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The Journal of Professional Adventurers

APRIL 1990
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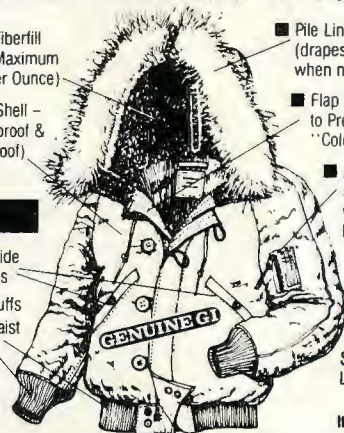
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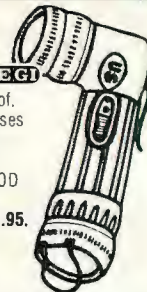


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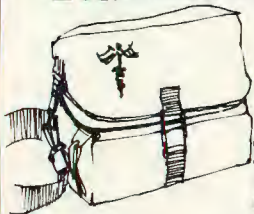
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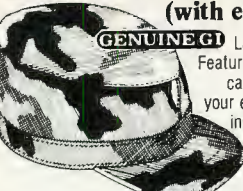
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AGAINST ALL ODDS

David James

Angola's Marxist regime continues its ill-fated efforts to knock out Jonas Savimbi's pro-Western UNITA forces, this time with a major three-pronged armor offensive. SOF's veteran Africa correspondent David James was the only journalist invited by UNITA to view first hand FAPLA's abortive 1-2-3 punch 28

NIGHT NARCS

Morgan Tanner

Our city streets and neighborhoods have become the front lines in the war on drugs. SOF frequent contributors Morgan Tanner and David Bjorkman continue their series on drugs in America, patrolling with police who are fighting to hold their own in this ever-widening battle 34

PRISONERS OF NASIR

Peter Douglas

After his guide turns against him, experienced war correspondent Peter Douglas finds himself in one of the most frightening situations of his career. In imminent danger of execution, Douglas has to find a way to escape from Afghanistan's wild Hazarajat 40

RKB in Panama — p. 55



Panama Invasion — p.48

"MERCING" AROUND IN PASO CANOA

G.B. Crouse

When U.S. troops rearranged the political situation in Panama, SOF wasn't about to miss the action. Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown and our intrepid staffers soon found themselves in the town of Paso Canoa on the Costa Rican/Panamanian border with a bunch of "mercs" who had taken over the town from Noriega's henchmen. It was the good, the bad, and the ugly — you decide who was who 48

U.S. WARRIORS TOPPLE PANAMANIAN THUGS

Robert K. Brown

Operation Just Cause may have been a victory for George Bush, but it was the grunts who did the job 55

THREE GUNS OVER VEGAS

William Burris

Las Vegas rolled out the red carpet to celebrate the SOF Convention and Three Gun Match's 10th birthday. As always, it was a wild and woolly shoot-out in the Nevada desert 62

GHOST GUN

Peter G. Kokalis

SOF's Technical Editor examines Italy's 9mm Spectre submachine gun 68



SOF

VOL. 15 NO. 4

APRIL 1990



Night Narcs — p.34

COLUMNS

Command Guidance 2
Just cause

Bulletin Board 5
U.S. Supreme Court rules for SOF

FLAK 8
Para Knives

In Review 14
Break Contact, Continue Mission

Full Auto 18
Mr. Machine Gun's mail bag

I Was There 21
Beauty and the grunt

Combat Weaponcraft 22
Anatomy of an ambush

Adventure Quartermaster 26
Grand Garands

Advertisers Index 88

Supply Locker 89

Classified 92

COVER

COVER: U.S. forces invading Panama proved themselves to be effective and professional in both urban and rural operations while defeating the Panamanian Defense Force and Noriega's thugs. SOF maintains the U.S. military has *at long last* overcome its own post-Vietnam stress disorder and is again ready to fight — and win. Photo: S. Ferry/Liaison

INSET: 82nd Airborne troopers on top of air-dropped M551 Sheridan demonstrate their attitude toward Noriega with anti-pineapple T-shirt. Photo: A. Tannenbaum/Syigma



COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

Just Cause For Gunboat Diplomacy

WE won, and it's about time. For years we've put up with Manuel Noriega, that pineapple-faced bastard who raped his own country, trafficked with the cocaine cartel, helped further Sandinista and Salvadoran FMLN corruption in Central America, harassed U.S. troops and civilians with his PDF and goons of his so-called "Dignity Battalions" — and declared war on us.

On 20 December 1989, Operation Just Cause, a combined services effort (though primarily Army) jumped off, the intent to depose Noriega and his corrupt regime and break the back of his defense forces, thus securing the safety of American personnel in Panama and our interests in that region (and interdict a major drug trafficking route while bringing Noriega to face justice in the United States), and allow the Panamanian people to install the government they wanted and duly elected.

And, surprisingly enough, it all worked.

Why do I say surprising? I've watched our government flounder around ever since Vietnam when it came to making tough foreign policy decisions, especially those involving the use of military force. I've watched third-rate terrorists — Khomeini and Ortega come to mind — thumb their noses at us, and I've watched drug kings around the world do the same. When we did finally react — Desert One and Grenada — the results were either disaster or nearly so.

This time around, though, things were different. Perhaps there's been a stiffening of resolve out there in Foggy Bottom. Perhaps somewhere along the way the United States got damned tired of being treated like an impotent tiger, gnawed at by the jackals of this world and laughed at by the rest. Perhaps we're finally mad as hell, and not going to take it any more.

This country is strong, the strongest the world's ever seen. Our military is tough and ready, and if Just Cause is any indication, someone in the Pentagon's finally figured out how to run a successful operation. The Soviet "Evil Empire" is crumbling, so we can now focus out attention on matters closer to home.

What's my agenda for the 1990s? Let's start with a rat eradication program — the drug war. How? I've said it once before: identify key cartel drug lords, and exorcise them through the use of military force. Interdict their transport system through military (and if necessary, deadly) force. Expand the size and powers of the DEA and Customs Service, especially in their foreign interdiction efforts.

And if a foreign country complains that we're violating its sovereignty by flooding it with agents and military forces, so what? What'll they do, cut off their foreign aid to us? Complain in the United Nations?

Yes, that's gunboat diplomacy on our part, but again, so what? We have the right to protect this country and the people in it, and if that calls for the big stick, let's use it — selectively, but let's use it when the equation shows that either we take a fall, or they do.

The same holds true for Daniel Ortega and his communist Sandinistas in Nicaragua. His army will never invade us, but his subversive ideology has thrown Central America into turmoil and that affects the integrity and stability of the United States. We cannot tolerate a series of Marxist states along our southern frontier any more than we can tolerate the drug lords who are intent on sucking out the soul of this country.

Operation Just Cause proved that when pushed far enough we can act, and act decisively and effectively against the enemies of this country. Noriega pushed too far, and we rammed it down his throat. How long will we let the other rats continue to push? ☒

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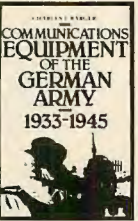






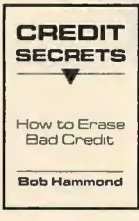
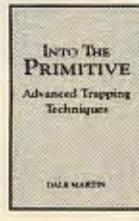





BREAK CONTACT, CONTINUE MISSION

by Raymond D. Harris

The men of MACV-SOG were the elite combat troops of the U.S. Army Special Forces, carrying out the most dangerous missions of the Vietnam War. Secretly inserted by Huey helicopters deep into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam, SOG recon patrols moved silently through enemy sanctuaries deep in the hills and jungles, gathering intelligence, snatching prisoners and calling in air strikes. In this widely praised first novel, MACV-SOG vet Ray Harris tells the story of Ted Garner, a recon sergeant running missions out of the CCC compound south of Kontum. In what Special Forces vets have called "extraordinary," "haunting," and "one of the best" accounts of special ops in the Vietnam War, Harris recounts the faith, fear and friendship that bound the men of SOG, and with stark and brutal honesty unveils the meaning behind the unit's motto: "You have never lived until you've almost died." 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, hardcover, 368 pp. **\$22.95**



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U.S. SUPREME COURT DECIDES NOT TO REVIEW EIMANN VS. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE...

On 17 August 1989 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decided the appeal of the Eimann case in favor of *Soldier of Fortune*. The plaintiffs petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review this decision. On 8 January 1990 the U.S. Supreme Court denied the petition, in effect affirming the Appeals Court's decision in favor of SOF.

As readers will recall, this was a case where two people made contact through a personal-service classified ad in SOF, and after a long train of intervening events colluded in the murder of a woman named Sandra Black. The victim's mother and son sued SOF in Federal Court in Houston and won; the trial court's judgement was reversed on appeal and the reversal is now, in effect, affirmed by the Supreme Court. In short, in the end, we won.

GLASNOST PRIMER...

Glassy-eyed over Glasnost? Think it's something new? *The Glasnost Primer, A Report on Glasnost, the Recurring Soviet Phenomenon* might change your mind. Just published, this report documents the cyclical nature of glasnost — a term used some 46 times by Lenin himself — and a technique used every few years by Kremlin leaders when they need to consolidate power and win concessions from the West by donning a new mask. Published at \$10, available to SOF readers at \$5 postpaid from: Primer, Dept. SOF, Nr. 442, 3808 Rosecrans St., San Diego, CA 92110.

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LITE WARS...

The Lentz Peace Research Laboratory in St. Louis reports that in 1989 there were only 17 wars being fought around the world — down from 22 in 1988. They define a war as a conflict involving at least one government and having 1,000 deaths a year. Guess Operation Just Cause wouldn't have qualified as a war. Well, some might say getting Noriega out of the Canal was more like a roto-rooter detail anyway.

PITCH A BITCH...

Because broadcast media are given access to the airwaves, they are supposed to serve the public interest. Chuckle, chuckle. That means accurate and *balanced* coverage of the news and public issues. Chuckle, chuckle. The licensing agency, the FCC, is the watchdog which is supposed to ensure they do just that. If they don't, the people the broadcast media are licensed to serve — that's you and me, Joe — are supposed to bitch. Next time you hear biased reporting or unfair coverage of an issue, let the FCC know: upon enough complaints they investigate. Could get you equal time to set the record straight, could affect their license renewal. If you have a specific complaint (time, date aired, why it was untrue or unfair), write the FCC Mass Media Enforcement, 1919 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20554. Or call (202) 632-6460.

SOUNDS LIKE GOOD IDEA TO ME...

Soviet Defense Ministry newspaper *Red Star* recently revealed that an atomic bomb was dropped over Soviet troops on a training exercise in 1954, to test their ability to fight on ground contaminated by radiation. The report stated that the test site was chosen because it was virtually unpopulated, but that scientists waited for the right wind conditions so fallout would not contaminate nearby villages. (You have to be a Russian to understand how an unpopulated area has villages.) The report in *Red Star* stated there were no injuries, and there was no increase in local radiation. A month later *Izvestia* stated there were large numbers of soldiers killed and injured, and that many survivors suffered long-term effects from the radiation. (You have to be a Russian to understand that, too. Maybe it helps if you bear in mind that although this is glasnost-time, a new era of openness and truth, the Sovs may stumble a bit as they've had damn little experience with the truth.)

HE SHOULD KNOW...

During United Nations' debate over a resolution to condemn the United States for jumping into Panama to glom Noriega, there was one solid vote for the United States — the U.N. representative from Panama who had been appointed by Noriega. Casting his vote, he called the Pineapple a "narco-terrorist who placed his interests above those of the Panamanian people." The overall count at the U.N. was Noriega 75, United States 20. But in Panama City, where it matters, the count was United States 1, Noriega 0.

FACT NOT NEWS; ADMISSION IS...

In announcing changes in USSR veterans' benefits, Soviet Lt. Gen. Anatoly Siderov recently admitted that Soviet troops have played active combat roles in Korea ('50-'53), Egypt ('62-'63), Vietnam ('65-'75), Syria ('67), Angola ('75-onward), and Ethiopia ('77-onward). This, of course, is in direct contradiction of what the Kremlin has been saying for the last 40 years. We're just so disappointed to learn they have been fibbing to us.

FACT NOT NEWS; ADMISSION IS #2...

The USSR's largest newspaper *Argumenti i Fakti* — it has a circulation of over 30 million — has published an article which admitted over a million men have died in Soviet slave-labor prison camps from poor nourishment, fatigue and brutal treatment. Western intelligence sources indicate more than 10 times that number, so the number is not news, but that they admit to even one-tenth of their gulag atrocities *is* news. The article noted that in 1947, eight percent of the prisoners were snitches for the NKVD, and that during 1939-1941 some 107,000 Soviet troops were tied up as gulag guards. But now that they have perestroika, glasnost, and an entirely new gene pool, everything is A-OK in the communist Soviet Union.

THE ORIGINAL CLEAN CUT FELLOW...

He's a good family man (very good, in fact — he's had some 24 wives and 25 children), gets along with his neighbors, and minds his own business. For which his neighbors may give thanks, as Saeed Al Sayaf's



business is lopping heads for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He's very good at his job — he *usually* can cleanly sever a head with one stroke — but then, he is a large fellow and has given some 600 such haircuts in the past 35 years. He opts for a pistol on adulteresses (to avoid removing any covering from the woman's body), and a nice sharp knife on the right hands of thieves. He is now training one of his sons in the family business. In a recent interview with the Saudi Arabian newspaper *Al Madina*, Al Sayaf said it takes courage to perform an execution, but that once it's all over he feels a sense of satisfaction. Murder, rape, adultery and drug trafficking get one on the Saudi list. Wonder if they'd be willing to send him TDY to Medellin so he could TCOB there.

STAR WARS VS. THE CLAM...

Before the Army proceeds with SDI tests at Kwajalein, they have to move some clams. Not just any clams, but the world's *largest* clams. These giant clams (they get the size of a dinner table, can "swallow" a man if he is careless enough to swim into one and frighten it into closing) are an important regional food source, and will be moved to nearby islands before tests start. An Army study outlined a number of environmental considerations to be addressed before tests begin, but moving these clams may be a major project, as some are so large — and so old — that they are largely overgrown with hard coral.

PASSING THE BUCK...

Phrobis, designer of the M9 bayonet, has sued Buck knives, contract manufacturer of the M9 bayonet (violation of license agreements, restraint of trade, patent and trademark infringement, fraud, economic duress and unfair competition); Buck has counter-sued (breach of contract, negligent misrepresentation, violation of anti-trust laws). Who's right? Dunno. Hasn't been strained through court yet. Suggest we just get a new bayonet and forget it all.

WIN SOME...

Chin Peng, aging leader of the communist party of Malaya, has finally decided to pack it in. After 41 years of trying to overthrow the government of Malaysia with an ever-dwindling guerrilla army, the communists agreed in a peace brokered by the Thais to lay down their arms and pledge loyalty to King and Country. The remarkably bright, although unsuccessful, guerrilla leader began his career in World War II fighting the Japanese, and was awarded the Order of the British Empire after the war, but soon thereafter became secretary-general of the communist party. In 1948 Chin plunged his country into 12 years of violence known as the Malayan Emergency. The Brits fought one of the first successful wars against communist insurgency there, at the height of the Emergency deploying

some 70,000 Commonwealth troops. More than 10,000 combatants and civilians died from 1948 to 1960.

STEALTH BLIMP...

We're not making this up. The Army is interested in a fleet of robot stealth blimps, very nearly invisible to hostile radar, as part of its arsenal for drug interdiction along the U.S.-Mexican border. Being developed at the Navy's civil engineering lab at Port Hueneme, California, these 69-foot airships also have potential for battlefield surveillance and combat communications relay systems, can relay non-jammable and non-interceptable commo some 20 miles over a fiber-optic cable the size of fishing leader. Can't you just see one patrolling for dope growers in the wine region of Napa-Sonoma-Mendocino counties in California? They could call it the Very Good Year Blimp.

GERTRUDE GRUNT...

The Pentagon's advisory board on women in the military has told the Army they should let women volunteer for direct combat roles. Head of DACOWITS (Department of the Army Committee On Women In The Service) Connie Lee said, "For Heaven's sake, why not let them serve?" "It's about time somebody tried," said committee person Mary Jane Galer. Canada initiated such a policy in 1988.

Some 174 women served ably alongside their male counterparts during Operation Just Cause in Panama, primarily in combat support roles. Some historians question how combat roles for women may interface with the Defense Act of 1947, but the Army notes women are assigned support roles, and thus far the combat is incidental — even if our female soldiers have acquitted themselves well.

NO WAR — GOBS TROMP GRUNTS...

Tradition — this is a Navy tradition you understand — has it that if Navy loses to Army four years in a row, then the nation goes to war. Well, they managed to tromp Army in the Army/Navy game, and then we jumped into Panama to excise Noriega. But this was not a war, it was a local antiseptic action. ☒

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PARAKNIVES ALL THE WAY...

Sirs:

Kudos for your article on parachutists' knives by Chuck Karwan (November '89). With reference to the Air Force MC-1 knife: so far as I know it's still an item of issue ... and is required to be carried whenever the parachute is worn. The British issue an odd-looking knife with a somewhat sickle-shaped blade (and blunt point), which is held upside down in its sheath by a catch. On the MC-1 the reason for the lanyard on the same end as the primary blade is that the hook blade is what you're expected to need and use in flight or after a bailout. Because it's a switchblade we used to carry a special note on our psychological training cards giving us permission to carry it, but that was done away with some years ago.

Michael R. Little
Atwater,
California

McElfish Parachute Supply, 2615 Love Field, Dallas, TX 75235 offers a hook-bladed knife designed for military parachutists ... I have one laced to my B4 harness just below left quick-release riser.

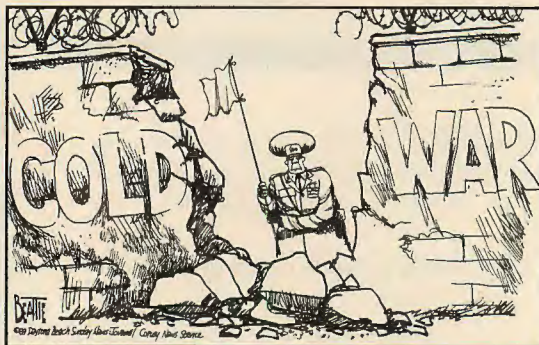
John B. St. Clair
Tulare, South
Dakota

The Spyderco Mariner fits all the described attributes needed but for the lanyard hole, which can be drilled in any machine or gun shop. I carry three Spyderco knives and use them daily: a Police Model 2 in my EMT kit, a Mariner on my upper left arm in my squad jacket pocket, and a Harpy clipped on my right front pants pocket. You will find these to be well-built, rugged and reliable tools.

Ex-Special Forces
Newark, New
Jersey



FLAK



YOU RIGHT, BUT YOU WRITE...

Dear Robert K. Brown,

I just read your reply to Lee Atwater's request for contributions to the "President's Council of Sustaining Members" (February '90). I want to thank you for stating the case for America's gun owners. My letter went into the trash. Once again, thank you.

Peter A. Alvarez
Whittier, California

We're glad you agreed with the point we made and the way we made it. But, it is critically important that every gun owner, as an individual citizen, write their elected representatives and state their case. Can you imagine the impact — even in moribund Washington — of getting 30,000,000 pieces of mail in support of the Second Amendment? Dig your letter out of the trash and mail it!

MERCHENARY SOLDIER...

Sirs:

First, let me commend the editors, writers and all the staff of SOF. It's so damn refreshing to read articles where the authors aren't a bunch of liberal boot-lickers. Secondly, I would like to commend you on the article about this country's Merchant Marine in your Bulletin Board Section. It might be of interest for some to know that there is an organization on the West Coast: U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans WWII, Box 629, San Pedro, CA 90731.

Being a U.S.M.M. veteran of WWII and an Army veteran of Korea, I am part of both worlds. The recognition of the wartime Merchant Mariner has been a long time in coming. I can tell you one thing for certain — when I was in Korea, I said a silent prayer to those sailors every time I opened a ration box, crawled in a sleeping bag or loaded a rifle.

You guys keep up the good work!
Robert (Bob) Langdale
Naches, Washington

CRUELEST CUT TO K-9s?...

