free and well-armed China safely aligned with the West against the evil Soviet Union and consuming vast amounts of American-made home appliances, automobiles, arms and running shoes and providing fertile ground for future academics to carve out their careers as China watchers.

None of this should be very surprising. The experts have been wrong, in fact, on every single important historical event that occurred in Asia in the last half century. Every one! No one, for example, in a position of authority, predicted the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And nobody predicted the Japanese economic miracle following World War II. Nobody predicted the economic transformation of Taiwan. Nobody predicted the North Korean invasion of South Korea. Nobody —not even Douglas MacArthur — predicted the intervention of China in the Korean War. Nobody predicted the economic boom in South Korea or in Singapore or Hong Kong. Nobody predicted the defeat of the Communist Party in Malaysia and Indonesia. Nobody predicted the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the rise of the Viet Minh in Vietnam. Nobody predicted the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968. Nobody predicted the onset of the utter lunacy of the Cultural Revolution in China and nobody predicted the triumph of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and nobody predicted the genocide that would follow their victory. In fact, American experts and political moralists like Tom Hayden, predicted that the

bloodshed in Cambodia would stop once the Khmer Rouge won! Nobody predicted the sudden collapse of the South Vietnamese Army in the spring of 1975—not even the North Vietnamese. Nobody predicted that hundreds of thousands of North and South Vietnamese would prefer to become boat people and risk their lives on the South China Sea and languish for years in refugee camps rather than live in a nation dominated by the Communist Party of Vietnam. In fact, outspoken members of the American “peace movement” who visited Hanoi during the war and became instant experts, predicted that the Vietnamese people would love to live under the kindly humanitarian whip of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Nobody predicted the anti-African riots in Nanjing last December. And nobody predicted the rise of the democracy movement in China this spring. And nobody predicted the crushing of that movement by armored units of the PLA.

There is a certain conventional jargon that goes along with the incorrect predictions of America’s experts on Asia. When, for example, Ngo Dinh Diem became the leader of South Vietnam in 1954, Americans predicted that he would fall in a very short time. When he didn’t—he survived until his assassination in November 1963—he was called “the Miracle Man of

Asia.” And so when the American experts are wrong it is alleged by those same experts that a miracle has occurred. And Asia, it seems, has been an area where miracles have become all too common.

So for the record, the American experts on Asia and China are, in the lingo of baseball, batting zero. But they are still, nonetheless, standing at the plate day after day, taking the proper serious stance and they keep right on swinging away fanning the air and apparently learning absolutely nothing. The American media and the general public could probably do a better job in predicting what is about to happen in Asia if instead of listening to professional academic China watchers and state department experts we listened to someone who read sheep entrails.

In some instances in the past the considered opinions of the pundits have proved fatal for some believers. Nien Cheng, author of the best-selling *Life and Death in Shanghai* wrote that many businessmen and other middle-class residents of Shanghai in the late 1940s decided to stay in the city and to try to coexist with the communists after 1949. They had been lulled into optimism by favorable reports about that kindly agrarian reformer Mao and his victorious armies by Western journalists. Tens of thousands of those people paid for the

idealized journalistic and academic agathism with their lives. And of course many residents of Saigon stayed behind to greet their liberators from the North, believing that the reports from journalists about the happy nationalism of the North-erners was in fact a reality and that once the war was over all Vietnamese could unite in building a strong and prosperous country. Wrong again. And in Cambodia, of course, there were hundreds of thousands of people who disbelieved the horror stories concerning Khmer Rouge atrocities and who instead believed stories from outspoken American and European celebrities and newsmen that the accounts of atrocities were not true and that there would be no bloodbath in Cambodia. Wrong. And other thousands stayed behind and paid with their lives for it in Havana and Managua.

Many of us who watched the so-called armed police confront demonstrating students in Nanjing last December and who watched films of the performance of the PLA in Tibet and were aware of the massacre in Tiananmen Square previously had no doubts whatever that the soldiers under the control of the Communist Party leadership in Beijing would sooner or later use violent force to crush the student demonstrators. But it proved virtually impossible to get such predictions on the



news. They didn't fit in with what the China watchers were saying. We hoped of course that we would be wrong in this case and that the China Watchers would be right for once. But history and experience offered overwhelming evidence that the Chinese army would in time obey party leaders' orders to exterminate the demonstrators. And history also indicated that they would do it as they usually do their dirty work, after a press blackout and at night. And so they did.

Then why did the students persist in their demonstration? Why were they so foolhardy in defying openly one of the most brutal ruling cliques in the 20th century? Why did they continue day after day and week after week to defy the antique ruling lords of the Communist Party? I believe it was because after many years of listening to the increasingly tolerant cant and the cheerful mendacity of the Party troglodytes

**...Deng Xiaoping and his supporters objected to the Cultural Revolution not for what it did but simply for those it singled out for punishment.**

they came to a common fatal error. They believed, along with George Bush and his advisers and the China Watchers, that the Communist Party actually cared about the present and the future of China. They believed that the Communist Party, although incredibly stupid and brutal, was not stupid and brutal enough to kill thousands of students who had been unable to escape to universities in the west — and from which they were not likely to return to China — who instead attended universities in China and who might some day provide China with much-needed economic and political and military and moral leadership. But they too were wrong. And they made the same blunder that students and nationalists and brave men and women had made in years past in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua and Vietnam. They believed the words rather than the deeds of the Communist Party. They refused to be guided by history but instead depended upon their best hopes and their noblest instincts. And they never had a chance against the fire and steel of the Marxist-Leninist Realists. During my own residency in China in the past year, I was struck by the dramatic divergence between what I found to be true in China and what the American experts were saying was true in China. There was talk of an economic transformation in the PRC and the boast that at least the Communist Party had housed and fed more than a billion people. Yet everywhere I looked in China I saw

masses of unemployed and homeless people. When rumors of jobs and housing spread throughout the Chinese countryside earlier this year hundreds of thousands of unemployed converged on Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. All of the talk about a steadily rising economic path for the PRC was simply smoke blown by the Party to draw in more investment for the siphoning off by top party officials.

I found that in China, as in Vietnam, the local Communist Party had triumphed over a corrupt system and made it vastly more corrupt and that the basic governmental dynamic was something like that of a polluted pond in which the scum quickly floated to the top and stayed there seemingly eternally. The system established by the Party is one of nepotism and favoritism and graft and inefficiency all presided over, currently, by wrinkled little rat-toothed and iron-clawed ideologues. Ask any

executive involved in a joint venture about corruption in China. He'll probably wink and laugh. Ask him if the corruption has been publicized and he will tell you no. Huge amounts of money are simply stolen from any project or enter-

prise and that money goes directly into the pockets of party officials. At one joint academic venture in an eastern Chinese city, one of the costs of setting up an academic program was delivering a van to the president of the participating Chinese university for his personal use. While students were not provided with examination booklets or with pencils or pens or with heat or hot water during most of the winter, the university managed to request from the American academic cooperators an \$8,000 truck that they said was badly needed. A three-year-old building constructed partly with American funds was leaking and falling down and many of the construction materials had obviously been pilfered. The food budget for the university was obviously tampered with and students were served the very lowest quality food at the very highest possible prices. When visiting American academic administrators were told of the corruption and graft and inefficiency, their reaction was one of dismay at the complainers. "Of course there are problems," they would say. "This is China. What did you expect?" And back in America, at fund-raising dinners and gatherings, naturally, the corruption and graft was never mentioned. Officials from the Chinese university were regularly trotted out to sing a carefully calibrated sentimental song, a sort of hybrid of "The East is Red" and "The Good Earth," about the crying need for American expertise in China and all of us listening to this hypocritical Asian jeremiad knew that what

was really wanted was American bucks. Ask Chinese university students who gets into the best graduate programs, who gets into the medical schools first? Ask them who gets the best jobs? Ask them who has their grades altered upward by university officials? They will tell you it is the children of the party members. Ask them who the most powerful official on campus is and they will tell you it is the head of the Communist Party. Most Americans, watchers and non-watchers of China, will tell you that the Cultural Revolution ended in China more than a decade ago with the arrest and prosecution of the so-called Gang of Four. And yet in positions of authority throughout the country are the very same men who carried out the brutal mass murders of the Cultural Revolution. In the university where I taught one of the more popular instructors told his American students that during the Cultural Revolution he had been beaten and finally had been forced to jump out a third story window in an effort to kill himself. He had survived with only broken bones. The students asked him who made him jump and gasped when he said without hesitation it was the current dean of students of the university. The same brutes are still in powers. And the current wave of arrests, confessions, and executions demonstrates that Deng Xiaoping and his supporters objected to the Cultural Revolution not for what it did but simply for those it singled out for punishment. Now they are in charge and the macabre ritual goes on. In fact, during the democracy movement that same dean of students who was identified as a persecutor during the Cultural Revolution marched along beside student demonstrators, no doubt carefully marking down names at night for those he would finger later to be imprisoned and shot.