Sirs:

I've just finished reading the articles about the Timbershepherd protection dogs and the Thai dog training center (January '90) for about the eighth time, and they've raised a couple of questions: (1) Is it better for security dogs to be sterilized (spayed or neutered), or to be capable of reproducing? Or does it matter? (2) Does it make a difference if the dogs are male or female?

Finally, in the Timbershepherd article, Tony Herbert states that "Like a Cruise missile, a properly trained dog can be recalled." Is it safe to assume that this was a misprint? I just can't see a Cruise missile returning safely to whatever launched it.

Toujours Pret (Always Ready),
Richard Gibbard
Chelsea, Michigan

We called Harrison at LRRP Security Services on questions (1) and (2). His response was that it is not important one way or the other for a security dog to be neutered, although it might be important to the dog. Further, in his experience, the personality and intelligence of the individual dog is much more important than whether it is male or female, although he notes most orders for military and police dogs are for males. Perhaps this apparent preference relates to a somewhat diminished capacity of the female in late pregnancy. During World War II, tests were done to see if the predominantly male tracking dogs could be thrown off the trail by scent of a female in heat. Well-trained dogs were not, no matter what their sexual inclinations, illustrating the triumph of discipline over distraction. The reference to the Cruise missile was to illustrate the difference between the finality of firing a gun for protection, or launching a dog which, if conditions change, can be recalled from its target. One of the perceived advantages of a Cruise-type missile is that, like a manned bomber, it can have its mission aborted and be recalled from its target should the engagement scenario change after its launch — but there is a difference between recalling a missile from its target and recalling it to its launch pad. You're right — Cruise missiles are a little shy on landing gear.



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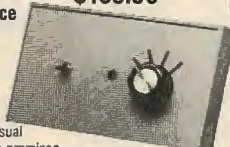
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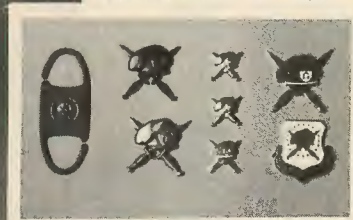
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#7001 SOF Round Patch, red. **\$2.95**
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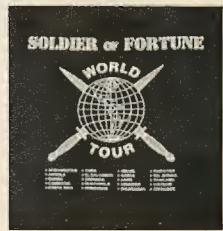
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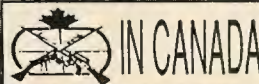


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 (Sorry, M26 Grenade is not for sale)

BURIED ALIVE...

Sirs:

In the February issue I read a letter from H. Student, who suggested you guys write a good article on the long-term storage of weapons in case things get really bad in this country.

Only a couple years ago I would have thought that this guy and anybody like him was a nut case, but today there are thousands of gun owners and veterans out there who think that this is going to be necessary to ensure the freedom of our country. Once disarmed, there is no telling what will happen. The time to prepare is now. We can all say we will never give up our guns, but as a police officer I know that there will be times that you have no choice.

Please write an article on this subject, covering not just guns, but knives, food, medical, the whole thing. I recently buried two rifles...

A Cop in
Western Pennsylvania

I am in total agreement with H. Student in FLAK in your February '90 issue. Please run an article on long-term storage of semi-auto weapons and how the "gun grab" will most likely proceed. This would give law-abiding firearms owners a chance to keep their embodiments of the Second Amendment when the firearm roundup occurs.

W.I.W.
Casper, Wyoming



RED RECOMMENDS HE READ SOF...

Sirs:

Receiving SOF is always a pleasure to me, because no matter what I'll find inside, I know it will be the best combat reporting in the world, and I know I will find my ideas fully reflected in your articles.

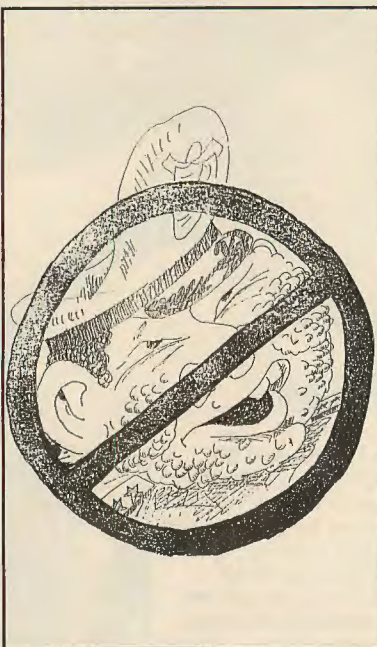
It's funny to remember how I learned of SOF. One day during the 1983 spring, a guy known for being a commie (yes, a commie!) told me, "Here's a magazine a guy like you surely will find interesting..." and he was right. He later told me he got SOF from an Italian army officer.

Here in Italy Gorby and the USSR are the current fashion, and people buy Soviet-made watches with the red star ... while I wear with pride pins of the USMC, 1st Air Cav. Div., or the Old Glory pin on my clothes, and this is not a matter of fashion to me.

Bad news hit me today: the death of Lance Motley, KIA in Burma. I have always appreciated his reports from around the world, and from what I can tell from the way he used to write, he was a man and a soldier concerned with freedom. He died too young, but I'm sure he had a hell of a good time wherever the action was, in the front lines where a true soldier feels his life really calls him. I want to publicly pay homage to his memory and say that we SOF readers will never forget him, nor the contras, the Karens, or other freedom fighters around the world.

Thanks to all of you at SOF for your wonderful magazine.

Roberto Pratico
Reggio Calabria, Italy



GET NEW LEADERS...

Sirs:

The more I read articles like "Bombs over Benghazi" (January '90), the more I think we should scrap our military and just hire the Israelis to do our work.

If there is humor in this at all, it has got to be our concern about "exposing the extraordinary capabilities" of our F-111s to the Russian navy. I'm sure the Russians did find it "extraordinary" that six F-111s couldn't find and hit one goddamned building! I am sure they also found it "extraordinary" that the commander of the three-carrier task force was afraid the Libyans might fight back.

I think we need to start putting our defense dollars into training our military leaders instead of buying all the crap the defense industry pumps out. We don't need "new weapons." We need "new leaders." I think we would be better off with M1s and BARs and leaders like Chesty Puller, George Patton, and David Hackworth.

R. Barker
Sylmar, California

You don't know how much we wish that we could disagree with what you say.

VOLUNTEERING FOR A "JUST CAUSE"?...

Sirs:

A civilian friend of mine showed the spirit of volunteerism that President Bush calls for when one of weakman Noriega's dingbats showed up in his neighborhood with a LAW rocket. My friend, a Vietnam vet with a bronze star and a purple heart, removed the LAW rocket and the dingbat's shoulder with a blast from his 12 gauge shotgun. You never know when one of these Vietnam vets is going to flash back and freak out!

Chuck Fowler
Belmont, Arizona

Reader Fowler also sent copies of some grassroots anti-pineapple posters which were making the rounds in Panama while Noriega was still in control, some of which we have reprinted here. Thanks, Chuck. ✂

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If we could put a voice to all the books written on Vietnam, they would probably sound a cacophonous dirge of armchair-warrior laments, howling excuses and bleated apologies — with a few crystal clear notes rising far above the rest to remind us that good men fought and often died in Southeast Asia and that they, if nothing else, should be remembered.

Unfortunately, those books are few and far between. Fortunately, they do continue to surface, and the most recent arrival, **Break Contact, Continue Mission**, (Paladin Press) joins that small fraternity of Vietnam war literature that will be remembered for all the right stuff: drama, humor, realism, excitement, accuracy; all woven into tight fiction form that pops like gunfire and rushes like adrenaline.

Not much has been written on MACV/SOG's Command & Control operations but first-time author Raymond Harris, himself a 5th Special Forces Group vet who ran recon missions into Cambodia and Laos, helps pull the shroud of secrecy away with **Break Contact**.

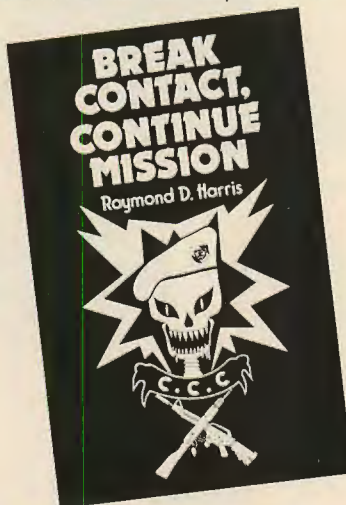
Although officially the United States didn't send U.S. forces on cross-border forays, we did, and they usually came in the form of CCS, CCC, and CCN — for Command & Control South, Central and North. Harris, drawing on his own experiences during 1969-70, creates a young SF Specialist 4th Class, Ted Garner, who somewhat naively steps off the airplane in Vietnam and heads for CCC, HQ'ed just south of Kontum.

Garner's job? Cross-border recon — the toughest, grittiest and most gut-wrenching day-after-day job one could ever hope — or die — for. Where Harris shines in **Break Contact, Continue Mission** is his ability to breathe life into Garner, to create a scared young man who isn't destined for super-hero status, but who gets with the program, learns and does his job, and finally walks away from it — still young, but rife with the physical and psychic scars from a year across the fence. Here, against all odds for a Vietnam combat book, is the human side of the shadow war, painted with ferocity and tragedy, and destined to stick with you long after you've turned the last page. (For information on ordering **Break Contact, Continue Mission**, contact Paladin Press at 303-443-7250.)

If Ray Harris' novel gets you thinking about Vietnam, **The American Experience In Vietnam — A Reader** (The University of Oklahoma Press) edited by Grace Sevy may help you sort out some of the questions that still haunt this nation about its ill-fated involvement in Southeast Asia. Sevy,

who teaches regularly at Stanford University, compiled scores of articles dealing with American policy, the military in Vietnam, role of the press, the antiwar movement, and the continuing controversy and consequences of Vietnam, all of which formed the foundations for much of her classwork and which forms the basis of this book.

You may not agree with many of the views expressed in **The American Experience in Vietnam**, but that's really its purpose: to generate discussion and perhaps come up with some answers about the why and how of



Vietnam. With America's shift to the arena of Low Intensity Conflict (Vietnam in its early stages), we could, if we don't carefully analyze our past mistakes (Vietnam in the mid- to latter stages), repeat them. Let's make sure we understand what went wrong last time so we can get it right in the future.

On the subject of wars — big, small and middle size — come three fine books well worth adding to your reference library. John Keegan, perhaps the finest and most widely read contemporary military historian, has produced **The Second World War** (Viking), an examination of key strategies and battles that shaped the outcome of World War II, and in many ways our current world. In six parts Keegan analyzes the wars in the West, East and Pacific from the 1940/41-1943 timeframe through the intense and final 1943-45 world at war.

A bit further down the warpath came Korea, and James L. Stokesbury brings it to life with **A Short History of**

the Korean War (Quill - William Morrow), an excellent third to his trilogy on World War I and II. As Stokesbury aptly writes: "...In 1950 the questions were more naive than [was Korea really necessary?] Americans, greeted with the advent of war for the second time in a decade, were asking: Why are there U.S. troops in Korea, and how did they get there? Indeed, most Americans, including many who would die there, did not even know where Korea was." Unfortunately, most Americans still don't.

But if Korea leaves the average American somewhat vague, then the 1965 Dominican Crisis leaves 'em absolutely blank. Why did U.S. Marines and 82nd Airborne Division troopers deploy to that island in the sun? Why were roughly 350 killed or wounded? Was the intervention, almost universally condemned, a successful application of U.S. political and military prowess against a communist threat or, as Senator J. William Fulbright contended, did the United States act "impetuously and unwisely in unseemly fear of an indigenous revolution in the Dominican Republic"? General Bruce Palmer, Jr., placed in command of U.S. forces deployed to the Dominican Republic, does much to examine the issues and people involved in **Intervention in the Caribbean - The Dominican Crisis of 1965** (The University Press of Kentucky). If nothing else, the Dominican Republic incursion proved that further adventures such as Grenada and Panama could be made to work — and they were.

Finally, settle back for some pure entertainment and a damned fine book in master military storyteller W.E.B. Griffen's **Counterattack - Continuing the Saga of the Corps** (G.P. Putnam's Sons), book three in this series. From the surprise Japanese attack against Pearl Harbor to the U.S. counterstrike against enemy-held Guadalcanal, Griffen again taps into the military heart and mind with the same realism, flair for characterization and hammering action that have made his Brotherhood of War series million sellers.

Provocative and entertaining reading this month — perhaps even enough to help you forget that the taxman cometh. ✕

IN REVIEW



by John Coleman

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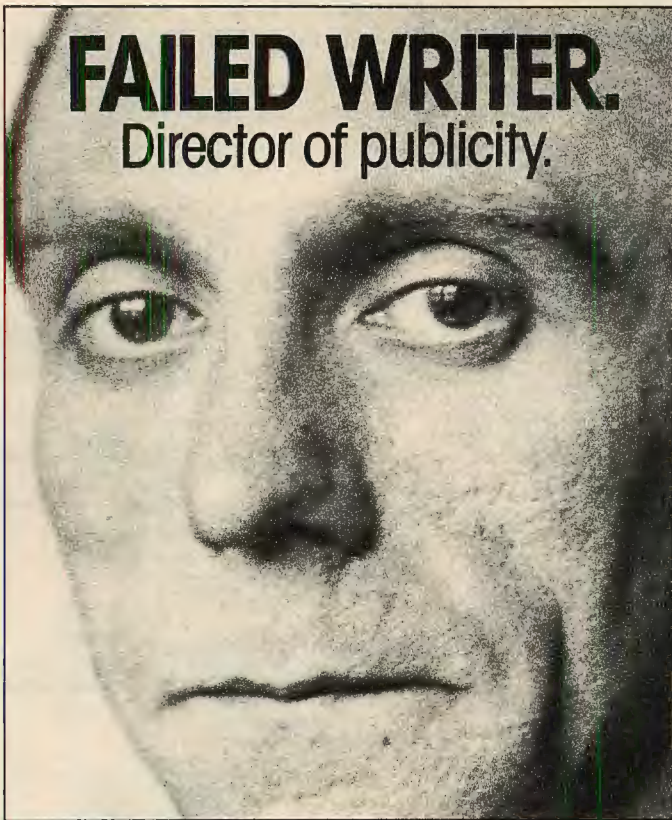
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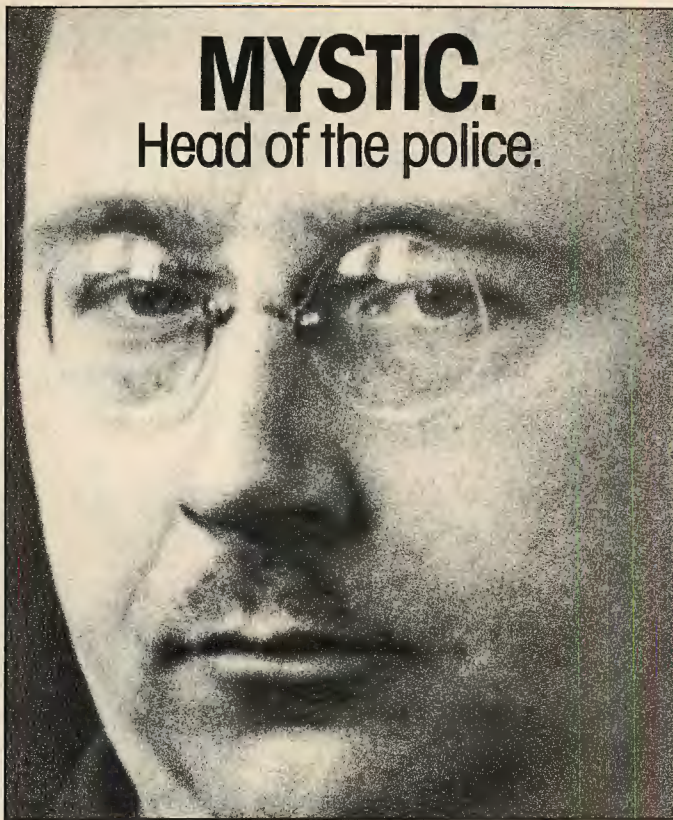
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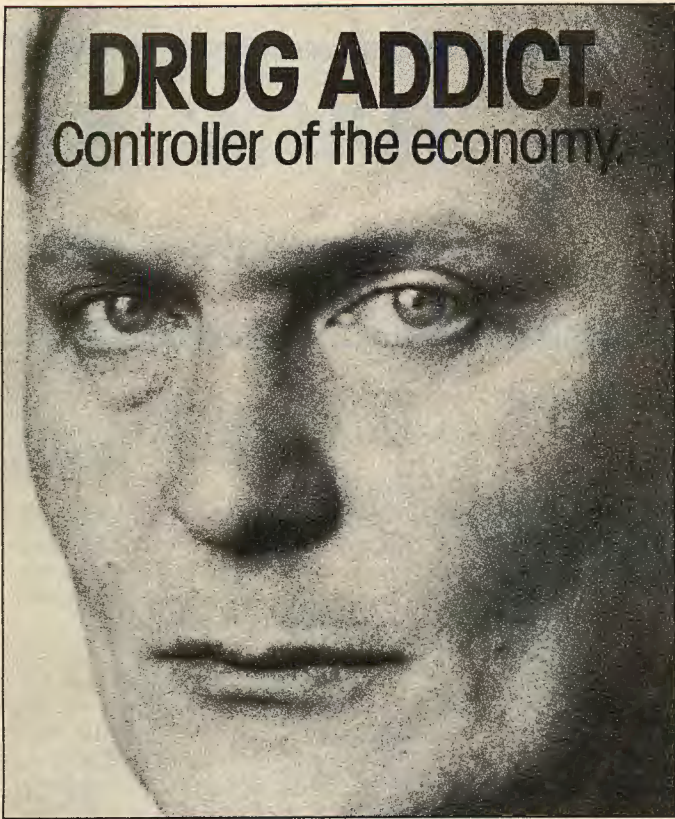
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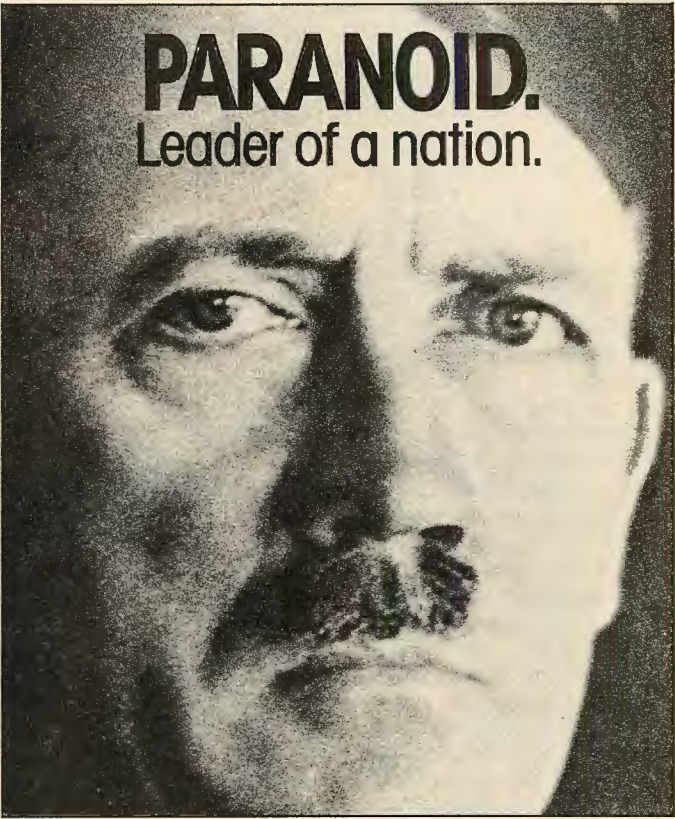
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M24 Sniper Fiasco

Have you received any user feedback on the U.S. Army's new M24 Sniper Weapon System (SWS) since SOF's article on this rifle appeared in the July 1988 issue? If so, what is the assessment to date?