I met two young officers from the PLA during my stay in Beijing. They had lost all faith in the Communist Party. They decried the rampant corruption and the inflation and the blatant dishonesty of the Party and its officials. They refused to visit Tiananmen Square and they refused to visit the mausoleum of Mao Zedong. They loved China and the Chinese people. But they hated what they saw the Chinese Communist Party doing to their country. They told me that the worst thing the Party had done was to rob the Chinese people of a future, of hope. When they saw the future they saw only more desperate times and darkness. They never told me that they foresaw massacres, but now I believe that they did. They were simply too ashamed to say it. I thought of those two young officers when I watched the first troops called into Beijing talking with the demonstrators and refusing to remove them. I had a feeling that my friends were in that group.

Part of the problem with China reporting and the mispronouncements of the experts from venerable academic institutions and

*Continued on page 79*

# AFGHAN WALKABOUT

Continued from page 63

binoculars and stared back.

Qadir's assignment was to deliver me to his commander, Sher Ali, but we got side-tracked for lunch at a Nasr camp, one of the seven Iranian-backed Shi'ite muj parties that has no representation in Peshawar, Pakistan. As it happened the Nasr boys were celebrating the release of their commander Gholi Mali from prison in Pul-i-Khumri after 10 months incarceration with shackles around his ankles and regular beatings with wooden clubs.

He'd been set free just two days earlier along with 20 Hezb prisoners in exchange for four Soviet prisoners held by Dr. Ismael. They were jubilant and I was invited to join their feasting. Commander Agha Alawi, their leader, was one of the many who had been sent to Iran for military training under the Pasdaran, or Revolutionary Guards.

Agha Alawi claimed they had received no weapons or aid from Iran, nor were there any Iranian Pasdaran in Afghanistan. "We accept training from them but not interference," he said. Their heavy weapons — an 82mm mortar, an 82mm recoilless rifle and a 12.7mm DShK HMG (all Soviet made) — were brought in Samangan from Harakat and their Kalashnikovs from the Hezb in Baghlan.

Although Agha Alawi claimed Nasr had groups as far north as Samangan, Balkh and Mazar-i-Sharif their traditional turf is south of there into Hazarajat, where I was heading.

Sayed Sher Ali, a Jamiat commander who sports a magnificent handle-bar moustache, is a renowned player of the Afghan game *buzkashi*, a cross between polo and gladiator combat played on horseback with a decapitated calf. I'd seen Sher Ali playing Buzkashi in Peshawar the previous winter; he was away this day playing again.

Darnau Ghorri had been the regular pit-stop for truck transport to Pakistan but recent fighting there between Hezb-i-Khalis and pro-DRA Hazara militia had scotched that. Besides, Sher Ali was also contesting Khalis there — he claimed they were encroaching on his territory. I now needed to get to "New Town," the new depot. So with letters of introduction to "a friend," 1,500 Afs *baksheesh* forced on me by a beneficent Sher Ali and an elderly Uzbek to guide me, I set off on foot for a place called Lakorbi, midway to New Town.

Two hours later — where the fuck was I? There had been a Nasr post, several bombed out DRA posts, and now this. Asking directions to the mujahideen camp brought blank stares. Mujahideen? I showed my letter of intro from Sher Ali. Where is the commander? "Him, oh at Pul-i-Khumri." In jail! "No, he went for more supplies."

I paled. These fuckers had to be government militia! Impossible — why would Sher Ali send me here then? Then again, now that I think of it, why didn't he give me a muj for a guide instead of the old man? Stay cool Border. Jaglan Seraj-al Haq

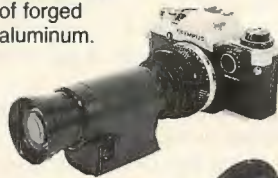


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appeared and guided me into an underground bunker complex he proudly announced was Soviet-built. Overhead a 76mm field gun pointed towards Darnau Ghor.

The Jaglan compounded my confusion (to his obvious relish) by stating that the Hazara militia (Ismaili-sect Shi'ites) under Sayed Mansour Naderi at Darnau Ghor were not pro-DRA at all but now on the side of Jamiat.

That meant Jamiat were now fighting Khalis at Darnau Ghor? "Yes, and we're shelling them from here too." Intermujahideen squabbles were not uncommon but this seemed improbable, especially when the all Ismaili gun crew claimed to come from (no doubt because as a paranoid precaution that's where I said I was going to next) Mullah Izzat's Jamiat command in Paghman! Hell, Mullah Izzat was mainstream Sunni, not Shi'ite.

It was very strange. Unsettling. Downright unnerving. Abdul Rahim, a civilian arrival, a devious and deliberately ambiguous bastard with a malicious sense of humor, joked that I might be worth as much as 10 million Afs if delivered into the hands of the DRA.

This was a very real possibility but there was nothing I could do about it. I would have to wait and see. I fondled my grenade but it was cold comfort. Meantime I played the game: How about a truck to New Town? "There is a truck going to Pul-i-Khumri

tomorrow for ammunition. From there you can get a ride to New Town," offered a grinning Abdul Rahim.

Eventually they conceded there was a way station called Kampirak four hours walk away from where (same old story) "many vehicles leave to Pakistan." Could I have a (gulp) "mujahideen" escort? No dice. "You won't get lost," insisted Serajal Haq, without any hint of concern.

Rain in the night dampened my chances of a truck out of Lakorbi. I was fatigued, depressed, apprehensive — and alone. What to do? Have some tea, and wait. But for what? Khad, or a lucky ride out. Gloom. Then joy! A clapped-out Russian truck clattered into the village square. It was going to Kampirak. I could go too.

I was so exhausted I barely registered when the other two passengers said, "We are Hezb, on our way to Pakistan. You can join us." Hah! — I was free and flying. For one hour. Then we were stuck on a hair-pin bend on a vicious hill while below some group was taking pot shots at us. Who are they? "By name they are mujahideen, by work, militia," replied Delbar. Bugger me! This whole area around Pul-i-Khumri was rife with intrigue, rivalry, banditry, betrayal, and sheer bloody-mindedness. Typically Afghan.

Kampirak contained a massive Hezb ammo dump but no truck to Pakistan. When a mixed batch of 30 Jamiat and Hezb from Kunduz showed up we jointly bargained for

a truck to take us to New Town. Getting there entailed a 4½ hour drive down an Ismaili-controlled valley where checkpoints were manned by Naderi's militiamen in Khaki uniforms of the DRA (only better tailored). They checked our papers but passed us through. Even hitched free rides. No one argued or objected.

The fabled non-stop truck ride to Pakistan was fast fading to fantasy. From New Town we spent six hours in three different trucks to end up at a place called Shashpul, just before the Bamiyan-Kabul main road. Bamiyan is famous for its massive standing Buddah statue which I had seen in '77. The wondrous scenery here hadn't changed — sandstone mesas in deep purple and burnt sienna, jagged peaks like something out of a Tolkien tale.

Now we had to get to Kalu at the base of a mountain pass. Beautiful landscape, a hot spring, a Nasr post with Khomeini portrait — a four-hour slog on foot. We stayed the night at a travelers inn where our travel papers were checked by the local heavies. Three Shi'ite mujahideen parties were represented in Kalu: Harakat-i-Islami, Sarzmone-i-Nasr and Shura. They gave us no hassles.

There was a truck available for hire next morning but there was also snow on the ranges. We made about an hour's progress before we were stuck firm. Another hour was lost arguing over payment. Then we set out on foot.