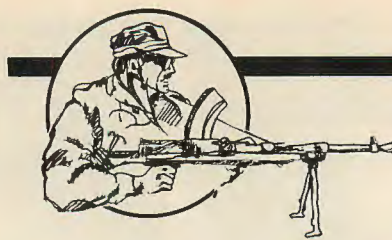
Kevin Thomas
Santa Fe Springs, CA

Thus far, all the reports we have received on the M24 are negative. There were 10 M21s (accurized M14s with ART scopes) at battalion level in divisions such as the 101st Airborne. They are being replaced at the ratio of three M21s for one M24. Each Soviet motorized rifle platoon has one Dragunov-equipped sniper.

As issued, the complete SWS package weighs an incredible 64 pounds! This includes an airborne drop-case and an armorer's kit with a torque-wrench set that has seven socket sizes. Four of these sockets must be used to attach and zero the scope. The scope and rings must be removed to attach the emergency iron sights. These consist of the Redfield Palma target system. Their front inserts feature several posts of differing widths and a set of front apertures (intended for paper punching, not combat). Designed exclusively for small-bore (.22 LR rimfire) competition, the Redfield Palma sight is too large, heavy and complicated for the battlefield and will shake loose under recoil from either the 7.62x51mm NATO or .300 Winchester magnum cartridges. The complex Mil Dot reticle pattern on the issued Leupold Ultra M3-10X scope has no rangefinder system and almost requires a hand calculator to employ. No instructions for the scope have been provided. No bipod has been issued (an essential component, in my opinion), yet in addition to a firing pin and sling swivel, the spare parts kit includes an extra magazine follower and spring (components almost never required).

It has been reported that the sling swivels tear out of the stock and that the stock comb is too low. Furthermore, as the stock was made too short for the average soldier and the buttplate assembly must usually be extended to the maximum length of pull, it will not stay adjusted and must be continually re-tightened. The issued steel, sectioned cleaning rod has no protective coating and will destroy the bore in short order.

The Remington 700 long action—equipped with a steel trigger guard and floorplate assembly, 40X trigger mechanism and radially-rifled, five-groove barrel—has all the makings for a superb turn-bolt sniper. It appears that, once again, the blue sky rangers that direct our small arms programs have managed to turn a silk purse into a sow's ear.



FULL AUTO

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

Mr. Machine Gun's Mailbag

Rumanian AKM Handguard



What is your opinion of the vertical foregrip as commonly issued on the Rumanian Kalashnikov? What does the "S" stand for in "AKMS?" Finally, now that the importation of semiautomatic-only versions of military assault rifles has been banned, where can I obtain spare parts for my AK?

Michael J. Pastika, Jr.
San Angelo, TX

While it looks racy and would appear to be a good idea, the laminated bottom handguard with a vertical grip found on Rumanian AKs has, in combat, proven to be a hindrance. Kalashnikov magazines must be removed and inserted with a forward rocking motion. All of the Rumanian vertical grip handguards that I have examined in the field were badly scuffed on the bottom, indicating that they impede speed reloads in high anxiety environments. It has become a more or less common practice for irregular troops to cut off the vertical portion of the Rumanian lower handguard.

The "S" in "AKMS" stands for "Skldyvayushchimsya prikladom" which translates as "collapsible buttstock." The "U" in AKSU-74 (the so-called "Krinkov") stands for "Ukorochniy" which means "shortened." The caliber 5.45x39mm AKSU-74 is principally employed by armored vehicle crews and Spetsnaz commandos.

PARS International (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 37184, Louisville, KY 40233; phone: 502-363-0000) sells an original spare parts kit for the Kalashnikov that includes a hammer spring, firing pin and retainer, and extractor with spring and retainer for \$35, postpaid. These parts will fit all AKs except those with a

spring-loaded, retracted firing pin, such as the PRC Poly Technologies, AK-47/S (in this instance "S" stands for "semiautomatic-only").

PARS International can also provide Kalashnikov barrels, bolt heads, bolt carriers, triggers, receiver covers, cleaning kits and Egyptian laminated wood buttstocks and handguards.

Defective Canadian Ammo

At a recent gun show several dealers were selling 5.56x45mm NATO ball ammunition purported to be Canadian SS109. It was attractively packaged on stripper clips in cloth bandoleers. The cartridge cases were headstamped "IVI 85" with a NATO cross in circle. Why would military ammunition of such recent vintage be offered for sale on the commercial market? Are these production overruns or is there something we aren't being told about this ammo?

Chris Landis
San Luis Obispo, CA

The ammunition was manufactured by Industry Valcartier, Inc., Dominion of Canada in 1985. SOF has learned that it did not meet MilSpec and was rejected by the Canadian government. In an effort to find out why, SOF turned over a batch with this headstamp to Thunderbird Cartridge Company, Inc. (TCCI, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 302, Phoenix, AZ 85001; phone: 602-237-3823) for test and analysis.

The results can be briefly summarized as follows.

Upon visual examination it was found that several cases displayed evidence of a case lamination defect which looks like a small piece of brass foil adhering to the exterior case wall. This defect presents the potential for high pressure case failure and any ammunition exhibiting this abnormality should be destroyed. Furthermore, during the firing phase of TCCI's tests, one cartridge left a ¼-inch long, thread-like fragment of the bullet jacket in the bore. This can contribute to excessive bore fouling.

Pressure tests yielded an average of 59,900 CUP (Copper Units of Pressure) at 82 degrees F. Although this is about 6,000 CUP higher than most U.S. ball ammunition in this caliber, examina-

tion of fired cases exhibited a high number of 100 percent clean casewall shears at the chamber vent hole produced by the modern bond pressure gun, which normally indicates harder cases than usual. Thus, they should be able to withstand the somewhat higher pressures. Nevertheless, pressure increases approximately 60 psi (not exactly equivalent to CUP) per degree of temperature rise, and firing this ammunition in a high-temperature environment could drive pressures to a more dangerous level.

Based upon TCCI's analysis, SOF cannot recommend Canadian 5.56x45mm SS109-type ammunition with the "IVI 85" headstamp. It should be avoided.

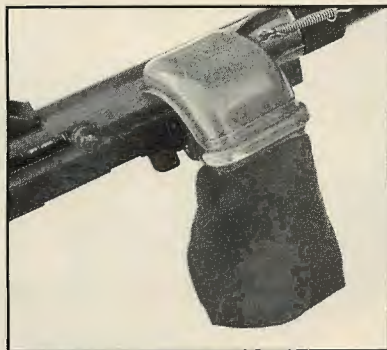
Not all military ball ammunition of recent manufacture available on the commercial market is necessarily defective. For example, PRC, Yugoslav and Portuguese ammunition manufactured during the 1980s is quite safe and acceptably accurate in all calibers. They are all either production overruns or were produced specifically for commercial sale in the United States.

Swedish "K" Brass Catcher

What is the purpose of the brass catcher sometimes shown attached to the Swedish "K" submachine gun? I

have been told that it was designed to be used in conjunction with the sound suppressed version of this weapon for clandestine operations. Is this true?

George Karkazis
Chicago, IL



I once thought this was the case, and while it would be more exciting to envision this accessory as having a sinister application, its intended use is actually far more mundane. Keep in mind that any special operations group desiring to prevent determination of its origin through examination of empty cases left on the scene would have access to either foreign-produced or sterile ammunition. Also, the real possibility of a case bouncing back into the receiver to cause a serious stoppage

would be an unacceptable trade-off. Furthermore, special ops types, who often go so far as to cut the handles off their toothbrushes to save weight, would never tolerate excess baggage like this.

The brass catcher that can be attached to the ejection port of the Swedish Carl Gustaf M45 (B) SMG, consisting of an L-shaped sheet metal funnel and a cloth bag, had its origins with a similar device constructed for the Bergmann MP35/1 submachine guns which Sweden purchased from Germany in 1939.

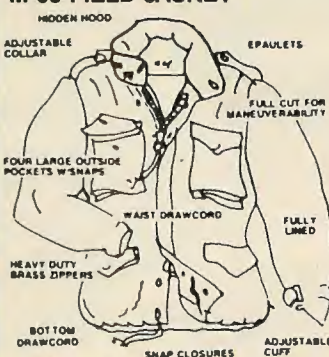
The brass catcher was supposed to prevent empty cases from flying into the face of a military vehicles driver, presumably while speeding into or away from combat. While this is a thoughtful gesture, it's hard to imagine a scenario where it would really be important. During training cycles, the brass catcher was also used to collect cases and keep empty cases from disturbing others on the firing lines.

There was supposedly a brass catcher made for the sound suppressed Sten MkIIs SMG. I have never encountered one. Brass catchers are used with good effect aboard aircraft having crew-served machine guns to keep personnel from slipping on the ejected cases. ✕

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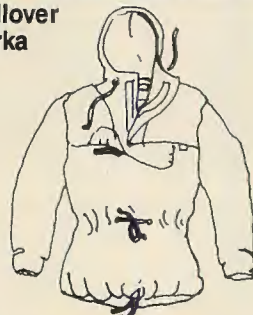
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THE womp, womp, womp, of the Hueys made conversation almost impossible. Minutes before, we had taken off from the Air Force side of the field at Da Nang. We were flying lead with two gunships as cover. On the right, the pilot came within a rotor's distance from our open-sided chopper.

"What the hell are they doing," yelled the doorgunner, pulling his M60 inside our ship in an overprotective manner. Those of us with headsets could hear our pilot chewing out the sloppy flying of some FNG Lieutenant. "Captain, we just wanted a look," came the reply. "She" heard the crew's lament and stood in the door, holding on to the gunner with one hand and waving with the other. This brought a cry from the chopper on our left, so she started to the other side. We hit an air pocket and she landed in my lap. The look of shock and envy from the rest of the crew and passengers was laughable. If they only knew. But I wasn't going to tell them, or anyone else, if I could help it.

The morning had started like so many others with the same womp, womp, womp overhead. This time, it was the fan in our room at the Erawan Hotel in Bangkok. Clean sheets, hot water and having her asleep in my arms, was making a new man of me. And I was more than interested in showing her that new man. At about noon she finally opened the drapes and let the light flow over her body as she jumped back into bed. Unfortunately, the same light glared down at my slug colored form. Tan arms and legs looked OK, but the rest of me hadn't seen the sun since God knows when. As she lay next to me, with her head resting on her hand, she looked down and laughed. "Are those the critters that you told me about?" she asked, looking at the tiny specks playing football in the hairs on my stomach. To this day, she believes that everyone had critters in Southeast Asia, that they came with the territory. God bless her.

We were headed for the chopper landing site flying at about 7,000 feet. She looked at the small dot that was the stage, and the seemingly empty hills surrounding it, and tears came to her eyes. She raised up my earphone and whispered loudly, "We came 8,000 miles, and no one showed up." Just then, the chopper started to make a combat approach and seemed to drop from the sky. As we hovered for a few seconds before we headed for the pad, the hillsides started to move. She glanced out the door again, and looked into the faces of 85,000 cheering, cammie-clad men — Welcome to Vietnam's 1967 Bob Hope Christmas



I WAS THERE

by Patrick Curtis

Beauty and the Grunt



Raquel Welch belts out a tune for some 85,000 GIs during Bob Hope's 1967 Christmas tour of Vietnam. Photo: courtesy of the author

Show. Now, she really started to cry.

From the moment we landed and she jumped into the waiting arms of the two largest Marine MPs on earth, her life changed, forever. She finally realized that it was wonderful to be her. No more "birdlegs" from high school, no more being ashamed because she had a funny name, no more explaining her "foreign" looks. She was Raquel Welch, and finally damn proud of it. To hell with that little blond with fat ankles in homeroom. Here were 85,000 guys and they all loved her. She was quickly moved backstage and I was left standing there, just another clown in green.

Hope started the show, the first of the '67 tour, right on time. By then, a gunny sergeant had shown me to my "seat," a log about 10 rows from the stage. The front rows were filled with the walking wounded, Marines and airmen in wheelchairs and nurses. For once the brass and REMFs hadn't hogged the choice seats. On that day, the best of the best were there.

Thanks, Bob.

As Hope started his comedy routine with Gary Crosby, I looked down the log, and almost croaked. There, yelling and whistling, was every general

and admiral in the Pacific sitting on "my" log. I had grown up four doors away from Bob Hope. We had our grammar school graduation in his backyard because his daughter, Linda, was in our class, but how did he organize this? But, what the hell, he got me to Bangkok and back, so who was I to complain.

The huge crowd was growing restless. A cry of "Raquel, Raquel" started from the cheap seats and moved forward like rolling thunder. It was incredible. Hope stopped the song he was doing with Les Brown and his band, and said, "OK, boys, here's what you've been fighting for. Yessir ladies, and please be gentlemen, here she is, Raquel Welch!" Everyone went ape-shit. The MPs moved to block the stage. It was Raquel's moment, and she took charge. Wearing a blue and white knit mini-dress that seemed to start about 30 inches above her knees, she took the mike and moved to the edge of the stage. When she sat down, it was like the rug was pulled out from tens of thousands of standing, screaming men. They hit the ground with a thud that must have been heard in Hanoi. Thousands of cameras went off, and probably a few Marines. Those had to be the most photographed knees in the world. Then she and Hope did a little song and dance and a comedy routine.

Bob then quietly left the stage to Raquel. She and the band started "A Different Drum" and the MPs couldn't contain the crowd. Sensing the moment, she invited the Marines and airmen on stage, to dance. For 20 minutes or more she danced with as many fresh faced, shy young men as she could. Finally, the band ran out of gas. Blowing the crowd a kiss, she reluctantly was escorted off stage. Now, if I could just get off this damn log and get backstage ... no chance.

Hope came back on and said it was time to introduce the brass in the audience. My time to flee had passed. Oh, how I really wish I had. Bob started with General Westmoreland and worked his way down the log. As each branch of the service's top guy was announced a contest started to

Continued on page 73

COMBAT lessons are often learned at great pain. One of the most painful lessons during the Vietnam War was the ambush at Soui Cat, where a platoon of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment was almost destroyed. The lessons learned from this action are worth studying again and again. They are universally applicable, and will save lives in future conflicts.

On 21 May 1967, Kilo Troop, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, was providing security for the 595th Engineer Company at the Gia Ray rock quarry in III Corps. Kilo Troop also had the mission of clearing Highway 1 from the rock quarry west to the junction with Interprovincial Route 2. The troop commander assigned the road clearing task to the 1st Platoon, and they moved out just before 0800. The platoon consisted of seven Armored Cavalry Vehicles, or ACAVs (M113 Armored Personnel Carriers with armored tubs and shields for their M2 .50 caliber machine guns, and shields for their side-mounted M60 machine guns), with four or five men per ACAV. They were reinforced with an M48A3 tank from Mike Troop, and accompanied by three engineers in a jeep, and Kilo Troop's 2½-ton mess truck.

The 1st Platoon reached the village of Soui Cat without incident, and there was nothing in the village to indicate what lay ahead. The villagers seemed to be involved in normal activities, and there were many women and children in sight. The advance guard, consisting of two ACAVs, K10 (with the platoon sergeant aboard) and K11, crossed the Song Rai stream and continued west. The main body, following a couple of hundred yards behind, consisted of M34 (the tank), K16 (the platoon leader's ACAV), K4 (the mess truck), the engineers in their jeep, K14, K13, K17 (the ACAV actually assigned to the platoon sergeant), and K18. The order of march is shown in Figure 1.

The ambush opened when K10, in the lead, was hit by a 75mm recoilless rifle. The vehicle was brought to a halt, and the on-board ammunition was set afire. The platoon sergeant gave a radio warning, "Ambush, ambush, ambush!" — but because he was in the wrong vehicle, with only one radio, the warning went out *only* on the platoon radio net.

The crew of K10 were forced to abandon the burning ACAV, but they took with them a case of grenades and one of the M60 machine guns in addition to their personal weapons. Following K10, K11 made its way around the burning ACAV, took on board three of K10's crew, and fought its way through the ambush. The platoon sergeant and one other crew-



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Munremur MacGerrcinn

Anatomy of an Ambush

man from K10 were left in the ambush zone.

As the ambush was triggered against the advance guard, recoilless rifle and RPG-2 fire broke out along

in the firing, attempted to get back in the truck and make a run for it. They drove forward but took a hit from a recoilless rifle and came to a stop about 60 meters from the tank. One of

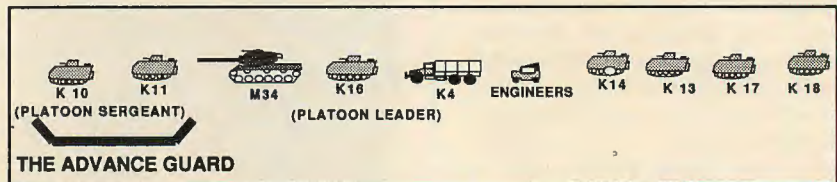


Figure 1: The original march column of the 1st Platoon.

the length of the main body. The tank, M34, was hit once, then took several more recoilless rifle hits as it moved forward firing its main gun. It ran off the road and came to a halt after about 100 meters of advance.

Thinking the tank out of action and its crew dead, the platoon leader in K16 bypassed the now-silent M34 and continued down the road, with the crew firing the .50 caliber and M60 machine guns. K16 sustained several hits from recoilless rifles, and the crew counted six enemy recoilless rifle teams and "numerous" RPG-2 teams.

Stopping beside the abandoned K10, K16 picked up the platoon sergeant and remaining crewman, then continued through the kill zone, joining K11 on the far side. After a hurried discussion with the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant mounted K11 and the two ACAVs attacked back into the ambush, driving down the road with all guns firing.

the cooks was killed while attempting to abandon the vehicle for the second time and the other was wounded. The latter "played dead" but was searched by VC, who shot him twice in the side. Miraculously, he survived.

The engineer jeep managed to dash about 500 meters through the ambush, but was finally hit and brought to a stop. One man was killed, while another was picked up by K16 as it came back through the ambush. The third man in the jeep, unarmed, tried to make his way alone through the ambush. He ran past several VC who looked at him, but did not fire. Finally one VC with a rifle blocked his path. Without stopping, the American drew his sheath knife, stabbed the VC, and continued on to K10, where he joined another American who was firing an M60. Both these men were picked up by K16 as it fought its way clear of the killing zone for the second time.

The vehicles in the rear of the

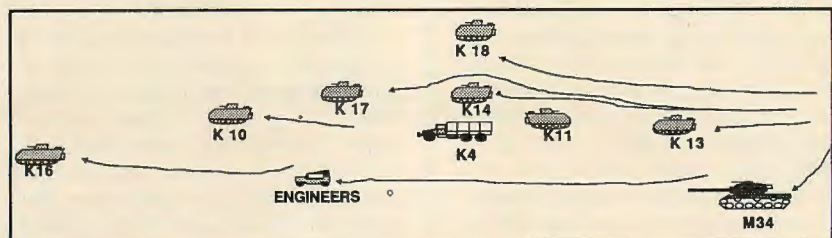


Figure 2: The final disposition of the 1st Platoon.

The cooks abandoned K4, but found themselves isolated in the midst of about 20 VC. They fired almost all their ammunition, then, during a lull

platoon suffered even more heavily than those in the lead. K14 came to a halt next to the mess truck and sustained several recoilless rifle and RPG-

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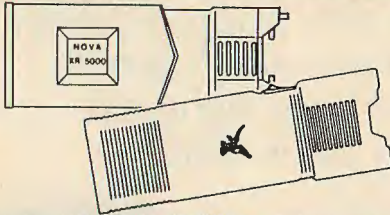
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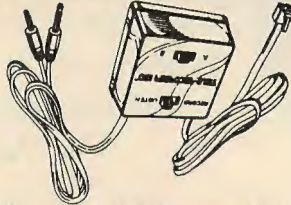
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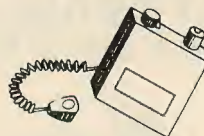
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2 hits. K13, following K14, suffered a hit that wounded all the crewmen. Only one man was able to continue the fight. He began to throw grenades out the cargo hatch, attempting to prevent the VC from closing in on the disabled vehicle. He was soon blown out of the vehicle by a recoilless rifle hit and lost consciousness. This man was the only survivor of K13.

The last two vehicles, K17 and K18, attempted to drive the length of the kill zone. Coming abreast of K14, K18 was hit repeatedly. The complete story of K18's agony can never be told as there were no survivors.

The remaining vehicle, K17, kept moving. It sustained several RPG-2 hits, wounding most of the crewmen and putting both M60 machine guns out of action.