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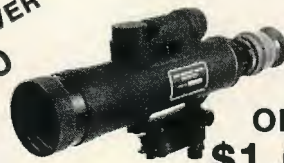
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It was snowing, my right boot had split open at the sole, I had plastic bags around my socks and I was humping my rucksack and camera bag. My German-made down jacket (500 Afs from Taloqan bazaar) kept me warm in the white-out conditions, and for the two hours it took to haul my arse over the pass. I gorged on rice and potatoes on the other side in a Harakat tea-shop watched over by Khomeini, his portrait glowing with an indigo aura; I had no protective glasses and the snow had fucked up my eyes.

A waiting roofed-over truck took us through Behsud (Harakat) and Chillum Jai (Nasr) to Duskul (Shura, Nasr and Harakat) for the night. It was a dump, but warm, and packed with travelers like us. A portrait of an obscure Iranian Ayatollah was tacked to one wall. Morning was misery: I had to crap in the snow, there was no food for breakfast and no transport.

The day was hell: a seven-hour hike to Tezak. We started in white-out conditions and perfect silence. It was eerie. I couldn't see more than six men in front. My right knee was buggered by the mountain pass and my feet sodden as I limped into Tezak, a respectable village with shops and an inn with a heated floor. It was 1430, and the snow had stopped. So did we. Everyone was burnt out. I bought fresh socks, new plastic bags, and consumed six eggs with rice, beans and tea.

I woke in the night to a dreaded sight outside — falling snow. Tomorrow was

going to be a bitch. Sure enough, a meter of snow blanketed the ground and it was still falling. The truck price rose — six times. I was willing to pay anything, Christmas was just five days off and I was determined to make it out by then.

It made no difference. The truck, loaded with a medicinal bark that yielded a powerful purple stain when wet, was bogged inside 100 meters. We had to walk. This time I hired a muj to carry my pack and was fortified with a Pakistani multi-vitamin syrup I'd found in Tezak. Yet for some reason I was having trouble keeping up with the group, missed my footing and generally staggered about like a drunk. I was drunk! I laughed. That damned syrup! It was about six months expired so maybe the vitamins were dead, but the five percent alcohol base had me ripped.

Eight hours later we reached Tank-i-Saidan, a Hezb outpost. It appeared that we were exiting Hazarajat. Another dump, crowded, but a welcome rest. It was cold and damp in the morning light but there was no snow falling. There was also a truck but no driver so we had to hoof it again, first along a good road with a thin mantle of snow, then up over a pass with snow up to the knees. Again the bitter cold, the wet, the silence. And the agony.

Five hours later: an ancient walled town with medieval-like towers and battlements. I expected to be greeted by Ben Hur bearing a goatskin of wine; instead the locals were

cool and there wasn't even tea.

Two more hours. The road cleared of snow and signs of civilization stood before us — electricity pylons. Then, a Mercedes-Benz truck, a ride, and a town where we regrouped in a tea shop with fresh cakes and biscuits. Soon we were stalled in the mud 100 meters from the Kabul-Ghazni highway. The capital itself was just an hour's drive north.

We made it onto the smooth asphalt surface then stopped soon after just a klick down the road at a comfortable hotel with heating and good food. That night I watched the Soviet evacuation from Kabul — anti-missile decoy flares marked the staircase ascent of departing aircraft.

It was two days to Christmas as I plotted our progress on my map with growing desperation, yet we made our next destination, Baraki, provincial center of Logar, in time for lunch. Haji Tajmuddin, the Jamiat team leader, took me to a special place for Kabuli pulau — savory rice with succulent mutton. Excellent fuel. Had I known what was in store for me that night I would have doubled, tripled on that.

We hired a van for the two-hour ride into the foothills of the mountains, from where we started to walk. Some said two hours, some four. Would you believe seven fucking non-stop hours through the night. That nightmare journey became a blur after the grueling mountain pass that never seemed to stop.

Neither did we. Somewhere in a forest

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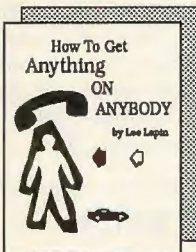
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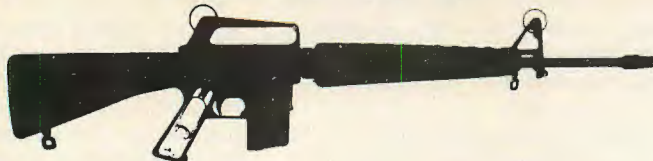


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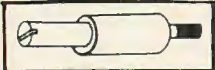
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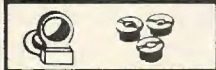
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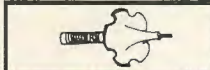
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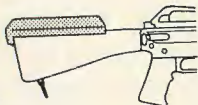
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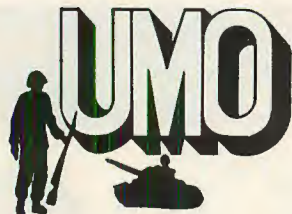
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near a place called Do Banday I met up with friends from Delbar and Tajmuddin after being separated and hiking alone for the previous three hours. We huddled in a bombed-out ruin with one pitiful fire to combat the cold.

Arms convoys were coming in — by pack mule — but there was no transport out to the border. There was also nowhere to sleep and the muj were attempting to stay awake around the fire that spewed forth volumes of noxious smoke. I was determined to crash, and counted myself lucky to locate a stable where by diligent arrangement of feed bags I was able to fashion a half-way comfortable bed. I slipped into my sleeping bag. Bliss.

For 10 minutes. Haji came lumbering up to drag me down onto the road where there was a small Toyota pickup waiting. He had to be joking. It was 0200 and the pickup was packed tight. I mean tight. “No problem,” insisted Haji. “Sit on the tailboard and hold on.” Haji had a seat next to the driver.

It was bloody madness and unmitigated torture. I grappled and fought to stop falling off but it was impossible. Right you bastards, here I come. I bulldozed my way inside where for the next four to five hours we contested every millimeter of available space.

The morning of 24 December 1988. After 24 hours without sleep and very little food we arrived at Jaji, a major all-party base for the mujahideen, a short haul from the Pakistan border. Then, Kurram Agency, Pakistan. Militia checkpoints dot the main road from the Pak border town of Terri Mangal to Parachinar. “You look like an Uzbek,” my muj mates assured me. “No problem.”

They arrested me at checkpoint #3 and accused me of being a Russian spy. My collection of cameras and souvenir Soviet bayonets inflamed their passions until excitement reached fever pitch. This was getting out of hand. I’m a Western journalist, I protested, waving my passport. No one could read English. A militiaman attempted to tie my hands. No way. Take me to your superior officers, I demanded.

Kurram Militia HQ — a spit and polish establishment in the finest military tradition — where reason prevailed. A curious but polite interrogator — an officer and a gentleman — was quickly satisfied I wasn’t from the KGB’s First Chief Directorate and soon I was speeding to Peshawar. Within hours I was feasting on Christmas turkey. I had made it back to the world. ✎

## PHILIPPINE BOLO

*Continued from page 39*

content makes it tough. So although the steel itself is fairly mild, it has some good properties for a field knife.

I invested seven dollars American into the local economy and took possession of my bolo. It wasn’t much to look at, but it felt right in my hand and had a fairly good edge for having been ground with a coarse wheel. I touched it up with my pocket steel and

tried it on some green bamboo. It sliced cleanly through, as advertised.

I considered wrapping the handle with 550 cord, but the grip felt OK as it was, so I left it alone. The rivet holes had been filled with a mixture of powdered water buffalo horn and epoxy, and the added roughness gave it a good grip.

A sheath of thin buffalo hide was supplied with the bolo, but it didn't appear too rugged. For seven bucks, I wasn't worried. But it did self-destruct on day four of the exercise. Negritos favor sheaths made of mahogany, thrust between belt and trousers and secured by nylon string. These are quite durable, though bulky. I'll probably trade our riggers a case of beer for a sheath stitched from heavy nylon webbing. I like carrying the bolo Negrito style. It's a lot less bothersome than having the heavy knife dangling low from one's belt or load-bearing equipment.

The best way to test a knife — or any tool or weapon — is to use it hard in the environment it was designed for. Bolos were designed for the jungle, and that's where I tested it, during seven days of JEST. I constructed bamboo hootches and sleeping platforms, cut hardwood for cooking fires, made rice cookers of large bamboo sections and snares from small twigs, using only the bolo. It was at its best chopping large sections of green bamboo, but I could use it for detail work as well. The blade dulled fairly quickly, which was no surprise, but it was easy to resharpen. I didn't feel guilty about using it to dig a cathole, something I've had a hard time doing with my Gerber.