An RPG-2 hit the driver's compartment, killing the driver, and K17 came to a halt. Most of the crew were either dead or too badly wounded to abandon the vehicle.

Only the platoon medic and one other man were still able to function. They abandoned the vehicle and became separated. The medic crawled down the roadside ditch, looking for other Americans. As he crawled, he heard K17 take several more hits. When the firing died down, he crawled back to K17 and found one wounded man inside the vehicle. All the rest of the crew were dead.

The tank had lost both machine guns and its sights. The loader, sitting on top of the turret when the action began, was severely wounded and later died. After M34 ran off the road and stalled its engine, the other members of the crew pulled the dying loader inside and "buttoned up." M34 continued to take hits, and two crewmen attempted to defend the vehicle by firing a .45 pistol and an M3 submachine gun from the tank commander's hatch. This produced no results, but in the process they noticed that the gun switch lights were still on. Using "Kentucky windage," they simply pointed the main gun in the direction of the enemy and fired, correcting for the strike of each shot. Each shot, however, drew return fire and ultimately M34 sustained a total of 14 hits and ceased fire but survived the battle, still in running condition. One member of the crew, the loader, died.

In the midst of the fight around K14 and K18, the platoon leader's voice was heard over K14's radio, "Move out! Move Out!" (Some witnesses remember it as "Hard Right! Hard Right! Move out!") It later transpired that the platoon leader had accidentally keyed the radio while talking to

Continued on page 75

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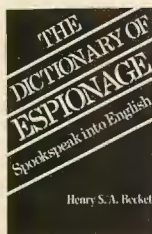
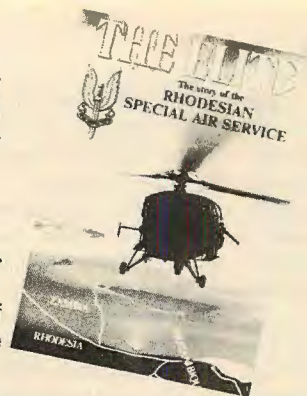
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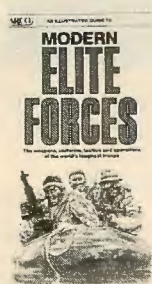
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Ordering information on items not given detailed treatment can be found elsewhere in the magazine with the company's ad (see Advertisers Index for help).



HIDE YOUR GUNS

Never mind that the Constitution guarantees everyone the right to keep and bear arms, the new breed of congressmen seem gung ho to deny us that right. Already in several states the only gun a person is likely to have is a hidden gun. Hiding your firearms is certainly preferable to meekly

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by Tom Slizewski

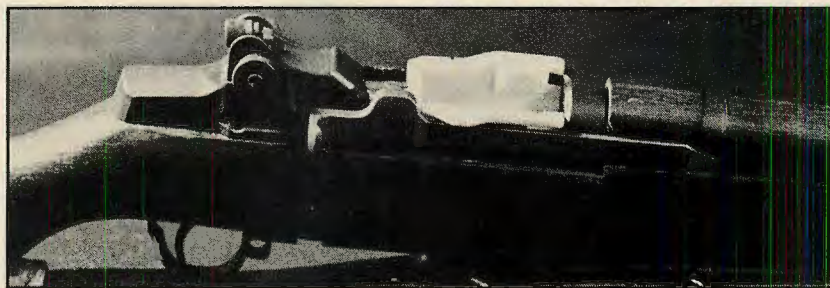
surrendering them to the first blue suit that shows up at your door, but does present storage problems.

That's where Muzzle-Nuzzle Company of Chico, California (where else?), comes in. Their natural-fiber storage covers are as good as it gets for safely tucking away your weapons. Made from a specially woven heavy cotton fabric and available in over 20 different configurations and sizes, Muzzle-Nuzzles keep moisture and corrosive chemicals away from your firearms during storage.

Most gun cases are lined with high pile synthetics that actually collect

moisture and form corrosive chemicals as they age and deteriorate. Using Muzzle-Nuzzles inside these cases is best for long term storage but even by themselves "Nuzzles" are great protection. Unfortunately this is a product whose time has come. Prices range from \$4 for the smallest "Nuzzle" to \$15 for the largest, which will hold an assault rifle and magazines. I urge you to give them a call for further details.

Contact The Muzzle-Nuzzle Company, Dept. SOF, 756 East Ninth St., Chico, CA 95928; phone 1-800-456-5255.



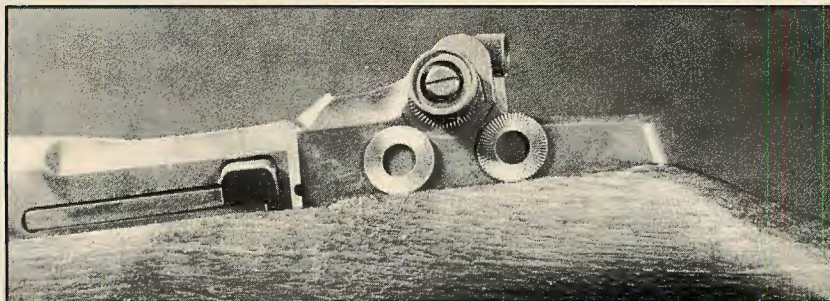
THOSE GRAND GARANDS

Likely still among the most-owned firearms in the United States, M1 Garands continue to faithfully serve the thousands who own them. The large number of Garand owners assures an active after-market, so new accessories for the rifle Patton dubbed the "greatest instrument of battle ever devised" aren't rare. A couple of cases in point:

P & M is marketing receiver inserts to aid in cleaning and maintaining M1s, M1A1s and M14s. This bright orange insert keeps the bolt fully retracted and protects the interior of the weapon from cleaning solvents.

It's available for \$7.20 postpaid from P&M Sales and Service, Dept. SOF, 5724 Gainsborough Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452; phone (312) 687-7149.

If you're interested in more precise sight adjustment or your elevation discs are just plain worn out, contact Steven Messa Tool Company. He's offering replacement, hardened, 1/2-minute-click rear sight elevation discs for Garand-series rifles. Made of high-carbon steel, they feature one-minute adjustments on one side and half-minute on the other. They cost just \$5 per set postpaid from Steven Messa Tool Company Inc., Dept. SOF, 123 Royal Ave., Cranston, RI 02920.



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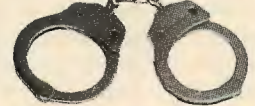
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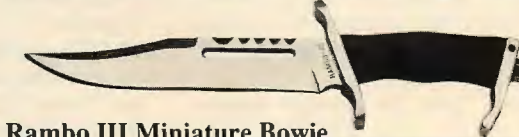
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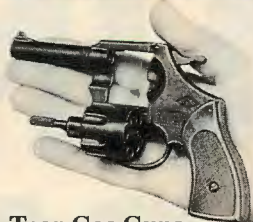


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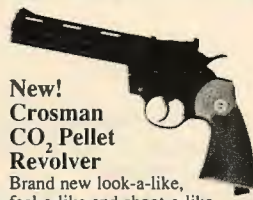


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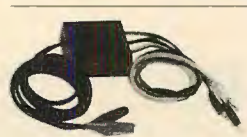
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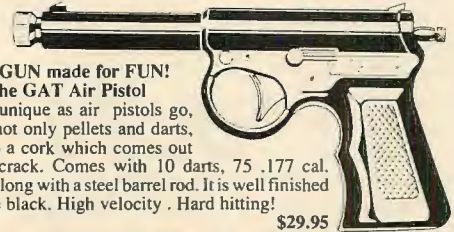
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AGAINST ALL ODDS

UNITA Beats Back FAPLA Offensive

Text & Photos by David James

PICKING up the telephone, I recognized the voice of Brigadier Isaias Samakuva, UNITA's senior representative in London. "David, we have a situation developing at home. The MPLA have finally launched their offensive toward Mavinga. We're already engaging them east of Cuito Cuanavale, and in the south near Yonde. And it looks like they are preparing a third axis from the north; we anticipate that one being launched from Munhango in the next few days. Are you interested in seeing it?"

An hour later I was on the train to London. From the Underground station at Piccadilly Circus it was a 10-minute walk down bustling Regent Street to UNITA's office just off Saville Row. Brigadier Samakuva and his aide, Colonel Abel Chivukuvuku, were waiting to brief me.

"When I called this morning, things looked more serious. We received word that the battle at Yonde is finished," Sam said, tapping the wall map with his finger. "Our semi-conventional forces stopped them absolutely. The remains of three FAPLA tactical battle groups are already withdrawing. Up here, though," he continued, circling a spot 50 kilometers from Cuito Cuanavale, "the fighting is still heavy, and the northern axis has kicked off

with another three tactical groups, all of them heavy on armor — T55s plus BMP-1s, BTR60s and BRDMs."

I paused for a minute. With two deep trips into Angola behind me already, I was well aware of the physical and logistical difficulty of getting to either of these two active fronts. And I was already planning trips to Somalia and Sudan, both stories SOF editor John Coleman had asked me to pursue, and which had taken considerable effort to organize. But here was a chance to cover what might be the decisive battle for Angola between the Soviet and Cuban-backed MPLA regime and UNITA. Well, Coleman was an Old Africa Hand as well as an experienced soldier and journalist; he'd have to trust me on this one.

"How quickly can I get in there, Sam?"

"There is an aircraft from W_____ to our headquarters at Jamba the day after tomorrow. In order to make it, you'll have to catch a flight out of Heathrow tomorrow night. Can you be ready that quickly?"

Damn, I thought. It didn't give me much time to get film, a transit visa for three countries I'd be jumping off from and all the other necessary bits and pieces, but — "I'll be there, Sam," I promised, heading out the door.

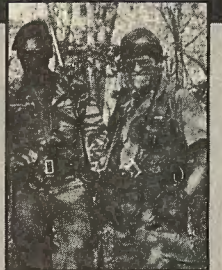
Two days later the airliner's wheels

touched down on the runway of the international airport. Bleary-eyed from the 11-hour flight, I was met by two unsmiling Africans in business suits who threw my bags into a sedan and drove to another airfield some distance away. I was delivered to a building off the side of the tarred strip where I settled into a well-worn chair and tried to nap, but by late morning the heat through the tin roof was reminding me that I was in Africa. Outside, scowling guards lounged under the shade of a flame tree; beyond them a paint-chipped twin turbo prop sat tiredly on a taxiway that shimmered under the blazing sun. With no identifying markings other than the registration letters, it begged the question of ownership. None of my business, I decided.

By late afternoon more passengers arrived — UNITA members returning from overseas conferences, plus a smattering of European Parliamentarians on a fact-finding tour. We climbed aboard and were quickly airborne. Approaching Angolan airspace, the aircraft descended to tree top level. Although it was highly unlikely the opposition would have MiGs this deep into UNITA-controlled Angola, there was no point in announcing our presence to Cuban and Soviet radar controllers 300 miles to the west and north. Less than an hour after crossing the unmarked border, the aircraft banked onto final approach for the tarmac strip near Jamba. Waiting for us was a welcoming committee of senior UNITA officers. General Wambo Kasitu, UNITA's

OUR MAN IN ANGOLA

One of the few foreign journalists trusted by UNITA to accurately report their side of the Angolan civil war, London-based American photojournalist David James has made repeated trips to the front lines of that war-torn African nation. His SOF reports include "Angola's Forgotten Front" (September '89) and "Good Morning, Cachingues!" (October '89), while our November '89 issue carried "The Accidental Target," an article based on the four months James spent with the now-defunct South West African Police Counterinsurgency Unit.



RIGHT: FOGO! Fire! and a barrage of 107mm rockets screams toward communist positions with BEST REGARDS FROM SOF.

INSET: UNITA guerrilla fills his canteen from clear, fast-flowing stream.



chief of intelligence, drew me to one side. It was the first time I'd seen him carrying an AK.

"Leave your bags on the aircraft, David," he said. "I'm flying with you to Mavinga. It's only another hour and from there we'll drive."

An audible sigh of relief escaped my lips. Only an hour by air, I thought, settling back into my seat, but almost three days by truck! By the time we lifted off, night had fallen. In the blackness below, orange arcs of wildfires ate through the dry bush of wintertime Angola. General Wambo used the time to bring me up to date on the fighting.

"...and they managed to get one tactical battle group as far as the source of the Cunzumbia River 70 kilometers east of Cuito Cuanavale before we stopped them," he concluded.

"What about air cover?" I asked.

"They tried, but we shot down one MiG-23 and damaged a second which crashed on landing at Menongue. Since

men immediately made room for us as the truck lurched forward, driving past the derelict ex-Portuguese homes on the north side of the runway. Behind us I heard the power come in and our aircraft accelerated down the runway to disappear into the African night.

I turned to the 30-year-old major general. "What's happening on the Munhango front?" I asked, raising my voice against the roar of the engine and wind blast. "Have you stopped them there as well?"

Zippering up his leather jacket against the chill, Wambo shook his head. "Their three tactical groups are still trying to advance," he shouted back. "They've pushed about 30 kilometers south of Munhango. As soon as you've seen what we did to them at the Cunzumbia River, I'm sending you north to have a look."

At daybreak the next morning I awoke, surprised to see my breath in the cold air. Half of our bodyguard were on watch, weapons in hand and constantly searching the terrain around us. I pushed the blanket

center, immediately identifiable by his almost boyish grin and widely spaced teeth, was General Arlindo "Ben-Ben" Pena, UNITA's deputy chief of staff. I'd first met him the year before when FAPLA launched an offensive along the Benguela railway. When we reached Gen. Ben's forward command post (FCP) just south of Cangonga, he already had the situation well under control, coordinating artillery barrages against communist-held Cangonga while maneuvering ambush units against a FAPLA battalion looking for his command post. It was no surprise to find him commanding UNITA's guerrilla and semi-conventional forces on this, the most critical of the present three fronts. Here was one highly experienced and competent fighting general.

Following a detailed briefing of the battle by Gen. Ben — punctuated by the distant rumble of FAPLA 122mm rockets — we returned to our URAL and drove another 20 kilometers to a scene of utter destruction. Within an area less than 100 meters across were the remains of six FAPLA vehicles. Soviet ammunition lay everywhere. The cloying smell of decaying flesh permeated the air.

"What happened here?" I asked.

"See that hole?" General Ben asked. I nodded. "One of our 120mm mortars hit a fully loaded BM-21. When that went up it destroyed the rest of them." He glanced around. "We have two more positions to show you, so as soon as you get the pictures you want we'll get moving."

A 10-minute drive through the bush brought us to an area of even greater desolation where the burnt-out hulks of 13 vehicles lay strewn across 20 acres of blackened tree stumps. When we stopped and engines were switched off, silence fell over the wasteland. Tattered pieces of FAPLA uniforms hung from trees on the periphery of the battlefield, while below empty foot gear bore further mute testimony to the force of UNITA's artillery barrage and the secondary explosions — FAPLA soldiers had literally been blown out of their boots. In between, the ground was carpeted with hundreds of unexpended mortar and artillery rounds. Around the skeleton of another BM-21 were the twisted remains of 122mm rockets. Diesel bowlers in dugout positions were recognizable only by the curved bottoms of the fuel tanks — the rest had melted away in what must have been a scene straight out of hell. A large mound of rice lay alongside what was left of a URAL. Noticing darkened clumps, I started digging them out with the toe of my boot before realizing the rice balls were cemented together with dried blood. And around it all, that same pervading smell.

I turned to Gen. Wambo in amazement. "What did you hit them with. And how were you so accurate?"

"We know this terrain, David. We put in reconnaissance teams who radioed back the grid references to our 120mm mortar crews and 107mm rocket launchers. The teams



UNITA semi-conventional troops on parade in Jamba with banners behind them depicting leaders of African countries which support UNITA.

then, nothing."

The aircraft banked and I saw two rows of oil lamps outlining the runway. Moments later we were rolling to a stop. As I stepped down the runway lights were already being snuffed out. MiGs had attempted a high altitude bombing run on this strip only two weeks earlier. The nearest bomb had landed almost a mile away and the 23s had immediately scooted for home after being discouraged by heavy anti-aircraft fire. No one expected a return, but there was no reason to give them an aiming point if they did.

A captured Soviet-built URAL truck was waiting for us with a heavily armed escort. My bags were tossed up to the bodyguard as Wambo and I climbed over the side. The

aside and stood, holding to the side of the swaying Soviet truck. Though I had spent over four months out of the previous 11 with UNITA in parts of central Angola, it was my first trip into this area. It was readily apparent why FAPLA saw this as the best route for their traditional dry-season offensives toward Mavinga. Absolutely flat with only moderately thick bush separating wide open *shanas* (savannas), it was ideal tank country. Fortunately for UNITA, it was also ideal for antiarmor missiles.

Three hours later the temperature had climbed into the 90s. We stopped and established comms with UNITA's forward command post, then proceeded another half hour before being met by two Unimogs mounted with Soviet KPV 14.5mm heavy machine guns. They took up positions ahead and behind to escort us to the front HQ. On arrival, a crowd of UNITA soldiers appeared from the tree line. In the

made some minor corrections after the first spotting rounds and then we hammered these positions. This was FAPLA's forward logistics position for their most advanced tactical group. Once we wiped this out, the survivors were forced to withdraw. Within a 5 kilometer radius we destroyed or captured a total of 28 vehicles, most of them carrying supplies."

"Losses?"

"We found and buried 89 FAPLA bodies between the two positions you've already seen and the next one. It's impossible to say how many we killed before finally stopping them here, or how many wounded they suffered. On our side we had 23 dead, 76 wounded and two missing. We think the two who are missing were captured. Which means they've probably been executed by now. 'Interrogation and execution' is the official policy of the MPLA toward any of our people they capture."

"Any evidence of Cubans?"

"No proof, but whites in command positions were observed by our recon teams. Our radio intercepts, though, indicate that they were Portuguese communists who have been in Angola since independence. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time they've been employed in an offensive against us. Until now, they've been providing security around the diamond fields in Lunda Province in the northeastern part of the country."

I excused myself and began walking through the area, stepping carefully over 60 and 82mm mortar rounds, 122mm D30 howitzer shells and 100mm shells for FAPLA's T-55 tanks. The amount of ordnance scattered over the site was staggering. A bit of paper peeking from under part of a charred ammo crate caught my attention. Lifting the plank, I saw it was a card bearing the Cuban flag and the bold words: SOMOS INTERNACIONALISTAS — We Are Internationalists — the Cuban cachet for Fidel's troops in Africa. On the other side was a letter. Although the edges of the card were burnt and the rest smudged with cordite, the words were still legible. And it was in Spanish. I slowly translated the letter. As the ungrammatical words fell into place, I was struck with the poignancy of the message.

Although I am not present, it read, a hundred thousand kisses to you and a profound wish that it finds you proud of your great Cuban son who on Angolan territory joins with one embrace to remove my delay from the African continent, and lift your arms to the wind that I am happy and content to return one day. Only that happiness recorded of your memory and you will feel the glory embrace you when I give you the kiss of victory.

On the front of the card — just above the Cuban flag — was the name Carlo. Looking at the destruction around me, I couldn't help but wonder who Carlo had been and if he had survived. But Wambo claimed there had been no Cubans here.



UNITA soldier repairs radiators at Likuwa logistics HQ.

Was UNITA disregarding their possible involvement, which would have been in direct contravention of the Brazzaville accords, as part of a delicate political balancing act, or had this letter simply been forgotten and left behind when the Cubans turned these vehicles over to their Angolan allies? Chances were that I would never know.

A few kilometers farther east the bush ended and we found ourselves on the edge of a shana. Directly in front was the wreckage of two tracked vehicles, both so torn apart as to be almost unrecognizable. General Ben explained that the lead BMP-1 had bogged down and was being pulled free by the second when UNITA crews in the far tree line hit them with "wire-guided anti-tank missiles." When I asked if the missiles had been TOWs, he smiled and answered: "We have very good antitank missiles." Looking at what was left of the vehicles, I had to agree.

Less than 100 meters from the BMPs lay the hollowed, blackened shell of a T-55. It was obvious that whatever had hit it set off the internal ammunition bay and fuel tank: barely a third of the tank remained. Incredibly, the turret, its 100mm gun barrel buried to the hilt in the sand, rested 40 meters away. "Our missile crew said there were five soldiers riding on top when they fired. When the missile hit they just disappeared." I scanned the far tree line, estimating the distance at 1500-1800 meters — well within range of either an American TOW or French MILAN. Examining the remains of the T-55 again, I was astounded at the accuracy and destructive capability of modern antiarmor weapons.