The bolo gets satisfactory ratings as a jungle survival tool. How about as a weapon? Well, I didn't have occasion to lop the heads off any sentries out there, but any knife large enough, heavy enough, strong and sharp enough to slice through heavy bamboo like the bolo does is a knife that I'll respect as a fighting tool.

A Filipino Special Forces captain I've worked with, a Moslem from Mindanao, recommends it above all others as a fighting knife, and his Moro ancestors certainly established the bolo's value as a close-combat weapon. Bolo charges by Moro warriors helped prod us into adopting the 1911 .45 ACP pistol, another crude, ugly, heavy, reliable and effective weapon. And since we're talking about weight, my bolo, at 25 ounces, is actually lighter than some of the extremely heavy Bowie and survival knives that are currently popular as field and fighting knives.

One such knife, which retails for about 20 times what my bolo cost, was carried by a young Marine going through the initial JEST course with me. After watching him bravely trying, for about an hour, to cut enough bamboo to build a sleeping platform, I loaned him my bolo. A few minutes later, he returned the bolo, mission completed, apologizing for the dent in the blade from the rock he tried to cut with it. No problem — I dressed the blade up, and when we came out of the field, the Negrito black-

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smith hammered out the ding and reground the blade. Good as new, no charge.

That's about it. If you need a sturdy knife for surviving in the bamboo forests of Southeast Asia or elsewhere in the tropics, or a knife to keep in your aviation survival kit, the Philippine bolo is a good choice, especially if you don't want to tie up a lot of money. It might not look racy, and you'd better have a small mill bastard file or coarse whetstone along, but this blade will give you good service. It did for me. ✂

## TIMBERWOLF

*Continued from page 67*

125-grain JHP can thus be recommended for plinking, but not serious social purposes.

For that, we need a heavy bullet that will penetrate deeply enough to reach the human body's vital structures. Samson's 158-grain JHP has an average velocity of about 1,260 fps when fired through the Ruger GP100. At that speed, it will remain intact and mushroom to approximately .52 caliber. Penetration in soft tissue will be between the 12 to 20 inches we require. Its velocity increases to more than 1,700 fps when fired through the Timber Wolf. Although there is no fragmentation, expansion increases to about .62 caliber and penetration drops to a barely acceptable level.

Samson's 158-grain Jacketed Soft Point (JSP) offers a dramatic illustration of the effect of increasing velocity. When fired through the Ruger GP100 revolver, the average velocity is about 1,300 fps. It will not mushroom at this velocity. As a consequence, it will over-penetrate in soft tissue. Chamber it in the Timber Wolf and its velocity will increase to 1,770 fps. It will then usually shed its jacket and over-expand to .70 caliber. Penetration drops to unacceptable levels.

We can safely conclude that there's a correct velocity for every handgun bullet, and it is quite obviously not the highest velocity possible. If we drive a hollow point or soft point at too high a velocity, it will inevitably over-expand and reduce penetration to an unacceptable depth. The proper velocity for a given bullet will vary as a consequence of several parameters, such as the bullet shape, depth of cavity, jacket construction and configuration, and core hardness. Manufacturers should conduct meaningful tests that duplicate performance in living tissue, not Duxseal, clay, wet newspapers or pine boards, before they market handgun ammunition, not after it has failed on the street.

Perceived recoil was negligible throughout the course of our test and evaluation. If you work the action smartly, there is no cause to fault the Timber Wolf's reliability. To preclude extraction problems, avoid aluminum-cased CCI Blazer ammunition. Although no longer readily available, you should also avoid loading conical-shaped

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bullets (i.e., the prohibited French THV and original, but now obsolete, .357 Magnum metal-piercing cartridges) in the Timber Wolf, or any other rifle with a tubular magazine.

While gun writers will wax ecstatic over the increased velocity obtained by the Timber Wolf's 18½-inch barrel, we cannot concur. Its greatest attribute over any handgun in this caliber is the increased accuracy potential resulting from its added weight and longer sight radius combined with firing from the shoulder. When equipped with the Ultra Dot™ optical sight, our test specimen consistently grouped to 1 inch at 50 yards with any of the Samson ammunition. This is more than adequate for the anticipated applications of this firearm.

Which are? As previously stated, most will fire the Timber Wolf at tin cans and such, totally oblivious to the BATF's recent ruling that plinking does not constitute a "legitimate sporting purpose." Law enforcement agencies with modest budgets will appreciate its suggested retail price of \$475, as more exotic weaponry, such as the M16 or MP5, costs considerably more and shotguns can be indiscriminate weapons in the hands of inexperienced operators. Departments still fielding .357 Magnum wheelguns may be attracted to the concept of ammunition commonality. Backpackers who prefer to prowl about in the wilderness armed, will find its knocked-down envelope appealing. For those hunting small game, the caliber will suffice, the weapon has greater accuracy potential than any handgun and the handling characteristics are excellent. ☒

## CHINA

*Continued from page 72*

think tanks lies with the "China Nerd Syndrome" that many of us found in China. The China Nerds were American students who had spent years studying the Chinese (Mandarin) language and history and politics. Then they visited China and found at first that much of what they had learned simply was not true. In fact the China they expected to find could only really exist in some remote corner of Disney World as a sort of "China Land," where kindly academics and deferential government officials and operatic performers and artists and writers and earnest students work daily to transform the largest country in the world into a workers' paradise while westerners invest in joint ventures and then stand around and applaud enthusiastically. In the name of cultural sensitivity the China Nerds refuse to believe that what they actually see is more than a temporary distortion of reality when indeed what they see is stark and cold and depressing and resilient reality. The sequence of events in their transformation to perennially incorrect China watchers went

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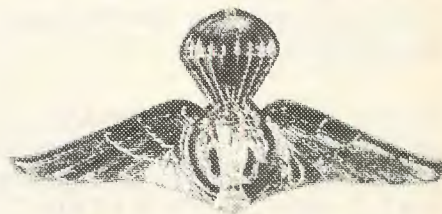
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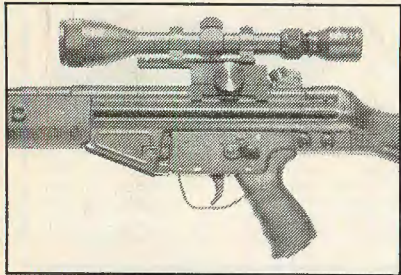
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like this. At first they refused to comment on the corruption and the unemployment and the homelessness and duplicity and domestic spying and the grotesque injustices and the inhumanity practiced on a large scale by the Chinese government. Then they refused to believe it. And finally they refused even to see it. Their lives and their careers, as they saw it, were on the line in China. To criticize openly, to be honest in print or on the record, in other words, would bring a certain response from the Communist Party in China. They might be expelled from the country for telling the truth — as happens regularly to newsmen. I tend to believe that they were thinking in terms of the long run rather than the short run. They would not speak the truth in the short run because China would change and they wanted to be around to see that change. Unfortunately, suppression and murder and brutality make the short run last a lifetime and the experts who hope to tell the truth tomorrow find that tomorrow never comes. So they tell half truths in order to please the Chinese monitors of the American experts and to make sure that they will not be cut off from academic appointments in China, from frequent visits, from that mysterious cachet that goes with traveling back and forth each year to Xian or Nanjing of Shanghai or Beijing or Tianjin and then returning with new knowledge to Washington or Baltimore or Ann Arbor or Los Angeles. If they told the truth, if they were candid and revealed what they really saw and heard, the Chinese government would certainly never again issue them a visa and instead more pliable academics and experts would be invited in and the honest academic would consequently lose his credibility in American academic circles. His career would suffer and his access to grants and journals and the media would simply evaporate. And so they would hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil about the government of China. Many of them would even go so far as George Bush, in time, and refer to Party officials of patently brutal bent as "old friends." And in doing that they themselves became willful instruments and outspoken apologists for the ruling clique of the country they thought they had to love. As the experts and the watchers, the American media invariably came to them and asked them what was happening in China and as men and women who wanted above all else to preserve their academic credentials and their right of access to China, they told subjective tales about the country they wished existed but which, partly due to their own selfish illusions, probably never will exist. I am afraid that the China of the China watchers will always be buried in some mass grave not far from some other Tiananmen Square, cemented over by false hopes, incorrect predictions and short memories.