Our last stop was in the middle of the bush where the tail section of a MiG-23 lay. "Two days after the offensive was launched, they sent in the MiGs," Gen. Wambo explained. "They came in right on the deck, but our antiaircraft guns surprised

them and forced them to climb. As soon as they pulled up, we hit them with missiles." I started to ask him if Stingers had done it, but let the question slide, knowing UNITA always side-stepped the issue. Not far away were the burnt wings and fuselage. A neat mound of earth marked the final resting place of the pilot. Inside the shattered cockpit were bits of scalp. "According to the documents we found on the body, he was only 20 years old," Wambo said, shaking his head. "He was brave but too inexperienced to understand how poor his chances were if we caught him below 15,000 feet."

The following night we were waiting along the airstrip at Mavinga. At the sound of turbine engines approaching from the east, the oil lamps were lit. A half-minute later a set of landing lights stabbed through the night and within seconds we heard the chirp of wheels on the tarred runway. There was the roar of propeller blades reversing to bring the aircraft to a stop. Immediately the white glare of landing lights and dim orange of oil lamps were extinguished. The door opened and a small group of men stepped quietly to the runway while Gen. Wambo's men moved forward to help unload equipment. Wambo spoke quietly with one of the new arrivals then turned to me to make the introduction.

"This is Lieutenant Bibi," he said as I shook hands with the tall, thin UNITA officer. "He will be your escort officer for the rest of your trip. We've received a message from President Savimbi that you are to be given every help in moving to the front and getting your story. Your transportation has already been organized and you will be leaving tonight." The general spoke to him in Portuguese, then looked back at me. "He'll be in radio contact with us in Jamba every day, so if there is anything you need tell Lieutenant Bibi and he can pass it on to us. You should be back in three weeks or so. In the meantime, keep your head down and good luck." We shook hands and Gen. Wambo boarded the aircraft. The doors closed and as the engines came to life



UNITA troops gather near one of two FAPLA BMP-1s destroyed by U.S.-supplied TOW.

siderably improved, I climbed aboard and we set off on the final leg. Shortly before dawn we arrived at the front headquarters where Bibi and I were met by Gen. Nunda, commander for the Munhango front. Although I had never met the man, I recognized him as one of the legends within UNITA. His most famous exploit was the ambushing of a FAPLA-Cuban convoy a few years earlier. Of the 114 vehicles in the convoy, to include the armored escort, *every one was destroyed!* It was the caliber of men like this who had made UNITA the most professional and capable guerrilla army in the history of Africa. Sitting around a welcome fire in a grass hut, we were soon joined by his chief of staff, Brig. Luwawa, whom we would accompany to the forward command post. Using a topographical map hanging from one wall, General Nunda showed me the locations of the FAPLA tactical groups. At the moment the 1st Tactical Group had overrun its supply lines and was stalled. A command and logistics column was trying to fight its way to them, but were being badly hampered by UNITA artillery and guerrilla ambushes. Overall planning and control of this front was under the command of 30 Soviet staff officers based at Ndala Sul 30 kilometers south of Luena. Another Soviet unit was coordinating logistics at Cuanza 25 kilometers east of Munhango on the Benguela railway.

Eager to get moving, I asked if we couldn't leave immediately. They had already explained that the FCP was only 90 minutes away. Both senior officers shook their heads. Enemy air activity was extremely heavy during the day, they explained. Although the MiGs were staying well above 20,000 feet, there was always a chance that the dust trail kicked up by the truck would be spotted. And that would pinpoint UNITA logistic routes to the front. We wouldn't move until shortly before dusk, by which time all the patrolling aircraft would be back at their bases. Night sorties by the Angolan air force were non-existent as the result of poor pilot training and the increased odds of their being hit by Stingers; at night the heat signatures of the MiGs' Tumansky engines were greatly enhanced.

As if to emphasize General Nunda's caution, the sound of the morning's first flight of MiGs passed over us. Stepping outside the hut I scanned the hazy sky, but the Soviet-built fighter-bombers were flying well above visual range. General Nunda joined me. Glancing upward, he shrugged and clapped me on the shoulder. "Not big worries," he said in broken English. "But better you wait for later." He raised his head again toward the sky and smiled. "Why make it more easy for the communists?"

We didn't pull out until almost midnight, having waited for a supply convoy to arrive



As RTO with PRC-25 monitors UNITA forward observer, Colonel Seth scans far ridge line for any sign of the enemy.

the oil lamps were lit once more. The aircraft accelerated down the runway and was gone.

In the silence that followed, there was a sudden sense of loneliness. As much as I respected these men, I was still a foreigner from a completely different background and culture. But the loneliness was tinged with excitement and a very conscious fear that always raised its head when I was heading toward combat. "Put it out of your mind, Sunshine," I said to myself. "This is what you came for. You're committed now."

We returned to the dugout quarters to organize equipment while the URAL sped away to refuel. When it returned, food and ammunition — wooden boxes containing Chinese-made 107mm rockets for UNITA's Type 63 MRLs — were loaded by the standard 15-man bodyguard I had come to expect. Even though the vehicles had been requisitioned for me, there was still ample room for critical supplies. Some of the men I recognized from the previous trip when I'd been taken deep into FAPLA territory to attack the important enemy garrison post at Cachingues. There were enthusiastic greetings as we all climbed aboard and the truck pulled out, heading



Shell casing of 122mm D30 howitzer round with UNITA guerrilla and destroyed FAPLA supply vehicle in background at site of abandoned FAPLA position 30 kilometers south of Munhango.

north. As before, we traveled at night to take advantage of the cooler air. Daytime movement was limited not by security, but the oppressive heat: dragging along in first or second gear through deep sand sent oil temperatures dangerously high with the subsequent risk of engine damage. However well-supplied UNITA was, they were careful about treating their equipment with respect.

On the fifth day I went down hard with fever, chills and severe joint pain. Bibi and the others helped me into the URAL and we drove through the bush to clinic staffed by UNITA doctors. Sitting doubled over with pain in the dirt-floored shack, I answered their questions while Bibi translated. A blood smear was taken and examined under an old but spotlessly maintained microscope. Their tentative diagnosis was confirmed: malaria. When I said that it was impossible, that I'd been taking both my nivaquine and paludrine anti-malarial pills, they smiled patronizingly and explained it was a resistant strain. Handing me a fistful of chloroquine, they promised I'd be feeling better by the next day.

The following afternoon, weak but con-

so we could transfer more ammunition to our truck for delivery to the front line troops. The rolling terrain quickly turned to steep valleys dominated by sharp, forested ridge lines. Under an almost full moon, a light mist gathered in the valleys, laying a silver shroud over gnarled trees. For the first time we drove without headlights. I started to question this until I saw a number of small campfires glowing through the trees less than a mile to our left. "FAPLA," Brig. Luwawa growled next to me, before wrapping himself in a blanket and going to sleep.

At the briefing next morning Luwawa showed me on a map where FAPLA's 1st Tactical Group was located near the village of Cassonga just 6 kilometers to the northwest of our position. The command and logistics column comprising the 2nd and 3rd Tactical Groups were dug in another 10 kilometers to their west, unable or unwilling to move for the moment. Both were receiving steady barrages from mobile 120mm mortar and 107 rocket crews. Part of Luwawa's forces had prepared an ambush along one of the only two possible routes the combined FAPLA supply column could use. He was sending me that afternoon toward the ambush site. "It's a difficult five-hour walk to our forward battalion HQ," he explained, introducing me to Colonel Seth who would command my security force of some 80 UNITA guerrillas.

Seth, compact and tough with quick, intelligent eyes, was one of those men you'd recognize at first glance as a soldier's soldier. Although he spoke no English, and I but a few words of Portuguese, there was immediate rapport between us. He asked through Bibi how well I knew the Angolan situation. When Bibi explained that this was my third deep trip with UNITA and that I had accompanied their forces on the attack against Cachingues five months earlier, Seth nodded. "He says he heard about the American who walked to Cachingues and back," Bibi translated. "He is pleased to meet you." My credentials had been established.

An hour after the sun had disappeared we were still working our way through dense bush, helped only slightly by dim moonlight filtering through the trees. Ahead I saw a faint orange glow. We stopped to make radio contact before sending the point element ahead to advise the sentries of our approach; no one wanted to be shot by mistake. Within minutes we began moving again, and soon entered the well-camouflaged camp where we were greeted by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel, the battalion commander, and his company commanders. All were very obviously exhausted. Stepping down into a 5-meter wide pit with seats dug into the sides, I sank gratefully into a grass padded dirt "chair" and leaned forward to warm my hands from the fire. Within minutes a cup of heavily sweetened coffee appeared. I wrapped my hands around it and sipped contentedly while Col.



Seth explained that although this position was a straight-line distance of only some 15 kilometers from the FCP, we had actually done almost 30 kilometers. Guerrilla tactics dictated that you never moved in a straight line, kept off trails and did everything possible to prevent your enemy from knowing where your base was. "At least now we know you can walk," he laughed, his teeth white in the firelight.

Colonel Seth (left) watches as abandoned carriage for FAPLA 120mm heavy mortar burns. This piece of equipment was new, as evidenced by the unworn treads of the tires.

Shortly after sunup we were on the move again. An hour later we reached the ambush position, a wide trail cut through the bush.

Continued on page 82



POLICE

COLOR FRUIT

JUPITER

NIGHT NARCS

Raiding the Houses That Crack Built

by **Morgan Tanner**

Photos by **David Bjorkman**

AT 2100 on a moonless night in October, the narcotics detectives on the Denver Police Crack Task Force are putting the heat on the city's crack dealers. The undercover narcotics detective (narc for short) we're riding with stops his black Toyota in a dark street and waits for his Confidential Informant (CI, or "snitch") to emerge from the shadows and slip into the car. The CI starts talking the moment his jeans contact the seat.

"Man, a guy's trying to sell me two UZIs," he says. "He's got clips up the butt."

Crack, not weapons, is the focus of the Task Force, but the narc pursues the lead. He wants to know if the CI could identify the man.

"I don't want nothing to do with him!" exclaims the CI. "He's big. He's got cannons, not guns. He's throwing dogs, not puppies."

The narc smiles at the slang description of muscles.

"Must have been in prison pumping iron," he says.

The narc heads toward a house in Denver's inner-city, predominantly black, neighborhood. He'll use his CI to "freshen" a search warrant, making a buy at a suspected crack house before he busts it. The narc's CI agreed to let us go out on the buy, trusting us to protect his identity. In turn, we agreed not to name the narcotics detective involved in this incident or assign the CI a pseudonym for fear of fingering someone else. Dopers deal in revenge as well as crack, and while we were working on this story dealers shot two people suspected of snitching.

"Dealers don't set up crack houses like they used to," the CI was saying. "Now, they gotta keep moving. But there are so many users, you can go to a house and ask

to sell out of it for a night. In exchange, you give them a little rock or some freezer meat."

Freezer meat?

"A package of steaks or pork chops," he explains. "A steak's a lot of incentive for some people. Me, I used to do it because of the money —\$100 to \$1,000 a day."

The detective doesn't delude himself that the CI is working for brownie points. Crack means bucks for everyone along its supply chain, including the bankers who launder drug money and the manufacturers of the little plastic baggies and glass vials used to package the dope. Denver's CIs get \$20 or \$25 for making a buy, \$100 if the case goes to court. The narc pulls into an alley and stops the car.

"I gotta shake you," he says to the CI.

They step out of the car and wordlessly follow a familiar routine. The narc pats the CI down for weapons or dope. He has to be able to swear in court that his informant was clean at the time of the buy.

Back in the car he asks him how much money he'll need to make the buy.

"He's dealing 40s," says the CI, explaining the minimum amount of crack the targeted dealer will sell.

It's a new twist in Denver's tweaked up crack business: with sales booming, many dealers don't bother with petty sales. Often, they won't sell less than a \$50 rock after dark. For the Task Force, that means additional money for buys. The narc hands him two 20s that will be recognizable in court if the case gets that far; if he doesn't make the bust, the money will be gone.

"I don't want to have to eat this one," the narc says, talking about the time limit before this warrant expires. "It won't look good on my report card."

The narc drives a couple of blocks, and stops a block short of the address listed on the warrant. We can see a knot of people standing on the curb in front of the house.

The CI begins to get antsy.

"Man, you gotta get a different car," he tells the narc. "I told you, if you want to stay undercover, you gotta keep changing cars."

But the narc is already thinking about what he needs to make his search warrant good. The purpose of the buy is to confirm that there is crack present at the address. Street sales aren't his objective.

"Don't buy the rock off the curb," he instructs. "You've got to buy it in the house, or see somebody bring it out of the house. Ask him how much longer he's going to be rolling. Check and see how many people are in the house, if there are any babies or little kids."

The CI already knows all this. CIs are a rare breed that walk the no man's land

CRACK CORRESPONDENTS

Morgan Tanner, along with David Bjorkman on cameras, spent three months researching "Crack in America" and "Crack in the Heartland," (June and July '89), by riding with gang specialists in Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis and Denver. This is the third part in their series.

between law enforcement and crime. Many of them procure dope for clients, which is how they know the location of dealers and crack houses. And some of them probably sell or trade information about police tactics to the dealers. But with their privileged connections, they're an essential tool for Denver's detectives. Some cities don't allow detectives to use CIs for undercover buys, relying strictly on cops; others stipulate that the CI must testify in court or at least be named on the affidavit. In an instant, our CI is out and away from the car, striding toward the shadowy figures in the next block. As he approaches, three people leave the group, heading our way. I take a breath and feel my body armor riding my chest.

"Do they suspect anything?" I ask.

The narc shakes his head. As we watch, they reach the corner streetlight, and we can see that they are two men and a woman.

This house — which you won't see soon in *Better Homes & Gardens* — proved a "dry hole" as the owners likely managed to throw away the crack before officers could catch them.



complete the arrest reports after it's over—from four to 10 hours of paperwork on a simple case.

The mission of the Crack Task Force is street level enforcement of the sale of crack cocaine, according to Captain Rudy Sandoval. From November 1987, when it started with only three men, through October 1989, the task force wrote 573 search warrants and made 1,764 arrests. Its detectives regularly pursue leads called in to Denver's Crack Hotline, an answering machine where people report suspected drug deals in their neighborhoods. According to Sergeant Paul Mahoney, who helped start the task force, its philosophy is to "be responsive to the needs of the community." Most of the busts are in Denver's inner city and net a quarter to a third of an ounce of crack or cocaine each.

This may not seem like much but, "We can't all be *country club narcs*," Mahoney is quick to point out.

But heating up the small-time dealers occasionally leads to mid-level rollers.

"Drug dealing is a huge web," says Detective Jim Nash, one of the first men on the team in 1987. "Almost all dope dealers are connected in some way—where they get their dope, who they're working for."

"It's like going fishing," says Detective Bernie Montoya. "You mostly catch stockers, and then one day you get a wall-hanger."

At 1900 Monday through Saturday, detectives who aren't writing warrants are on the phone, setting up their night's work.

"Yo, Babe," says Montoya picking up his phone. The voice at the other end is the CI he calls his "Crack Wife." She's anxious to make some buys.

"Hang tight," he tells her. "I've got too much other stuff going."

In the atmosphere of the office, the narcs appear incongruously seedy compared to the clean-cut image one associates with cops. Their hair is either scraggly or punk, and they dress in an assortment of aging T-shirts and jeans, topped off by baseball caps to alter their profile. They look like the bandits they chase. Their nicknames are Gunslinger, Grumpy, who is also known as Crack Daddy, Mr. Rogers and Aztec Terrorist. Their humor is cynical and reflects a paranoia that seems to come with the territory of the job.

"Vice goes after pornographers and hookers," says Detective Terry Demmel. "We chase dealers and tweakers. Cocksuckers and cracksuckers. But the worst job has got to be juvenile sex crimes. Now, that's raw."

Each of the 10 men on this elite corps, Mahoney tells us, was hand selected for his intelligence, flexibility, ingenuity and dogged perseverance. They mostly work from dusk to dawn, 55 hours a week, with their daytime sleep punctuated by mandatory court appearances and calls from their CIs.

"If you come into this job with an unstable family, you'll probably lose it,"



TOP: This crack house looked like this *before* the task force began searching. Cockroaches covered most of the kitchen floor and a rat was found in a cupboard.

ABOVE: Counting the cash, crack and guns after the bust went down.

Suddenly the men grab at the woman, who screams, then struggles free. In a moment the CI hurries back to the car, and the narc makes a U-turn and speeds away. The CI displays his purchase: two little white rocks the size of pencil erasers.

"Did you see those guys on the corner?" he asks. "They robbed that woman. The dealer's not selling anymore tonight. He's hosed."

He uses the slang for screwed up. The narc sighs.

"Did the dope come from the house?" he asks, trying to salvage as much of the buy as he can.

"They went in the front door, but I saw someone run out the back and go next door," says the CI. "I think that's where it came from."

The narc nods. Savvy to the laws, dealers commonly stash their goods at a different address than the one where they're

selling, the one that may be named on the search warrant. He gets on the radio to his sergeant.

"Deal's hosed," he says. "What else is going down?"

After he drops off his CI, he'll rendezvous with the rest of the task force team for the next bust, chase, or surveillance on their ever-changing agenda.

"Man, you guys got the worst life," says the CI, getting out of the car.

"You work all night chasing nickel-and-dimers."

"That's crack, mister," says the narc. "And it gets worse."

Chasing Cracksuckers

For the 10 narcotics detectives on Denver's Crack Task Force, drug busts begin and end at the typewriter on their third-floor office in Denver's Vice and Narcotics office. While the office is a jumble of nondescript desks, the narcs' personal memorabilia make obvious the focus of their job. One poster showing the cheeky bottoms of three women in string bikinis bears the hand-lettered caption "Hauling Crack." One of the detectives wears a tooled belt with the slogan "Crack Kills." It is in this room that they type their search warrants before a bust, and then

Mahoney says. "But this job appeals to a different kind of guy — a wild horse rider who'll jeopardize his personal relationships for it."

It's nearly 2100 when we head out with Mahoney to get his "ticket punched," a term for having his warrant signed by a judge. As sergeant of the team since its inception, Mahoney still works his own busts, and tonight it's a Hispanic woman who's doing small-time dealing near Denver's downtown. Tall, thin and having the long, easy stride of self-assurance, Mahoney is known as "Gunslinger" by his men.

"I'm in it for the action," Mahoney says. "Administrative duties don't turn me on."

Mahoney drives to a neighborhood of ancient, run-down houses, and waits until Denver Metro SWAT makes the initial entry into the house. When we go in, the suspected dealer, a woman about 30, is sitting on a couch, her wrists held behind her back with the disposable nylon bands used by SWAT. Two young Hispanic males wearing SWAT's handcuffs lie face down on the floor.

"What's up?" Mahoney asks a SWAT member.

"Same shit, different day," comes the answer.

The woman mutters to Mahoney that she doesn't know anything about dope sales. It's a tune commonly sung during drug busts. The narcs, however, make a buy within 72 hours prior to the bust, often on the same night.

"We've got buys from you," says Mahoney. "You were described right down to your pronounced limp."

"The only innocents in a crack house are the babies," says Bernie Montoya.

While Mahoney questions the woman and her companions, the team starts the long, dirty process of sifting through the house for tiny white rocks of crack. Even before the men begin the search, the house looks like it has already been ransacked. Mountains of clothes and junk pile up on both sides of a narrow path that goes from the living room door to the kitchen. Someone finds cockroaches nesting in the stereo.

"This is the only profession where you have to wash your hands before you use the bathroom," says Joe Black, head of Denver's new task force against crack sales in housing projects.

"When crack first started in Denver, dealers would rent a place and put a table and chair in it, maybe a TV," says Jim Nash. "Now that crack has become a family business, the houses are filthy."

On the second floor, Detective Mike Gassman hums the tune to "Greensleeves" as he searches through garbage and grimy mattresses thrown helter-skelter into an alcove. There's a stink like a rotting corpse or two-day-old vomit. He pats some posters to see if dope has been taped behind them.