I came away from China with a profound love and respect for the Chinese people. I felt a great thrill when I saw the student

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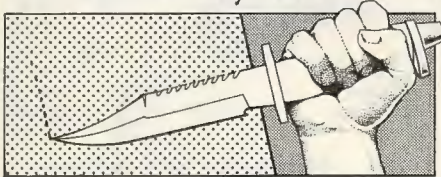
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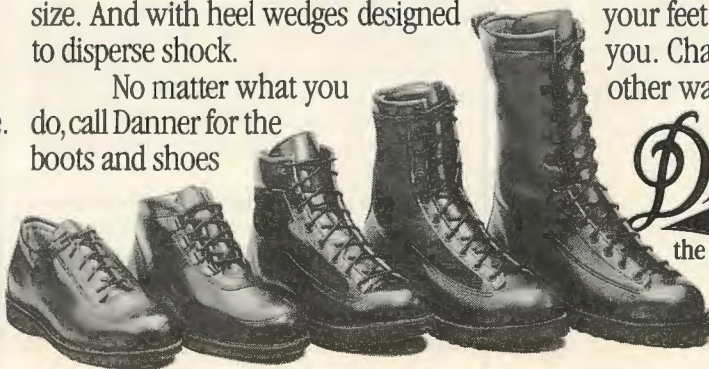
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demonstrators in Tiananmen square put their bodies on the line against tanks and rifles and bayonets. They were all heroes. Every one of them.

But I also know that as soon as they are all safely dead or imprisoned, as soon as their confessions have been signed and publicized and their voices silenced and their brains blown out by a bullet in the back of the head, as soon as the airwaves are filled to overflowing with that common word-bloat of denunciations by the Party spokesmen who tell us that nobody was killed and that hooligans were responsible for what happened, then academic and business China watchers who have come straggling out of the PRC this month will return to carry on their research, to make their investments again, in the hope of making a profit or a name. Again they will see a China and a future that certainly will never be. And again they will forget. And again they will make predictions. And again they will be wrong. And again we can wait for the next unexpected and not-to-be-long-lamented massacre of China's best and bravest. ☒

## SRI LANKA

*Continued from page 54*

another leading adviser sadly, "for he was in touch with the little man and appeared certain to cut through the bureaucracy and the slothfulness. Yet he has become a captive of the office. He has stumbled in dealing with the bureaucracy. Rather than a thorough housecleaning, he has simply given something to everyone."

Thus, the government sails from crisis to crisis, always relying upon its military as the ultimate lifeboat. This, however, will not go on indefinitely. The military is keenly aware that it has been condemned to a no-win situation.

"The army can only do so much," analyzes a brigade commander, one of the linchpin positions in the Sri Lankan military. "It can restore the situation to a point. But if there is no effort to address the socio-economic causes, all this will come back. Further, an army only has a certain store of human resources. Everyone can't be completely competent. We're all bound to make mistakes."

I ask him why politicians cannot comprehend this point. He thinks but a moment, then responds, "Because it would require that they accept that they are doing something wrong. We can't expect people who are part of the problem to recognize it."

There's a lesson there. I have been asked many times whether I see any evidence of an impending coup in Sri Lanka. My answer is probably unsatisfying to my Sri Lankan prompters, for they are expecting a discussion of personalities. And I invariably respond using the same structural analysis I advance when offering

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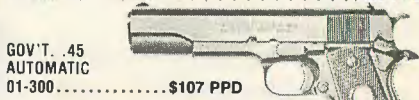
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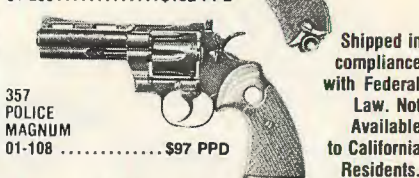
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a plan for dealing with the conflict:

You are putting your military out in the field and telling your soldiers to fight what they clearly recognize is an unwinnable war. It is unwinnable, because military operations serve no lasting function. They are not being carried out to further any course of action, to advance any reforms. There is no plan. Yet your military can see the imperative for such reform. Time and time again they ask the system why it does not produce political responses to political demands, why there is no plan for addressing popular grievances. Always the answer they receive is, in effect, "No one has the will to act." Eventually, you are going to have a battalion or brigade commander who says, "Alright, assholes, I have the will." Then, he will move. Then, finally, Sri Lanka will get a plan to deal with its insurgency. And with it will come a whole new crop of problems! ✕

## GRINGO MERC

*Continued from page 38*

should look me up when he got there. Ah, fame!

At any rate, I was informed that since the Company was taking over control of the situation, all would soon be resolved (anybody remember the Bay of Pigs?) and all independent training personnel were now no longer needed and very much not wanted. This SF guy was a master of understatement but I sincerely appreciated his intervening in what might have been an ignoble end for our hero.

I never learned what that Company schmuck's name was. If I ever do I would sincerely like to discuss his manners with him over a cocktail...a Molotov cocktail, perhaps. Nah, he's on our side. Isn't he?

A retrospective look at the way things have turned out with the contras in Nicaragua leads me to wonder if we shouldn't give higher marks to Comrade Gorbachev and the inept communists, than we do to the way the CIA has handled the freedom fighters. And *that* sticks in my craw worse than a bizarre incident with a lunatic newbie. ✕

## FULL AUTO

*Continued from page 20*

We fired five-shot groups of both the JHP and lead alloy HP Game Grabbers™ at 25 yards through a Remington Model 870 shotgun with a 20-inch, jug-choked barrel. Impact on paper indicated the projectiles usually yawed up to 90 degrees in flight. Group dispersion was a totally unacceptable 14.5 inches. Because of the shotgun's smooth bore, these slugs will not rotate. They must depend upon mass stabilization

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during their flight downrange to be accurate. Although they have a hollow base, visual examination alone is sufficient to conclude that their center of mass is too far rearward to adequately stabilize their path downrange at even short ranges. It would not be possible to reliably hit a human-sized target 100 yards from the muzzle with these slugs. Manufacturers should conduct test programs on their products before they are marketed to the public. Production of Game Grabbers™ 12 gauge slugs should be suspended until a projectile with its mass well forward is developed and tested.

Quite a different matter is the 12 gauge French Silver Plus slug distributed by Century International Arms, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 714, St. Albans, VT 05478, phone: 802-524-9541). Referred to as the "Sauvestre Arrow Type Hunting Ball Cartridge," this unique discarding-sabot slug weighs about 400 grains. Add another 75 grains for the two technopolymer half sleeves (sabots). Weight of the hard lead alloy projectile includes a technopolymer fin stabilizer. Jumping out of the barrel at about 1,700 fps, the sabot sleeves part company from the slug as it commences its downrange travel. The ammunition was developed by a military engineer at G.I.A.T. (Groupement Industriel des Armements

Terrestres) who is in charge of antitank kinetic energy arrow-type ammunition development.

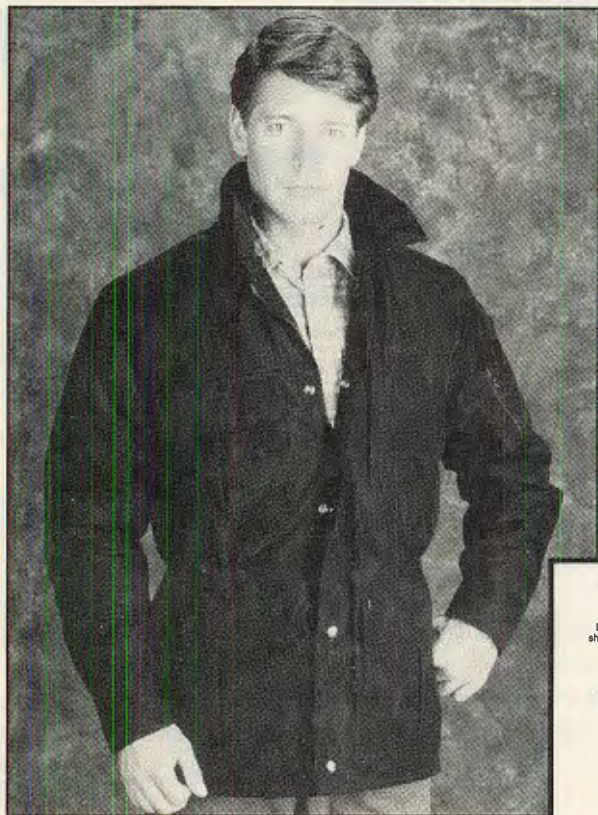
It is to be expected that such a designer would emphasize penetration. This fin stabilized slug will zip through 42 inches of soft tissue with only minor deformation and minimal yaw as it invariably ends its travel nose forward. About 25 percent of the projectile breaks into fragments, leaving a final weight of about 300 grains. This is too much penetration for human targets, but for busting barricades and piercing car bodies it should be just the ticket. Accuracy is outstanding and the Silver Plus will turn most combat shotguns into 2 MOA rifles while extending the effective range out to 200 meters. One of the combat shotgun's most important attributes is the wide range of ammunition types available for it. While primarily a hunting round, the Silver Plus has some limited, but important, law enforcement applications.

Against human targets at ranges up to 100 yards the best choice in slug rounds remains that of Remington. Its 437-grain, hollow-base lead projectile chugs downrange at about 1,500 fps to penetrate up to 14 inches of soft tissue with expansion to over one inch.

Remington has recently introduced a new subsonic 9mm Parabellum loading

marketed as 'practice' ammunition. Anticipating that it might have combat applications, SOF tested this cartridge, which has a 140-grain JHP bullet with a scalloped jacket and exposed lead alloy core. It is the same bullet used in Remington's .357 Magnum load number R357M9. Velocity from the 4.13-inch barrel of an H&K P7 averaged about 900 fps. The bullet exhibited good expansion (up to .64 caliber) in soft tissue with only minor fragmentation. Unfortunately, penetration was no more than 10.5 inches and this just isn't enough.

Even though the Relative Incapacitation Index (RII), presented in 1983 and published in NIJ Report 101-83 for the U.S. Department of Justice, and its non-demonstrable emphasis upon temporary cavitation has been discredited by wound ballistics authorities such as Dr. Fackler and numerous others, interest in high velocity, light-weight, frangible ammunition continues unabated. The latest entry in this category of low achievers is the so-called Core-Shot manufactured by the Buffalo Bullet Company. It differs from the Glaser safety slug principally by virtue of a lead-alloy, hollow-point tip instead of the Glaser's plastic cap. The results are pretty much the same. The multiple wound tracks are no larger than the



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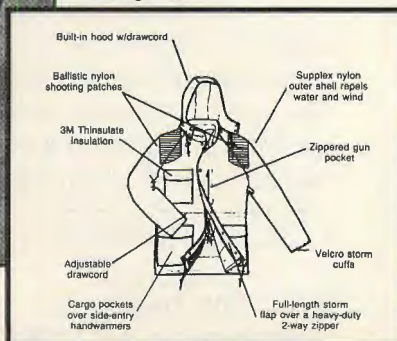
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0.05-inch pellets (No. 12 birdshot). While the lead tip may travel somewhat farther than the Glaser's plastic cap in soft tissue, the tiny sub-projectiles will penetrate no more than about 5 inches. Not acceptable and not recommended.

Because of recent federal regulations concerning so-called "cop killer" bullets, projectiles with steel cores are now forbidden if a handgun is chambered for a cartridge using such bullets. Chinese-manufactured 7.62x39mm ball ammunition as sold in the U.S. and fielded to their military has a steel core and boat-tail configuration. Anticipating that someone will eventually chamber a pistol for the 7.62x39mm round, the PRC has developed a lead-cored, flat-based bullet in that caliber. While not yet commonly available, SOF obtained a small batch of this ammunition (head-stamped '351 88') for test purposes.

In its steel-cored, boat-tail configuration, 7.62x39mm ball turns in a rather pathetic performance. It travels point-forward about 10 inches in soft tissue before significant yaw occurs. At that point the bullet will yaw to less than 90 degrees, then come back down to a point-forward position and finally yaw 180 degrees and end its travel in a base forward position. Total penetration in living tissue is almost 29 inches. Abdominal shots usually exhibit no greater

tissue disruption than that produced by a .38 Special pistol bullet since, after 10 inches of travel with minimal yaw, the bullet has generally passed through the abdominal cavity.

The new PRC bullet resembles the Yugoslav M67 flat-based bullet in this caliber. Both have 6 caliber ogives (about standard for most .30 caliber military bullets), but the PRC projectile is 0.990-inch in overall length, which is 0.060-inch longer than the M67 bullet. Jacket material of the Yugoslav bullet is a copper alloy, while that of the PRC bullet is copper-washed steel. Both have only a slight cannellure. The Yugoslav M67 bullet weighs 123.5 grains, nominal, and the PRC bullet is somewhat heavier at 136.5 grains.

Like the Yugoslav M67 ball, the new PRC bullet is considerably more effective than its boat-tail predecessor. It commences its bi-lobed yaw cycle after only 3-4 inches of penetration. The bullet reaches its maximum penetration of 23-26 inches traveling base-forward, somewhat flattened and losing about 11 percent of its original weight to fragmentation. This yaw behavior is almost the mirror image of the Yugoslav bullet, only with increased fragmentation bordering on the significant. It can be expected that the new PRC flat-based bullet will cause more damage to the

abdominal contents, liver, spleen, intestines or pancreas than the boat-tail 7.62x39mm bullet, because the bullet passes through these organs at a large yaw angle.

How ironic that the anti-gun nuts have initiated the development of a more effective round as a direct consequence of their "cop killer" bullet charade.

A final historical note concerning ammo quality control standards is in order. We recently test-fired an M95 Steyr Mannlicher straight-pull rifle in caliber 8x56R Hungarian. This fat, rimmed cartridge has a 208-grain boat-tail bullet with a steel jacket and lead core. The propellant charge was 49.6 grains, nominal, of a cut-sheet flake propellant. The headstamp of this standard-issue military ball indicated Bulgarian manufacture in 1939. Average velocity was 2,548 fps, somewhat slow by today's standards. Most amazing was the standard deviation of this ammunition, which, after half a century, was only seven fps. How disturbing it is, that as we approach the millennium, Lake City (LC) Arsenal cannot even come close to these levels of consistency.

At this point in time, Black Hill 185-grain JHP is our best choice in .45 ACP. Unfortunately for those packing nine mils, Winchester's OSM (Olin

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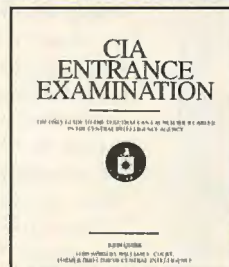
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## LADY KILLERS

*Continued from page 26*

bombs, poisoned them, or shot them with a suppressor-equipped .22 we'd given her. If I recall, it was a Beretta 934 or 948.

"I was back there in '70, nobody was the same then, so I never found out what happened to her. By then, the Agency had several females out killing the Indians. One of our freelancers was a sniper, by the way, so maybe some vets will remember her.

"She used the name Andre, so they wouldn't know it was a woman. She was German, I recall, with good English and Vietnamese. She hit four or five big military targets. As a look at the photo will show, she was a master at the art of disguise as well as sniping.

There are more recent examples, too, in Central America. When Eden Pastora was severely wounded by a bomb several years ago, speculation screamed intramural politics and blame was aimed at a recognized European hitman with phony credentials as a Danish journalist. According to a top source who knows, the man was a decoy for security people to watch, while the actual bomber, a quiet, forgettable young lady, did her job and disappeared. She was never identified or located.

Late in 1986, French police identified the assassins of the industrialist George Besse as two women from a European terrorist group known as the Direct Action Committee. He was shot three times by one of the women, using a suppressor-equipped 9mm pistol while the other professional assassin stood security watch with a Beretta PM12S submachine gun, neither weapon the choice of amateurs.

That this professional violence begets its family of more violence is hardly subject to question. Nearly 20 years ago Hannah Arendt wrote, "The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world."

I will end this with someone who told me her name was Aleta. We met several times in Central America since 1984. One night, we both overdosed on lemonade and after I had finished unloading some of my past, she told me that she had been secreted into Nicaragua, through Costa Rica, and had performed some feats of

marks-ladyship with a Remington 700. Her targets ("which I dumped in the damn dust") included some minor government functionaries.

For the record I asked her who she worked for. She drank another, slid off the stool, shook my hand, and said, "I probably still have some sitters out there, so why don't you stay here. Maybe when I'm old, too, we can talk more about this."