"People get lazy," he says. "They hide

their dope more from the junkies than from us. But it has to be accessible. They put it somewhere convenient."

Gassman's partner Detective Dale Wallis clomps up the barren steps.

"I thought people made money selling drugs," Wallis says, looking at the ugly room.

Gassman picks a pair of jeans up off the floor.

"God, this place has fleas!" he exclaims.

The little critters jump across the soiled carpet, making everyone itch. One of the first things narcs learn is to never put their jacket where a pregnant cockroach can crawl into the pocket.

Sifting through the junk, Gassman turns up an Olympus camera, a check-writing machine, and two spoons with residue that indicate the place has been used as a junkie's "shooting gallery." Downstairs, the woman has been carted off to headquarters, but Mahoney concedes that finding crack in the mess is probably a lost cause. He has hit what's commonly called a "dry hole." He has also learned that when SWAT hit the house, the woman was standing outside, which gave her ample opportunity to toss any dope she was holding.

"I got two buys off her," Mahoney says. "I could get her if I wanted to burn my CI, but on a nickel-and-dime outfit like this, it's not worth it."

That means she'll probably be back in her happy hovel before Mahoney goes home at the end of the shift.

"An empty jail is a happy jail," says Joe Black.

Mahoney snorts his agreement.

Narc Nights

Waiting for a call to do some rolling surveillance, three detectives sit at the edge of Denver's City Park in the "civilian" cars the task force leased for them. I wait in a sporty Celica with Sergeant Rick Castricone who, like me, is wearing Second Chance body armor.

"You're either sitting or racing," says Castricone, munching from a bag of

Cocaine being cooked into crack or "rocked" was discovered during this bust.

candied cashews. Narcs learn early to eat when they can. The lunch breaks of their uniform days are gone.

We wait for Jim Nash and his CI to "drop a dime," to call a dealer's beeper, order up a rock, and then watch the "mule" make the delivery.

"It's the dealer's new game," says Nash. "Home deliver — like Pizza Hut. The minimum rock costs \$50."

The dealers use the tactic to keep the narcs off their home plate, but Nash hopes we'll be able to follow the dealer. His voice soon comes on the radio.

"Dealer's down for the night," he says.

Until recently, Nash, a tall, black officer called the "Texan," did a lot of undercover buys. He quit when he started seeing too many people he knew from past buys or his off-duty peacekeeping at high school football games.

"Besides, now that I'm 40, I'm older than most dealers," he says. "I don't speak their language."

In an undercover situation where a narc is outgunned and outnumbered by the dealer and his men, it's his silver tongue that stands between him and a bullet in the head. Dale Wallis says he likes the challenge of undercover work. He is reluctant to speak for publication, reflecting the sentiments of several of the task force detectives. First, cops have no love for the media, which usually screws them. Second, the narcs have a hard enough time with dopers, without giving away their trade secrets in *Soldier of Fortune*. But he agrees to talk about the experience of going

A small amount of suspected crack is found on this window ledge. There is a hole cut in the lower right-hand corner of the screen where it was slipped through during a sale.



undercover.

"I can't deny it," he says. "Every day I go to work, I feel a rush of adrenaline. Why else would anyone do it?"

A sting is one kind of undercover operation, in which a couple of cops sit in a vehicle with a camera. They record undercover cops making hand-to-hand buys from dealers.

"It's on film, and there's no plea bargaining," says Detective Kerry Rich.

Or they do a reverse sting, where an undercover cop replaces a dealer and sells bunk, or "woo." Customers who buy are arrested on a Class 5 Felony.

But Wallis digs into one-on-one undercover deals. He talks about one deal in which he was wired so that his team could follow him to Colorado Springs during a buy. But when the dealer headed back to Denver, Wallis's team lost contact with him, and he was on his own in a car with the dealer and his armed bodyguard. After a lengthy ride, he convinced the dealer to drop him off at a bar.

"As I walked away from the car, I knew the gun was pointed at the back of my head," he says. "The hairs on my neck were standing up, and I could imagine the bullet entering my skull. But for some reason, they didn't shoot."

But it's a different kind of situation that spooks Wallis even more.

"I was in the grocery store with my little daughter, and I ran into a dealer I had made a buy from," he says. "That really scared me."

With cocaine usage common throughout all of society's strata, white undercover agents are accepted by dealers that once would have only trusted black narcs or CIs. A poll by Media General-Associated Press from September 14-24 showed that nearly one-third of respondents admitted knowing someone who uses cocaine.

"The media is focusing on crack," says Rick Casticone. "But the problem is cocaine."

Jim Nash says that although crack affects everyone in some way, it's a black problem because it's centered in black neighborhoods.

"Being black, I feel a lot of black people don't want to work, and are looking for a way to make a 'big buck,'" he says. "But they're getting their dope from a white or a Spanish person. The people at the top are gaining, while the black people are just using more."

People commonly use "toot" at a party. Weekend users get addicted through friends, relatives and associates at work.

"It takes over their lives," says Terry Demmel.

One night, Bernie Montoya questioned a man who had been picked up for dealing crack. He was solidly built, good-looking, a little disheveled as he sat in the bare-bones interrogating cell —like a person might look after a long, international flight. When police picked him up, he had a ball of crack weighing half an ounce, and nearly

\$4,000 in cash.

"I asked him why a white man was selling crack, and you know what he said?" asked Montoya. "He said he had an identity crisis."

The dealer claimed that he had owned a successful car dealership in L.A., but had lost it when he became addicted to cocaine.

"He said that he tried coke and it became his lover," says Montoya. "I'd say it was a bitch."

Battle-Ram Night

The narcs wait in a staging area with the men from Metro SWAT for the next bust to come up. SWAT provides the muscle for most of the task force's busts, especially if the detectives anticipate trouble. The ninjas, as the dealers call SWAT, battle-ram the doors or use flash-bang grenades when they anticipate weapons or fortified doors.

"If you're careful in this job, you don't get hurt," says Bernie Montoya. "We may have 40 overglanded cops chasing down five skinny tweakers, but that way, we all go home at night."

"SWAT comes in, and it's all over in 30 seconds," says Detective Dino Gaviot. "The dealers never know what hit them. You'd be surprised how many people fill their pants when the door busts open. Then we have to search the assholes."

"Literally," someone says.

It's a busy but typical night, with a number of busts lined up. The first is a neat frame house in a nice neighborhood. A thin, black man about 60 squirrels up on a chair, his hands cuffed behind him. He burps and moans.

"You sick?" Gassman asks. "Vomit isn't a favorite with the team."

"No, I got an ulcer," says the man.

"You want some milk?" Gassman asks.

He pours him a glass, unhooking one of his wrists so he can drink it. When Sgt. Mahoney came in the man is burping again.

"You sick?" he asks, and the man explains about his ulcer.

"You want some milk?" Mahoney asks.

The house is neat and clean, a rare treat for the team. Detective Jim Kukuris unscrews a light cover that looks suspiciously new. Furnace grates, light fixtures, and electric sockets are suspect. The walls are a gallery of homemade paintings of smiling kids. If there was a law against bad art, the guy would be guilty. The team turns up only a few baggies and paraphernalia under a carpet in the basement.

Their work at this house done, the team moves back to the staging area and on to another bust, this time in a duplex with a fortified door. I ride to the scene with Jim Nash, and as we pull up in front of the house, three men run up to the car; we look like live meat to these petty dopers, who want to unload some product on us.

Inside the house, a man and woman lie handcuffed face down on the floor. The furnishings are sparse and the search for dope and crack pipes is easy. More bad art:

this time a crude painting of a woman being cut with a machete.

At the third house, the team enters after SWAT and finds four black women handcuffed face down on the floor, their children sitting wide-eyed on the couch like frightened birds.

"People think of a crack house as being full of gangsters," says Paul Mahoney. "Typically, it's old people and little kids."

Women frequently supplement their social services checks with petty crack sales. Still, their business becomes hot and heavy enough to attract the attention of a CI or their neighbors, who turn them in. While the team searches the house, the phone rings. Detective Kenny Gurule answers, listens, then looks at the woman handcuffed on the floor.

"She can't come to the phone," he says. "She's all tied up."

Downstairs three people, two men and a woman, lie handcuffed on the concrete floor. One of the men wears red, and the woman has a "No Gangs" pin stuck on her purse. Terry Demmel wants to know if they are gang members. They say no, but there's Bloods gang graffiti on the walls. According to Kerry Rich, the largest seizure of crack in Denver came from a gang member — a little over a kilo that was seized at the airport.

"Over 50 percent of the total weight amount of crack seized has been from gangs — Crips, Bloods or Jamaicans," he says. "They're moving heavy into crack, and that's something people don't want to hear."

Bernie Montoya scoffs at the idea of looking at gang members any differently than anyone else selling dope.

"People put an emphasis on he's a Crip or he's a Blood," says Montoya. "Big fuckin' deal. He's a punk. He's a dope dealer."

Back at the staging area for the fourth time, one SWAT member recalls "Super Tuesday" —when the team did 16 busts.

"Four in a night is really a lot," he says. "You feel physically beat up after you do a few."

This time, we await word on a bust that supposedly involves a fortified door and an UZI inside. The narcs put on their body armor, and duck behind the bushes for a quick piss. Finally, a voice comes over the radio.

"It's a go," someone says.

Kerry Rich drives us to a well-kept older home that stands behind the spikes of a wrought iron fence and has a heavy iron storm door. SWAT has the place secured. Inside are a man and woman, and two little children. The little boy cries.

"When the door comes off the hinges and you get a gun pointed in your face, it's really tough if you're only six years old," says Rich.

The narc team searches the house and garage for dope. They find a bag of old, dried-out green leaves — possibly pot, and an Intratec TEC-9 9mm semiauto pistol.

"Don't you have an UZI?" someone asks the man.

"Somebody stole it," he says.

"Yeah? In this fortress?" comes a disbelieving reply.

Further searching turns up a Remington 1100 shotgun, an AR-7 survival rifle with its barrel stored in its buttstock, a Colt .45 Government Model and a .25 ACP Raven.

"Remember the last .25 Raven we found?" someone asks.

The narcs laugh, remembering the dealer who had called the Raven the "finest handgun in the world."

The task force has seized more than 300 guns. In some busts involving weapons, the Federal Organized Crime Drug Task Force of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms will take the case.

"If they have a gun and are selling crack cocaine, it's a five-year mandatory sentence," says an ATF agent who declines to be identified.

The firearms charge is in addition to the drug charge. With a machine gun, it's a full 10 years mandatory sentence. This is good news for the narcs, who complain about Colorado's wishy-washy laws.

"The federal charge really hits them hard because they're used to getting probation from our judges," says Terry Demmel.

Occasionally, seized weapons appropriate for police work are assigned to the task force, a SIG-Sauer P.226, a Beretta Model 21 .22 LR pistol, as well as AKs and shotguns for SWAT.

"The rest are melted down and become manhole covers," says Kerry Rich. "It breaks your heart to see a \$6,000 collector's rifle go into the scrap heap, or a factory-engraved Browning 380. But what can you do? You can't very well sell them back to the public at an auction."

A Deadly New Menace

Again it's a moonless night with the winds of autumn blowing. While the narcs and SWAT meet at the staging area to plan a bust, Terry Demmel has drawn the job of watching the targeted house until the bust can be made. Once a uniformed member of the Tactical Motorcycle unit, Demmel now dresses for work in a turquoise sweatshirt with cammie fatigues and jungle boots. His reddish hair hangs on his neck and a scraggly beard camouflages his chin. We sit around the corner from the house, peering through a nightscope that turns the scene green when we press the rubber cup to our eye sockets. Demmel's job is to keep the buy money from disappearing before the bust occurs.

"Dealers move the money real fast," says Demmel, whose nickname is "Mr. Rogers." "Sometimes if you wait 10 minutes, your buy money is already gone."

Suddenly we see two figures slip out onto the darkened front porch and dart for a car. Demmel makes a swift turn in pursuit. His unmarked car is without a siren or lights, and he calls for assistance from patrol cars in the district. They stop the



Suspects cuffed and waiting to be searched. This crack house used an acid drop to dissolve crack in case of a bust. The bottle contains hydrochloric acid and has a hole cut in the top for easy deposit of incriminating evidence.

target vehicle, and a young couple gets out. Demmel "tosses" the car; while there are no immediate signs of dope, the man carries a wad of loosely folded bills.

"I'll bet our money's in here," Demmel says.

The woman protests.

"I work, mister," she says.

"Sure you do," agrees Demmel. "24-7." Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Demmel decides to take the couple back to the house where they can be questioned and searched, and the uniforms transport them. By the time we arrive back at the house, two men and two women lie handcuffed on the floor.

"Did anyone call for a policewoman?" Demmel asks. Women prisoners are searched by female officers.

The woman from the car wears the steel cuffs of the uniformed cop, and Demmel unlocks them to give them back to him. With one wrist free, the woman turns slightly away from Demmel and moves her hand to her mouth.

"She's got something in her mouth," Montoya yells.

He jumps toward her and stabs his finger into her mouth. He pulls out a slobbery square of plastic wrap with a damp hunk of crack inside.

"I'm pregnant. You'll hurt my baby," the woman screams.

She lunges against Montoya's grip, and everyone in the tight little living room reels in reaction. But before the men on the floor can stand up, SWAT settles the matter.

"Yeah," Montoya shouts at her, "and you almost swallowed enough crack to kill it."

Montoya goes to the kitchen to wash his hands in hot water and dish soap.

"God, I didn't even have my gloves on yet," he says.

As a rule, before the narcs begin searching a house, they pull on tight, white



surgical gloves that give them pale Mickey Mouse-like hands below their sleeves. Protecting against AIDS is a growing concern. Demmel says that Denver has an estimated 20,000 people with HIV.

"Sometimes when we check their mouths, their tongues are totally coated with a white fungus," he says. "They even tell us they have AIDS. We used to worry about not having enough clips with us. Now we worry about not having enough gloves. The idea of taking AIDS home to my family ... It scares me as much as the guns do."

Reeling in a Wall-hanger

The rolling surveillance has been in progress for nearly 30 minutes when Terry Demmel joins in. The target vehicle is a dove-gray Lincoln Continental—shiny, late model, clean, with tinted windows, and we guess that there's a smooth dude behind the wheel, making his lucrative deliveries. Following the Lincoln in their Hondas and Toyotas, the narcs could be any other of a million drivers on Denver's streets after dark except that they communicate their intentions in code over the radio in case there's a scanner tuned to their frequency.

"I'm peeling off," says one of the narcs, who drops back and turns the corner.

"I got it," says someone else.

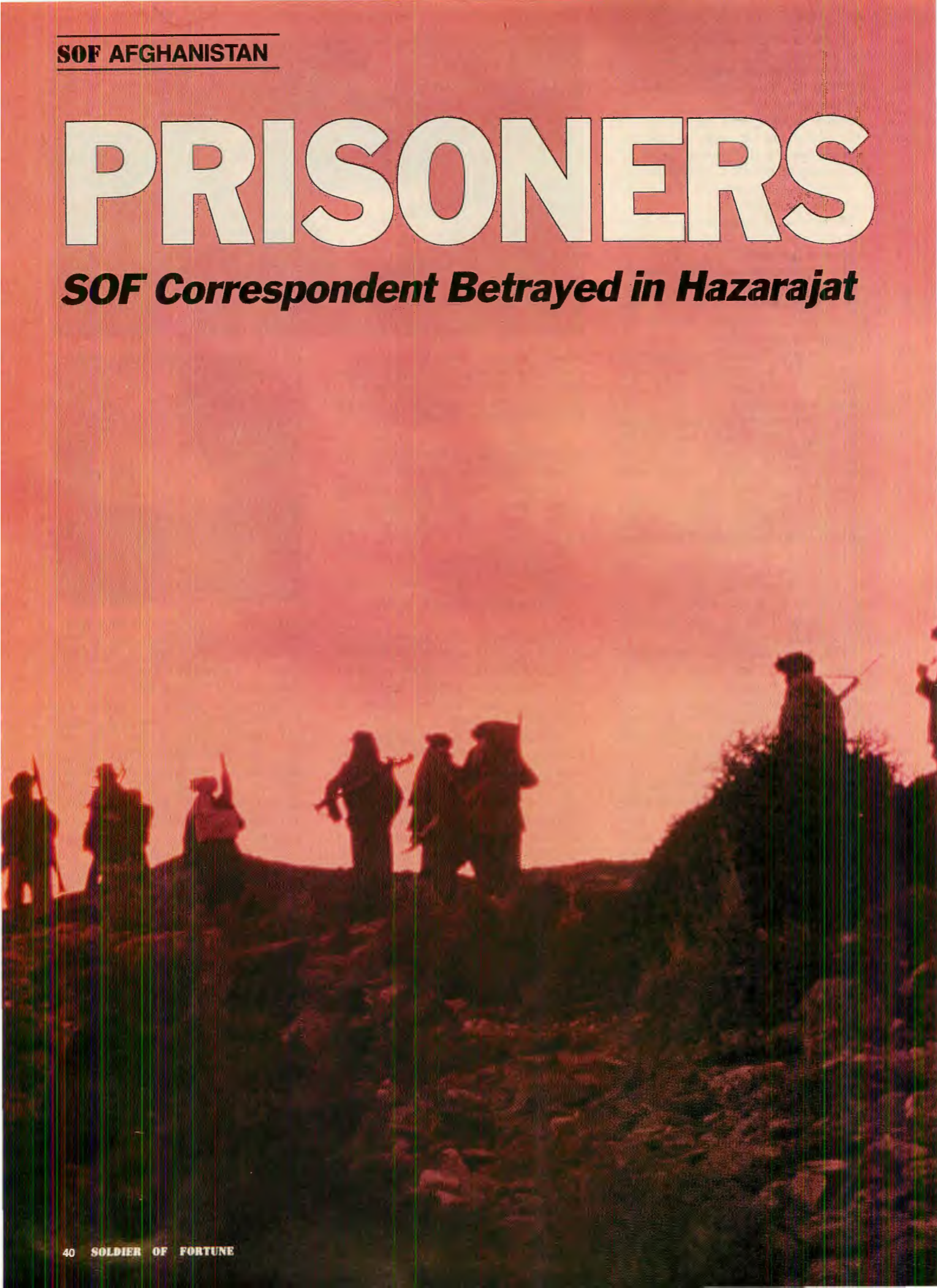
The Lincoln's trip is erratic. It exits the highway, then races back on. It meanders the streets of some of the best neighborhoods in southeast Denver, then

Continued on page 72

SOF AFGHANISTAN

PRISONERS

SOF Correspondent Betrayed in Hazarajat



OF NASIR

Text & Photos by Peter Douglas



RIGHT: Mounted mujahid with RPK. Afghans have a talent for using any current invader as a logistics source.



I was accompanying a large caravan of munitions heading for northern Afghanistan with French photo journalist, Philippe Jordan, an experienced Afghan traveler. If it is possible to find an amiable companion to travel with it enables you to watch out for each other when life gets dangerous.

Late in the afternoon we departed from Teri Mangal, on the Pakistan side of Afghan-Pakistan border, under a dark heavy sky from which had filtered a depressing drizzle. At least that stopped but the ground remained treacherously muddy under foot.

It was not until the early hours that we reached a tea shop, packed with those who had been ahead of us on the trail, and could stop for the few remaining hours of darkness. When we arrived there was only a little oily soup left to eat. This we had with very welcome hot tea and bits of stale bread left over from our last meal in Teri Mangal.

The mujahideen are loathe to burden themselves down carrying food if they think they can procure rations on the way. The result has been many hungry nights when food has not been available.

This was only the first day, and already every muscle ached. Inside the tea shop the heat from the stoves used to boil water and the pressing crowds of noisy men was such that, having eaten, I had to escape.

Outside I retrieved a sleeping bag and made myself comfortable on a pile of rope panniers. As I settled down, a door to the tea shop opened and the proprietor came out clutching a bucket to fetch water from the river. He stood framed in the light of the doorway, took a few steps forward into the thick mud and gave up on advancing further. Instead he bent down and scooped a bucket full of water from a ditch. A ditch where horses had been watered leaving a thick soup of muddy water and horse manure. No wonder his tea had a greenish tinge and foul taste!