She laughed unhappily and shuffled out. I stayed.

I'm still waiting. ✖

## IN REVIEW

*Continued from page 23*

when the operation was over), Hoover set up a Nazi radio transmission station which was the relay point for Nazi agents sending information to Germany. The information, of course, was cleverly filtered and sanitized by Hoover's brain trust before it was sent to Berlin, and before the hammer fell on the various spy networks, the noose had surrounded virtually all valuable Nazi spies, including the "godfather of Nazi spies in America" the old Boer, Fritz Duquesne.

**Hitler's Undercover War** is a fast-paced spy thriller with all the standard accoutrements: spies, traitors, saboteurs, moles, bribes, codes, forgeries, seductions, kidnappings, brilliant heroes et al. — and comprises a story all the more exciting because it is true. Solid and well-researched history, with a lesson for today regarding enemies who would prostitute Washington and the press for their own insidious ends — at the expense of American interests and the liberty of those everywhere who would be free.

## BULLETIN BOARD

*Continued from page 5*

### LAW FOR US, NOT FOR THEM...

CBS showed what purported to be a nine-minute conversion of a semi-auto AK to a machine gun. The special agent in charge of the New York BATF office and the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York decided to take no action. Columnist Jack Anderson smuggled a gun and ammo into Senator Bob Dole's office, and wasn't even booted out of the Senate press gallery. Our law may be no respecter of persons, but the persons who selectively enforce it sure are. If we'd made an illegal full-auto

conversion to prove it could be done, or "tested" security at the capitol by smuggling in a gun, you can bet we'd be writing this from behind bars.

## MONTHLY RATION OF FONDA BASHIN'...

Local law responded to a burglary call at the home of Jane Fonda and then-husband Tom Hayden, and found both Fonda and Hayden to be armed. In the average household, we'd think that's good. But considering Fonda's vocal anti-gun stance and the fact that California State Assemblyman Hayden voted for every anti-gun bill passed in California last year, well... When asked about this hypocrisy, Fonda responded "That's for other people, not us." Now AP reports that Fonda's daughter Vanessa Vadim was arrested in a New York drug den and charged with loitering for the purpose of purchasing, obstructing governmental administration, and disorderly conduct. And the *Denver Post* reports that Hayden could snap up half of Fonda's estimated \$60 million fortune when their marriage ends in a divorce. Among the assets to be divided, there's a \$2.5 million pad in Santa Monica, and then, too, they'll have to decide who gets the guns and the bust of Lenin. But through it all, Ms. Fonda told the *Miami Herald*, "I feel like a virgin... I feel like every day I have a new coat of skin..." Does this confirm allegations we've heard about her real species?

## CALLING VIETNAM CHOPPER JOCKS...

If you flew a chopper in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam era (1961-1975) — in any branch of the service, and under any flag — you should contact the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Dept. SOF, 7 West 7th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. The VHPA is looking for members (they have reunions and a newsletter and publish a directory), but even if you are not a joiner they'd like info on you for their directory. Drop 'em a line and find out whatever happened to your separated buddies.

## COVERUP: UNIFORM OF THE DAY...

It's official. The U.S. Military Court of Appeals has upheld the legality of safe-sex orders and the convictions of two military personnel with AIDS who

did not inform their sexual partners and failed to wear condoms. If there is any good thing about the AIDS epidemic, it is probably that it didn't hit during World War II when there was a critical shortage of rubber.

## MAYBE WE'RE NOT ALONE...

After their one-sided —and stupid — July 17 issue "covering" the gun-ownership issue, we decided *Time* was no longer a magazine we'd bother to pick up at the newsstand. *The Wall Street Journal* noted recently that *Time* is cutting the circulation it guarantees to advertisers by some 300,000. *Time* executives painted a rosy picture of the circulation cut as a show of strength: "What we are doing is screening out the readers who are only casually related to the magazine and don't really read it" they told the *Journal*. I guess that means no more free clocks and telephones, either.

## PLANE CHEAP...

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## COPYING TIME...

Many pieces of evidence point to the Louisville murders as a copycat version of the Stockton, California, slayings. A well-worn copy of *Time* which featured a graphic display of the carnage in Stockton was found among Wesbecker's effects by police investigating the Louisville murders. ☒

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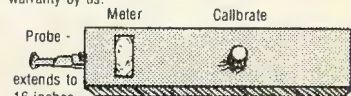
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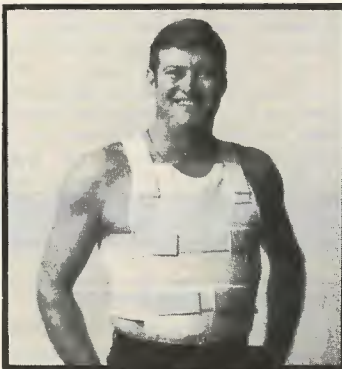
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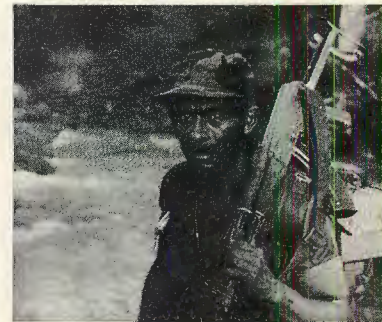
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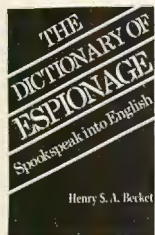
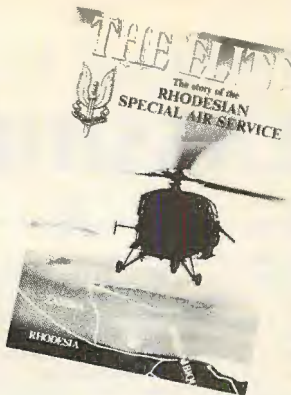
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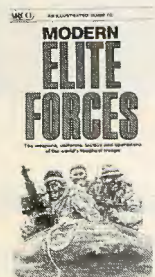
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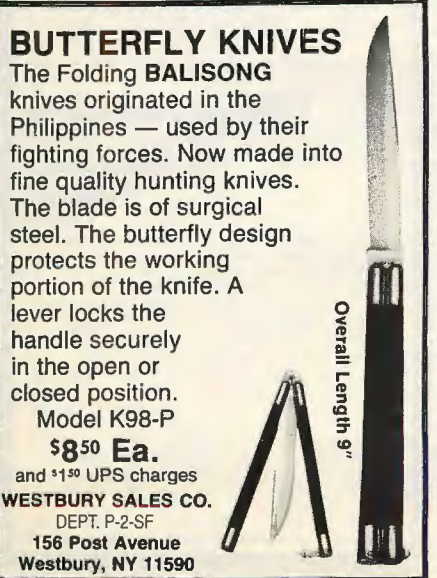


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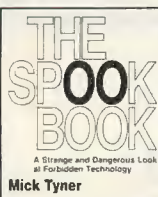
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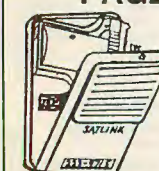
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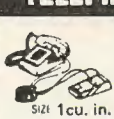
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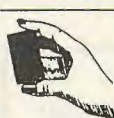
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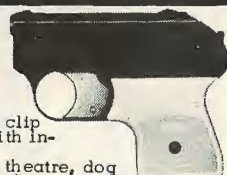


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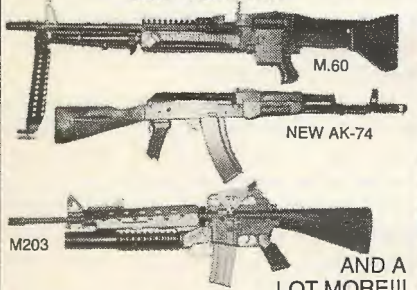


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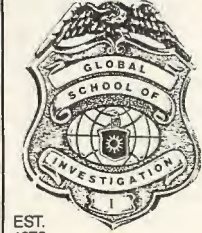
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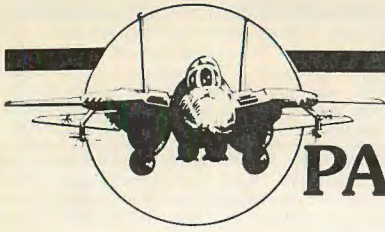


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# PARTING SHOT

by Galen Geer

## Wilderness Hype

**T**HERE is a short period of time just before dawn on fall mornings when a bone-chilling cold settles over the world and penetrates every stitch of clothing you can wear. I was sitting on the side of a mountain in Western Colorado last fall and SOF Publisher/Editor Robert K. Brown was behind and above me with Otto Shults, President of the Colorado Public Lands Sportsman's association. According to Shults, Brown and I would see some mule deer shortly after dawn and have an unobstructed field of fire. All we had to do was shiver through the morning cold.

Shults was right about the deer and field of fire but the deer were spooked by something on the mountain. Brown and I followed Shults to another ridge where we could ambush deer from another site. A few minutes later I was able to fill my doe tag and half-an-hour after that Brown filled his as well. The following morning Brown killed his buck. All of our hunting camp's deer tags were filled.

Taking home fall big game is a tradition for millions of Americans. A tradition that is under attack from every facet of the anti-gun/anti-hunting coalition. There is nothing new about that, but recently another threat to the America's hunting tradition has arisen. It's more subtle, but ultimately just as serious. It comes from the unlikely source of wilderness advocates, and it could threaten not only hunting, but gun ownership as well.

It's important to understand how—and why.

At first blush the concept of wilderness lands is one of the most sensible ideas that the congress has managed to put together since the end of the Korean War. Wilderness means that you will be leaving your vehicle behind as you enter a wilderness area and will be either hoofing it on your own feet, or if you are reasonably well-heeled, you can be riding a horse, either your own or one provided by an outfitter. Wilderness areas were created under the Wilderness Act of 1964, which at the time was hailed as a brilliant legislative act to protect those still undeveloped forest regions of the nation. The idea of wilderness is to preserve and protect those remote and still pristine areas by eliminating man's

interference with nature wherever possible.

This includes the banning of all types of motorized vehicles in wilderness areas. Even modern wildlife management is restricted. Such practices as stocking high country lakes with fingerling trout from aircraft, maintenance of artificial water holes, stream bank improvement projects and management techniques such as aerial surveys of big game herds and the use of chemical fertilizers to improve forage grasses for wildlife are eliminated.

Remote regions that are still true wilderness areas should be protected and a wilderness designation is the protection these areas need. It is not these true wilderness areas that represent a threat to the hunting sports. The threat lies in the hundreds of thousands of acres of our western lands now accessible by motor vehicle on established roads being closed off or severely limited by new wilderness designations, even though the areas have not been "wilderness" in nature for decades.

One of those areas is the Sangre de Cristo range of the Rocky Mountains in Southern Colorado, an area proposed for Wilderness by Colorado's Democratic Senator Tim Wirth. In his Wilderness proposal Wirth has asked for 750,000 acres of Colorado public lands to add to the 2,656,422 acres of the state, which has already been declared wilderness. Included in Wirth's proposal is all of the Sangre de Cristo mountains in Southern Colorado. Wirth's proposal would create a wilderness for the Sangre de Cristo range from forest boundary to forest boundary, completely disregarding the much smaller area of the mountain range recommended by the Forest Service. Wirth's bill is touted as a proposal that will designate wilderness lands in headwater areas to protect these headwaters from development, overuse, abuse, etc. Protectionists have said that in the 1990s they will push for additional wilderness areas downstream of the wilderness areas Wirth has proposed. Already Wirth's bill is proposing 235,388 more acres of Colorado's public lands for wilderness than the Forest Service survey recommended.

Too much wilderness is a threat to

sportsmen because wilderness areas severely limit the amount and type of access available to public land for hunting or any other activity. Limited access has the least effect on "30-something tree huggers" who backpack into wilderness areas. Nor does limited access affect well-heeled hunters who can afford the expense of hiring an outfitter with a pack horse string for his hunting trips. These are the same type of people who are counted among Senator Wirth's most ardent supporters. On the other hand, the weekend camper, fishermen or hunter who drives to his camping or hunting area, the older hunter whose mobility has become limited, and of course the handicapped outdoorsman, are just out of luck in wilderness areas such as those proposed by Tim Wirth.

And when hunters can't hunt because they can't get on public lands the incentive to continue hunting or to even own guns is diminished. Consequently, the shooting sports lose members, and support for the Second Amendment dies with each new acre of wilderness added by liberal protectionists.

This nation does need some wilderness. Those parts of the National Forest or other public lands where roads have not yet penetrated and where there are no strategic metals or other natural resources vital to defense should be protected wilderness areas.

(Ironically, there is now talk of creating a wilderness permit system to limit how many people use wilderness areas, because the "30-something liberals" using existing wilderness areas are damaging them. Recent studies quoted by John Peine, John Burde and William Hammitt at a National Wilderness Colloquium detailed how "adverse impacts from recreation activities occur in one out of every four wilderness units." They cited "vegetative damage" around campsites as one of the most frequent problems. The very people demanding more wilderness areas today have been loving those wilderness areas they already have to death!)

This nation does not need so much wilderness the average American is limited to reading about how his parents or grandparents used to go camping, fishing or hunting in the mountains and on National Forest Lands.

To voice your concerns about the push for more wilderness, write your congressman and senator and tell them you oppose more wilderness unless there are adequate provisions for access to wilderness areas by all Americans! The struggle to maintain public access to public lands is being waged by the Public Land Sportsman's Association. SOF Publisher/Editor Robert K. Brown is a member of its board of directors. For more information write the Public Land Sportsman's Association, Dept. SOF-O, P.O. Box CC, Meeker, CO 81641. ☒



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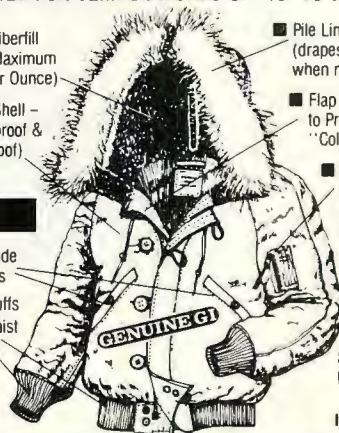
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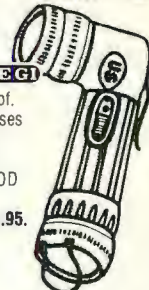
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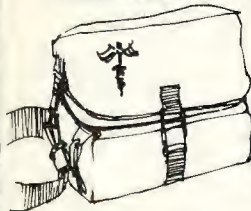
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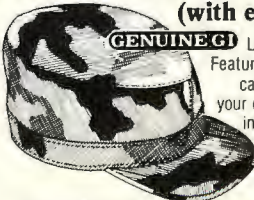
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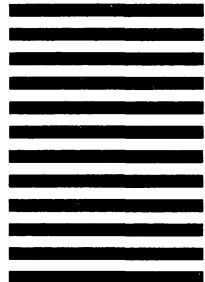
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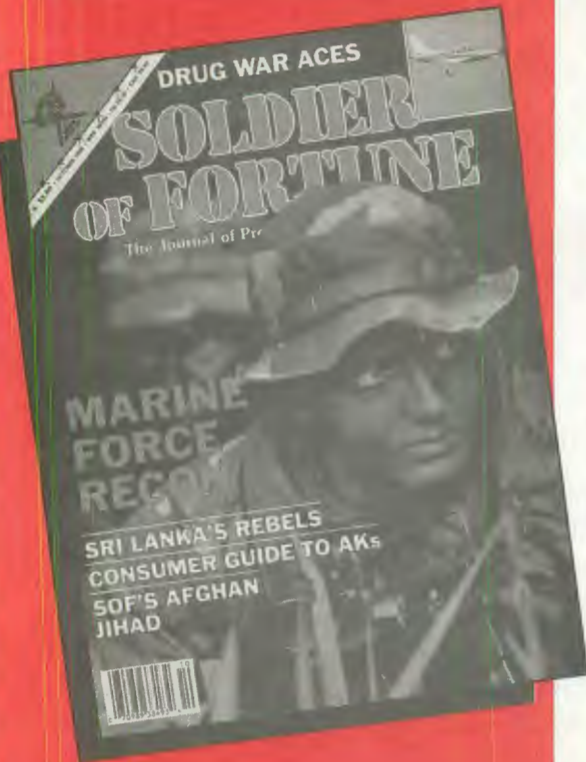
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