Through the rest of the night, men and horses passed the tea shop asking for information about the caravans they belonged to. By first light the last of our caravan had only just arrived, the men tired and dejected from the effort and confusion of the night.

A thin mist blanketed the ground in a foot-deep carpet of cloud, tinged a soft shade of pink by the rising sun. Horsemen moving about and fussing over their horses stirred the cloud into gentle waves. Beautiful as the scene was, I was too stiff and sore to appreciate it then. I was also beginning to feel a little unstable in the bowels and hoped it wasn't going to turn into a problem that would require constant rushes behind boulders along the way.

There was a constant noisy bustle of horsemen loading heavy panniers of munitions onto the horses. As each horseman sorted out his 20 horses he pulled out. With

Mounted mujahid carries radio and Dragunov sniper rifle.

my heart set on at least one cup of hot tea before departure, I hastily bundled up my few possessions and headed for the tea shop, from which a wispy column of smoke rose vertically into the cool damp air of morning.

Inside the floor was a sea of loudly snoring bodies, and the air heavy with a fog of mixed wood smoke and damp clothing. The water was yet to boil and I sat close to the stove trying to warm myself and eagerly anticipating the hot tea to come. A mujahid rudely disturbed this comforting daydream by poking his head into the tea shop and saying we were leaving immediately. Heavy with disappointment I followed after him. Our section of the caravan had already left and we hurried over a rocky path in the river bed in pursuit.

Two hours later the sun had lifted above the high walls of the narrow valley and we stopped at another tea shop for a quick cup of very welcome tea and a few slices of crumbly cake. After this I was heartened to discover that there was enough room on my horse to perch myself precariously on top of the packs and rolls of blankets. Thus mounted, I followed on behind the horses in front.

The day wore on in a slow but relentless pace, as we followed a path that climbed slowly higher. The column seemed to stretch to infinity fore and aft. At lunch the muj called a short halt at yet another wayside tea shop but my stomach was feeling far too unstable to contemplate any more than warm tea for lunch. All too soon we were off again, me lurching along propped on top of a mound of backpacks. Painful stomach cramps began to assail me with severe regularity, and I became progressively more concerned as each attack mounted in intensity. Inevitably I began to fall behind the others.

By late afternoon, I was trailing far behind, almost the last in line when we emerged onto a high plateau. Waves of nausea made me giddy and I hung on tightly trying not to fall from the horse.

There was not the least medical aid available, as Afghans remain heavily reliant on religious faith to recover from illness or wounds. Occasionally a mujahideen gruffly urged me to carry on, informing me the plateau was dangerously exposed and frequently visited by Russian patrols. This was hardly a comforting thought. I began to throw up and became ever more bewildered in a swimming sea of nausea. My Afghan companions hurried ahead to get off the exposed plateau. Only my fellow journalist, Philippe Jordan, kept with me, encouraging me with unrealistic estimations of how close our destination for the night was.

Shortly before dark I collapsed and slid from the horse to the stony ground. I recall the cold, cold feel of the rocks and a sharp burning pain in my stomach like a fireball. Then a final glimpse of boots walking past

as the last Afghan stragglers walked on and abandoned me on the plateau. Philippe carried me into a semi-derelict building and placed me gently down on some straw matting. The next thing I was aware of was the dull murmur of voices, the soft, orange glow of an oil lamp lighting a room and hot sweet, black tea offered to me as I woke up several hours later. I was surprised to see that it was now night outside.

A small knot of Afghan travelers were sitting next to a little stove. Then Philippe spoke from beside me and explained that we must continue as it was too dangerous to spend the night separated from the mujahideen in this spot. How I wanted to sleep! But with his aid and encouragement I was helped outside and strapped to my horse. He and a local Afghan led me along the track to a point where we began to climb up into the mountains.

We caught up with the mujahideen and horsemen who had abandoned us to our fate. They had encamped around a low, round building built of loose rocks and thatched crudely with bracken and gorse. In the darkness, horses seemed to surround

We caught up with the mujahideen and horsemen who had abandoned us to our fate.

the area as far as the eye could see. From the hut, sparks shot up into the dark, cloud-covered sky like a line of distant tracer.

Inside the hut there was not an inch of space without somebody squatting in it. This was about the crudest tea house I'd ever seen. Instead of a stove a large bonfire blazed in the center. It filled the hut with dense clouds of smoke as the hole in the roof through which the sparks escaped was too small to let out all the smoke. There was nothing to be had except the inevitable hot watery tea, all I wanted was to sleep; no sooner down than out for the count, and all the noise of the cramped men faded into oblivion as I lost consciousness.

Much to my amazement I awoke the next day feeling much better for the night's sleep, although still generally weak. It had been a salutary lesson about the wisdom of traveling with a trusted companion. Without Philippe I would have been alone out in the night, a helpless victim for any passing brigand and there are more than enough to be found in the remote wilds of Afghanistan. The loyalty of the mujahideen to journalists accompanying them is not always what one could hope for. Talk of faithfulness unto death can be impressive when you first deal with them in their safe haven offices in the Pakistani frontier town of Peshawar but less credible where it matters *in the field*.

We continued through the mountains, keeping down in deep, tree-lined gullies, as Russian MiGs frequently over-flew the area



and helicopter gun ships also patrolled. Eventually, we emerged out of a gully and found the wide, desolate, sweep of the Logar plains before us. We meant to wait until dark before moving out from cover to

cross this exposed expanse, but impatience won out and the column set off half-an-hour before nightfall.

Far away, over the Kabul Gardez highway, two Mi-24 gun ships flew against a

sky red with the setting sun scattering bright sparkling magnesium flares to deter surface-to-air missiles.

Once we were several hundred meters clear of the protected gully we could clearly

PETER KNOWS AFGHANISTAN

Peter Douglas, a former Royal Marine and experienced photojournalist, has been in Afghanistan numerous times since the early days of the war, and has become painfully aware of the difficulty of covering a war amid Afghanistan's bewildering mix of tribes, factions, parties and religious groups. On this particular trip in 1983 fighting between all of them almost became the death of him.

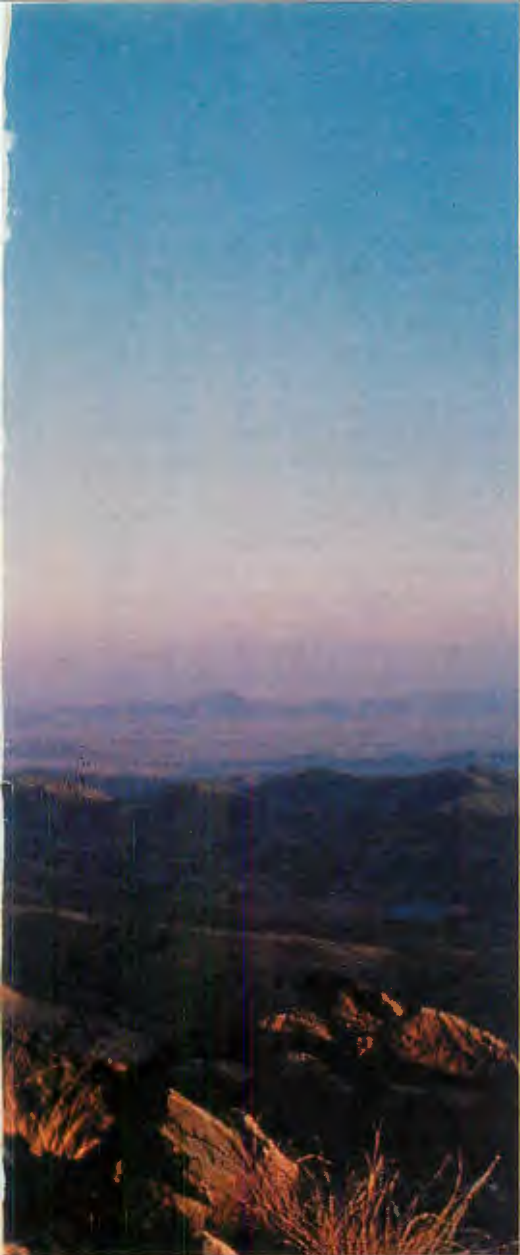
Douglas first described this horrible trip to SOF Managing Editor Jim Graves in 1985 but declined to write about it until now. Douglas felt the unvarnished facts reflected poorly not only on the Hazaras in Central Afghanistan but also on the political parties in Peshawar and the mujahideen in general. In those terrible days, the Afghans were fighting not only against the Soviets but to win support from an indifferent world, a world convinced the Afghans were a lost cause. In their desperation to sway world opinion through journalists reporting from the front, the parties often made promises in Peshawar that were damn hard to keep up in Afghanistan's wild mountains.

Douglas was captivated early on by the spectacular beauty of the country, the remarkable courage and toughness of the people and believed in the righteousness of the Afghans' cause. He resolved to hold back this story of bloody stupidity, incompetence, religious intolerance and political-tribal infighting until the Soviets were gone.

In hindsight the Afghans' victory over the Soviets is all the more remarkable when one knows what a battle they had just to convince some of their own people who the friends and enemies of Afghanistan were.

His last article for SOF was "Bloody Panjshir," October, November 1989.





FAR LEFT: Mujahideen overlooking Dorbandie.

LEFT: Logistics supply, Mujahideen style.

BELOW LEFT: Mujahid at tea shop. Note industrial goggles he wears to ward off dust on the march.

hear the rising throb of helicopter gun ships. The column stopped and everyone scanned the sky as if trying to verify the evidence of their ears. The sound of the throbbing rotors grew, and panic hit the column. Men ran in every direction, nervous horses shying and neighing, sensed the panic and bolted.

With men and horses dashing in every direction, three Mi-24 gun ships came into view over a ridge and closed on us. Everyone threw themselves down behind rocks and bushes, or hid under the blankets that each Afghan carried for his bed roll. The air shook with the roar of their rotors and throbbing engines. They were only 400 feet directly above us and we expected them to bank sharply and turn back toward us, spraying minigun and rocket fire. Instead, unbelievably, the roar began to fade as they flew on toward Kabul and left us alone. I presume that flying into the setting sun blinded them to what lay trembling directly beneath them in the deepening shadows of the earth.

Following the night, we crossed the

plains and then began to climb into hills on the far side. Over the next two weeks we wound our way through them and rose up into the central Hazarajat region of Afghanistan.

From Logar on, the column had been wary of government informers and areas where government militia units were operating. Every day Russian Antonovs flew even patterns high above us as they engaged in photo reconnaissance work.

As we entered the Hazarajat, Mullah Ashreif, his men and the horsemen, became more than a little skittish. We were in the area controlled by the indigenous Hazara people, reputed to be descendants of Genghis Khan's invading Mongolian hordes. Ghengis Khan's army operated in units of 1,000 men. A unit left behind when the rest withdrew gave the area its name, Hazarajat ("the place of the 1,000"). Long since converted to Islam, they belong to the minority Shi'ite faction in Afghanistan, the majority being Sunni Muslims.

There was no love lost between these Islamic factions and the Hazaras treated us

with, at best, a controlled tolerance on our passage through their territory. Mullah Ashreif purchased this tolerance by regularly parting with arms as a toll fee. Delays were not infrequent when fighting broke out between the Hazaras and caravans reluctant to pay the appropriate toll. We would wait for the problem to be solved ahead and then continue.

It was with a great relief that the column entered Bamyan and moved slowly on into Bhaglan. Food had regularly been short, and so had tempers, over the last week or so. I could now only walk short distances as a fully-laden horse had jumped onto my foot and injured it.

At last we reached Shashpool, which was no more than a collection of a few make-shift teahouses lining the Kabul-Bamyan road. It also served as the termination point for the hired horses, including mine. By then, groups peeling away to alternate destinations had greatly reduced the caravan's size. Here we hired a truck to take us, and Philippe's horse (which he had purchased outright in Teri Mangal) further north.

Frequent breakdowns and innumerable stops along the way to assess the situation ahead in long drawn-out discussions over cups of tea with local groups of mujahideen slowed our progress. It was impolite to rush these meetings and all news and gossip gathered along the way politely exchanged with every new group we encountered. One hoped that the men waiting for this ammunition were not in any dire need as it certainly was not being carried with any sense of urgency.

Although we used these stops to scour the local shops for supplies, most had little to offer. We often moved on without any more than the tea and bread from the tea shops.

A few days later we reached Tala Barfac and an early halt called for the inevitable news and gossip over cups of tea. We heard that the Russians were conducting a push up the road from Kabul and the way ahead blocked.

The mujahideen held a heated, brief debate on what to do, and opted to remain for a few days to see how events developed. After the long grueling hours put into the march north, it was a most welcome rest. We washed our clothes in the fast-flowing, ice-cold river and hung them out to dry. We made the most of what little we could buy from the shops and ate meals of rice, potatoes, and endless tea. Afterward we lazed in the sunshine, eating apricots from a nearby orchard.

Early the next morning there was a flurry of activity and the mujahideen announced

SHI'ITE MUJAHIDEEN FACTIONS IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN

SAZMAN-I-NASIR (ORGANIZATION FOR VICTORY), known as Nasir.

Leader: SADIQ NEELI. Previously second-in-command to Sayid Beheshti, leader of Shura, broke away to form the more pro-Iranian Nasir.

This was the first viable faction of Hazara mujahideen to emerge. It is said to be composed mostly of young, ideologically committed fundamentalists. Its rapid expansion was partly due to superior organization but Iranian financial and logistical support have ensured its survival.

SEPAH-I-PASDARAN (REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS), known as Sepah.

Leader: Unknown.

Sepah is said to have been initiated in 1982 as a result of Iranian dissatisfaction with Nasir. Rumor claims it is composed mostly of Afghan personnel but directly under Iranian control.

SHURA-I-ITTIFAQ-I-ISLAMI (UNITED ISLAMIC COUNCIL), known as Shura.

Leaders: SAYED ALI BEHESHTI, SAYED JAGLAN.

Shura was one of the first organizations to emerge among the Hazara resistance. Originally composed of tribal chiefs, prominent urban Hazaras and Sayids (men who, under Shi'ite Islam, hold religious power as direct descendants of Mohammed's son-in-law Ali). The Sayids soon usurped the shared power into their own control.

HARAKATI-ISLAMI (ISLAMIC MOVEMENT)

Leader: SHEIK ASAF MUHSENI

Minor party of the big four in Hazarajat.

There are dozens of other parties in the Hazarajat but these are too small and insignificant to deserve attention.

that the Russians were now only half an hour's march down the road. They informed us they had no intention of still being in Tala Barfac when the Russians arrived and were going to carry on, by foot, over the mountains. As I could not keep up with an injured foot, and Philippe had a horse loaded with camera equipment that could not manage the narrow footpaths, they were going to leave us here to do whatever we thought best. With this, they proceeded to unload the munitions into a neat pile by the roadside, covered in tarpaulin. Then they instructed the tea shop owner he would be held responsible for it until they could send someone back for it! Ignoring our requests that they at least put us in touch with a local mujahideen group they set off across the fields and abandoned us without a backward glance!

Although well clear of the religious differences that led to armed clashes in the Hazarajat we were still in a very delicate position. There are many differing political factions within the mujahideen who frequently resort to armed attacks on each other. Further, small, weak groups are at risk from bandits. We were also close to the fringes of government influence and the problems caused by local government militia. Things looked bleak, and our best hopes lay in retracing our steps as quickly as possible to Shashpool. There we could be sure to find a group politically loyal to the one we had been traveling with.

When Mullah Ashreif abandoned us, he unfortunately also insisted in retaining our letters of passage. Presented by the political party heads in Peshawar they authorized our travel, explaining who we were, and who we were traveling with. As he was abandoning us he felt we were no longer entitled to them!

An old man agreed to guide us, for a fee, to the nearest mujahideen group, as we would need to have their approval to pass through their area. Our reception by them was frosty, even after we could explain our predicament, the facts of which our guide vouched for. Whilst our hosts agreed to give us an escort to Shashpool, they remained wary of us, although by no means as wary as we were of them!

In Afghanistan the simplest events can be clouded in confusion and misunderstanding at the best of times; the further we were divorced from our original traveling companions the greater the confusion over just who we were and what we were doing in Afghanistan was going to become.

After a night at their base, our new hosts walked with us to Barfac the following day, where there was an on-going blood-feud between two factions. We had to wait to hire a truck. Barfac's single street served as the dividing line between the two warring factions. During the day they sat in the tea shops opposite each other, where they sipped tea and eyed each other hostilely. When night arrived they put down the teapots and picked up assault rifles and conducted a very localized battle across the width and length of town!

Of course, periodically someone would be wounded or killed. Honor then required a corresponding amount of blood to be spilled by the opposing faction. Which ensured that the problem remained insoluble, and prevented them from being distracted by battles with the Russians. The whole area was rife with rumor of Soviet-paid agitators stirring up sudden blood-feuds as an effective means of neutralizing the mujahideen. The feuds probably had a lot more to do with banditry than orchestrated agitation.

We procured a very battered looking truck and gladly left Barfac before the evening hostilities between the blood-feuding mujahideen got under way. Much to our surprise, our new escort de bussed only a few miles down the road, far short of Shashpool. They announced that they had reached their destination and many thanks for the lift. Again we found ourselves abandoned by the mujahideen and on our own without an escort for the drive to Shashpool. With some justification we were in a state of alarm. We had constantly heard that these roads were unsafe for armed mujahideen let alone for journalists with an arsenal composed of a Swiss army penknife and a spoon!

When, with some relief, we reached Shashpool, we immediately contacted Commander Doud, who we had met here on our way north, and explained our sorry situation. He listened and assured us that he would find a reliable group to take us south, back to Pakistan. Relieved at this assurance we then had to deal with the hired truck driver. A simple matter of payment flared up into a raging argument, with the driver hysterically waving his arms and appealing to the curious throng of bystanders that we were trying to renege on the deal. The driver now demanded more than twice the agreed fee. Everyone in the throng around us had an opinion about the matter and they passed it on, wanted or not.

Commander Doud had to arbitrate. After listening to both versions he announced that, as the driver was a Muslim and we were not, the driver must be right, as no Muslim would lie or cheat! In the end a mutually hostile compromise had to be settled on, which severely reduced our limited funds.

With the injury sustained to my foot I was not up to walking and would have to purchase a horse. Commander Doud purchased one from a band of passing Koochi (nomadic tribesmen). In Afghanistan horses are purchased as seen, complete with all saddlery and blankets on them at the time of inspection.

I found myself the owner of a small, gray horse complete with very threadbare horse blankets and Afghan saddle. Made of wood with high backs, like that of a medieval knight, Afghan saddles are covered in leather and studded with soft headed nails for decoration. All well and good to look at, but they are trying on the rear-end over any distance. Large cushions placed on top and lashed down with a broad strap for comfort usually have the effect of chaffing all the skin off inside your thighs.

With an unarmed escort of six mujahideen, we set off late that morning. It wasn't long before it became apparent that my new horse was not a well animal or in the least sure footed. He stumbled so much I christened him Stumblefoot and spent many miles limping along beside, leading him by the reins to ensure he rested as much as possible!

We passed back through the strange



ABOVE: Abdul Ghana, mujahideen commander, wearing traditional Afghan poshteen waistcoat, with Soviet manufactured AKM.

RIGHT: Mujahid with RPG-7, the ubiquitous armor buster in the Third World.

lunar landscape of the Bamyan, with its purple and green rock formations, as we tramped toward the Hazarajat. Every day we passed caravans of munitions heading in the opposite direction and sometimes a column of mujahideen tramping wearily along in the dust. The dust was fine and rose in huge billowing clouds and to keep it out we wound scarves around our faces. In one passing column of mujahideen all the men wore sunglasses or large industrial goggles. Except the last man in the line who happily boasted a swimmer's mask complete with snorkel!

As we drew nearer to the Hazarajat the escort became steadily more nervous at being such a small group and unarmed. At first they had been buoyant at the lack of arms, saying as they had nothing worth stealing nobody would attack them. Once isolated in the Hazarajat they missed the security of AK-47s badly and cursed Guldin, their leader, for having talked them into traveling unarmed!

We progressed in an atmosphere of mutual distrust between the escorting mujahideen and the local Hazaras. Normally the mujahideen can see no reason to be unduly



Continued on page 76



SOF JUST CAUSE

“MERCING” ARO IN PASO CANOA

***SOF Links Up With “Mercs” Who Seize
Panamanian Border Post***

by G.B. Crouse



CHRISTMAS Day 1989. Five days after Operation Just Cause we'd finally managed to work out the logistics of getting a crew into Panama. With Torrijos International closed and network charters full, our best bet was going overland from San Jose, Costa Rica.

I was spending the holidays at home with my family when the call came to move out. After packing (Walkman, notebook and suntan lotion), I was ready to go. I told my Mother, "I'm going to Panama now." Not terribly impressed by this foreign correspondent routine, she replied, "Is your room clean?" Fortunately it was, so mom allowed me to go.

I met Bob Brown and Paul Fanshaw, a former Legion Para, in Miami. There Brown informed me that Paso Canoas, a small town that sits astride the frontier between Costa Rica and Panama, was under the control of a group described as mercenaries.

Suddenly, Paso Canoas seemed like the place to be. Hoping to arrive before the American troops, we flew to San Jose, met with two gentlemen we'd hired to drive us to the border and set out for Panama. Seven

hours later, we stood a few meters from the border checkpoint. We didn't know what to expect from the gang who'd seized the town and we approached the border checkpoint with some trepidation.

An unarmed soldier from the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) greeted us with an extraordinary amount of courtesy. We asked about the mercenaries and were directed to a gentleman standing nearby wearing Reeboks and carrying an AK-47. He turned out to be Jose Echevers, leader of the Hugo Spadafora Armed Liberation Front, or FLASH. Junior, as everyone called him, was pleased to see us. He whisked us to the front of the line to have our passports stamped. Then he directed us to a nearby hotel (I use that term very loosely) and asked that we return in 30 minutes for a briefing.

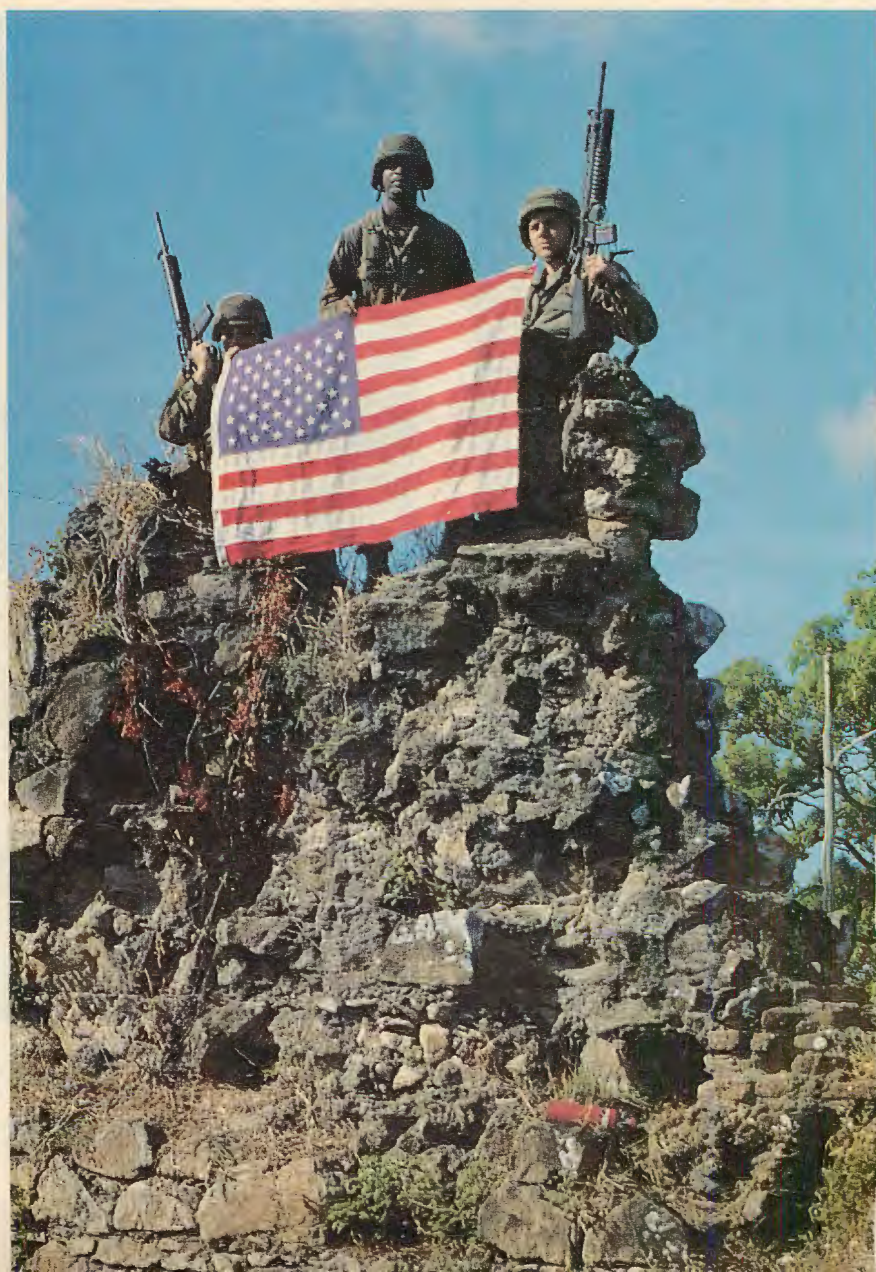
Things don't usually go this well on an assignment, particularly one put together at the last minute. But here we were across the border in an air-conditioned hotel room, American troops were nowhere to be seen and we were getting along famously with the new sheriff in town.

As we returned to meet with Junior we

UND

ABOVE: U.S. troops were well prepared for taking on Noriega's thugs in the crowded areas of Panama City. The 82nd and 7th Infantry Division (Light) all had received blocks of instruction on military operations in urban terrain (see sidebar, page 96.) Photo: S. Ferry/Liaison

RIGHT: Troopers of the 1/504, 82nd Airborne, show the flag. Not Mt. Suribachi, but it'll do. Photo: Cpl. Scott A. Defries/82nd Airborne PAO





ABOVE CENTER: Jose Echevers, leader of FLASH, ran a tight ship and prevented looting. Photo: Paul Fanshaw

ABOVE: Everyone's favorite pastime: confiscating vehicles from former Noriega goons. Photo: Robert K. Brown



TOP: Members of the Hugo Spadafora Armed Liberation Front guarding the Paso Canoa branch of the National Bank of Panama. Photo: Paul Fanshaw

ABOVE: Hurricane, an anti-Sandinista Miskito Indian from Nicaragua serving with FLASH, near the Costa Rican border. Photo: Paul Fanshaw

encountered his men spread around town, dressed in jeans and black T-shirts. Some carried AKs, some had handguns stuck in their belts. We met with Junior in what passed for his office near the border checkpoint. His office consisted of a couple of desks, some chairs that were about five years older than dirt and a picture of the late General Omar Torrijos. Attached to the photograph was a sign that (roughly translated) read "On our feet or dead, but never on our knees."

One of the FLASH men remained outside the door with an AK while another sat in the corner and monitored the radio, mostly excited babble in rapidly spoken Spanish. Throughout the interview Junior would often excuse himself to deal with some minor emergency on the radio.

Junior explained at length how he became head of FLASH. Echevers, a Panamanian businessman with interests in the coffee business, had fought with Spadafora (see Spadafora sidebar) in Nicaragua, against dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1978-79 and then as a contra against the Sandinistas from 1982 to 1985. Junior's involvement with Spadafora resulted in his running afoul of Noriega. After Noriega's thugs murdered Spadafora in 1985, Junior swore to capture those responsible. He began recruiting men and buying arms in hopes of starting a popular uprising against Noriega. After recruiting various Panamanians, former contras and nationals from El Salvador and Costa Rica, Junior began equipping them with AKs he purchased on the black market with his funds.

It was during this phase of Junior's career that SOF first became aware of his activities. In May of 1989, during the unrest following the Panamanian election, SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown and a former CIA field officer traveled to Costa Rica. There, they hoped to contact anti-Noriega resistance forces and cross the border into Panama. While in San Jose they heard rumors of a coffee factory destroyed by 12 PDF thugs in Costa Rica. Costa Rican officials alleged there was an arms cache at the factory. Brown was unable to develop specific information on the incident.

In Panama, just after Christmas, we learned it was Junior's factory that Noriega's thugs had crossed the border to destroy. He claims there were no arms. Noriega's men succeeded in destroying the factory, but missed capturing Junior. Later, Junior claims, four PDF men came to arrest or kill him. After a brief car chase, Junior stopped his car and took his pursuers under fire. He claims to have killed all four with his UZI while escaping injury.

As the invasion drew near, Junior was making some progress with his resistance movement and traveled to Miami to meet with American CIA agents to discuss his activities. He claimed he had 200 armed men in position to attack the provincial capital of David on the 22nd of December. Junior later claimed he could assemble as

many as 600 men for his offensive. The American invasion made this unnecessary. So he moved to seize Paso Canoas instead and try to prevent former Noriega supporters from fleeing across the border. He also wanted to apprehend those involved in the murder of Spadafora.

Accounts of exactly how the town fell vary. Junior claims he took the town on the 20th, seizing the PDF headquarters and capturing several crew-served weapons that he sent to the Americans in David. A PDF sergeant I interviewed had a different version. He claimed that Junior and the lads didn't show up for two days after the invasion, that there were no heavy weapons and no confrontation between PDF and FLASH. Many details of Junior's account are all but impossible to verify. Nonetheless, Junior and his men were very much in control of the town when we arrived. The local PDF unit, disarmed by Junior's men, was cooperating fully and supporting his efforts.

On the day of the invasion the local PDF commander hoisted a white flag to prevent his troops from being attacked by American forces. Paso Canoas is a long way from Panama City and there was little support for Noriega amongst the locals. After running up the white flag, the PDF continued with their mission of watching the border and maintaining order in Paso Canoas.

Junior continued to brief us on his activities. One interesting detail was the arrest of a PDF sergeant named Cheverria. Junior maintains Cheverria was involved in the torture and murder of Spadafora. The PDF had learned of his presence in a house near town and turned the information over to Junior. We stopped by the jail later to visit with the Cheverria, but he had little to say.

Junior informed us that he had some 50 troops in the area even though earlier he had reported having 150. He must have been using new math because I never saw more than 30. The American military reported finding 37 men and 57 weapons when they arrived.

As our meeting was breaking up there was a flurry of activity outside the PDF headquarters. Without really knowing where we were going or why, we jumped into a vehicle and took off for the outskirts of town. It turned out we were dashing off to seize some vehicles Noriega supporters had hidden for use in the event of trouble, such as an American invasion. We approached the first house with some caution, only to find your basic Panamanian family and a large herd of chickens. But, sure enough, half hidden behind the house we found a truck.

After a brief conversation with the residents of the house, we established that they did not know how the truck got there. Except that perhaps God had miracled it

into their backyard. It is a testament to the depth of their faith that they did not question God's generosity. They looked disappointed as Junior's men towed the truck away.

We visited with the people next door and found they too had a car mysteriously appear in their chicken pen. We took that one too. Junior's motor pool was getting larger, but we'd yet to confiscate anything with air conditioning.

We returned to town and headed for Los Nellos, the local FLASH headquarters/restaurant. Junior had some men go with us so that, as he put it, "nobody would shoot us." That did wonderful things for my appetite. I'm pretty sure Los Nellos is Spanish for bad service. The women who worked there were the only Panamanians we met, except the jailed murder suspect,

Junior's motor pool was getting larger, but we'd yet to confiscate anything with air conditioning.

who weren't friendly.

The next morning we returned to town to find SOF patches, given out by Brown the day before, sewn to many of the FLASH men's shirts. Junior had one sewn onto his baseball cap.

Brown, now thick with Junior, attempted to persuade him to attack or at least recon a suspected Noriega guerrilla base camp of 300-400 men some 75 miles away. Junior declined, insisting he would allow the Americans the honor of attacking the base camp. I personally was not displeased by his decision.

About mid-morning Brown decided to travel to David, the provincial capital, to see if he could contact the American troops. After he left, taking Paul and two FLASH men with him, I hung around outside the bank waiting for something to happen. One of Junior's men was always outside the bank, holding his rifle at high port. My arms got tired just watching.

About an hour after Brown left, Junior's men arrested another pro-Noriega goon who gave information about the location of another stashed vehicle and an arms cache. The suspect agreed to accompany us (he was in no position to refuse) to the nearby countryside to find the car and supposed arms.

After rushing the wrong house, we got back in our jeep and rushed to the next house down the road. So much for the element of surprise. Our prisoner's memory wasn't real clear and it took nearly an hour of stomping through the bush to find the hidden jeep. Confiscating cars was starting to get real old. A couple of less than friendly looking gentlemen with long machetes, told us there was no arms cache. I for one, was willing to take them at



Paul Fanshaw, right, and FLASH trooper carrying black market AK-47. SOF patches quickly appeared on FLASH uniforms. Photo: Robert K. Brown



SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown and Jose Echevers visiting one of the suspects in the murder of Hugo Spadafora, in the local jail. Photo: Paul Fanshaw



TOP: Sheridan tank on the perimeter securing the approaches to the Papal Nunciature. Photo: P. Chauvel/Syigma

ABOVE: Sergeant Cheverria, a former PDF soldier, after his capture by FLASH. Not a happy camper. Photo: Robert K. Brown

their word.

Getting our new jeep back to town turned into a comedy of errors. Junior burned out the clutch of our jeep towing the other one



TOP: American troops were more concerned with taking out PDF than attempting to stop looters. Photo: P. Chauvel/Syigma

ABOVE: Members of FLASH greet an A Team from the 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, the first American troops to arrive in Paso Canoa. Photo: Robert K. Brown

out of the scrub. While Junior tried to get the crippled jeep into gear the engine died and wouldn't restart. We then used the captured jeep to tow ours until the rope broke. It still wouldn't start so we pushed it down a hill. That didn't work. We pushed it back up the hill and on the push back down it finally started. At the rate these guys were going through vehicles we'd all be walking soon.

For accompanying Junior on this mission and carrying an AK (the truth is I held it while one of the troops went to the bathroom) Junior made me a member of his group. Nice, but I would have preferred a membership in the Balboa Yacht Club.

Brown returned from David shortly after I got back to town. He and Paul had found the American troops. They met with a Special Forces major who questioned one of Junior's men and then asked Brown for his assessment of the situation. All the

information Brown provided was news to the American troops. Initially the Americans had believed Junior and his men to be pro-Noriega. Brown informed the major that Paso Canoa was calm and under the able control of Junior. Junior had told Brown he was anxious to cooperate with the Americans and he would surrender his weapons if necessary. The SF major said he'd come to Paso Canoa later in the afternoon.

A couple of hours later the major and two other American officers arrived driving a brand new confiscated Toyota Land Cruiser. Apparently we weren't the only people running around liberating automobiles. Negotiations with Junior led to an agreement in which Junior would remain in charge and his men would keep their weapons. At some point in the future the Americans promised Junior the AKs would be replaced with M16s and 10 of his men

would become part of the new police force. A steady paycheck was not unimportant to Junior's forces as all he provided them was room and board, making them more soldiers of fortune than mercenaries. The American officers left for David, taking the murder suspect with them. They promised to return with a detachment of American troops the next day.

Early the next morning the PDF confiscated a fragmentation grenade from some fool dumb enough to carry it around town. Not wanting to turn it over to FLASH, for fear they'd accidentally blow themselves up, the PDF gave it to me. Later that morning a Special Forces team arrived, driving, you guessed it, confiscated trucks. Not having much use for a grenade, I gave it to an NCO.

When the American troops did arrive we decided there wasn't much left for us to see or do. Besides, though confiscating cars has much to recommend it, it can get old after two or three days. After leaving some extra cans of Copenhagen with the American troops and saying our goodbyes to FLASH and the PDF, we rented a van (with air conditioning) and took off for Panama City.

Driving to Panama City was pleasant enough, with brief stops to chat with small groups of troops. Near the city we fell behind a slow moving military convoy brought almost to a standstill by the inevitable checkpoints and road blocks on the approaches to Howard Air Force Base. After clearing the last checkpoint we entered the city, only to be stopped again, this time by a beer truck that had caught fire. Press reports in the States had made the Panama City situation sound grim, with shortages of most everything. I prayed the beer truck had made its deliveries before catching fire.

Media coverage in the states about the dire situation (lack of food, water and party supplies, looting etc.) proved somewhat inaccurate. There had been looting in low rent districts. In fact the streets looked as if some giant house cats had thrown a kitty litter festival. Trash was waist high and glass from broken windows everywhere. The sort of thing you see after any disaster, *natural* or man-made. The nicer parts of town were for the most part untouched.

We headed for the Marriott, the usual press hangout in Panama City, only to find it shot up and empty. A few minutes later we checked into the nearby Inter-Continental. After our hotel in Paso Canoas, which was about six stars away from being a five-star hotel, the Inter-Con was a welcome sight. Hot water, clean sheets and room service.

Brown and Foley left to meet with some journalists at the Holiday Inn. When it was time to return they discovered that the curfew was in effect and they would have to overnight where they were. I joined them the next day. As we'd been traveling since Christmas Day, we had no way of knowing that the Holiday Inn overlooked the Papal

SPADAFORA'S MURDER TRIGGERED NORIEGA'S FALL

The brutal murder four years ago of Dr. Hugo Spadafora, a Panamanian physician and liberal soldier of fortune who fought in guerrilla wars in Africa against Portuguese Colonial rule and in Central America, galvanized public opinion in Panama against General Manuel Antonio Noriega.

It was a key event in Noriega's downfall.

Spadafora's headless and mutilated body was found in Costa Rica stuffed into a U.S. mailbag near the border of Panama on 14 September 1985. The head was never found. Noriega, in France at the time, was blamed for the murder of the guerrilla warrior who had become an outspoken enemy of the General and the repressive and corrupt Panamanian military regime. Noriega denied he had anything to do with the slaying, but U.S. officials said he had ordered the killing.

Spadafora's case became a major political scandal in Panama. When then-President Nicolas Barletta, headed a major independent investigation into the killing, Noriega forced Barletta to resign and it wasn't long before Panama's attorney general concluded that there was no evidence involving Noriega. A separate investigation by Costa Rica's judicial police and attorney general came up with a different conclusion. They interviewed a witness who told them that two military jeeps drove across the Panama frontier before dawn. When the sun rose peasants discovered the body but no head.

Spadafora had let it be known to friends and relatives that he was returning to lead a campaign against Noriega, and that he planned to present proof that Noriega was a ruthless dictator, killer, and a major drug trafficker who had to be overthrown. He had voiced these charges publicly many times.

Spadafora had apparently gathered evidence of Noriega's drug activities while helping his old friend Eden Pastora, a contra leader operating out of

Costa Rica, fight the Sandinistas. The two had first met years earlier while fighting to topple Anastasio Somoza but had become disenchanted with the Sandinistas. Spadafora had also been working with the Miskito Indians opposed to the Sandinistas.

Before leaving Costa Rica overland, Spadafora, according to his brother Winston, spoke to American agents in Costa Rica. He crossed the border to Panama by bus on 13 September. His decapitated body was found in Costa Rica the next day. The autopsy reportedly showed that his head had been cut off when he was still alive.

Three witnesses gave sworn testimony that they saw Spadafora enter Panama and that he was arrested by Panamanian military in the town of Concepcion. The body had the marking "F-8" carved into it his brother said. Analysts said they believe the symbol is linked to an army unit named F-8 set up in 1984 to suppress political opponents of Noriega. A contra leader who knew Spadafora told Soldier of Fortune he had heard radio reports of Spadafora's progress toward Panama but he did not regard this as alarming.

Guillermo Sanchez Borbon, a Panamanian newspaper columnist vehemently opposed to Noriega, has published many details of the murder. He claims that four different confidential sources told him that Spadafora was tortured and beheaded by Panamanian army soldiers in a schoolyard in the village of Corozo and the body was then dumped in Costa Rica.

The murder had a big impact in Panama. Spadafora was no right wing zealot. He was an educated physician, an intellectual who had not hesitated to take up arms for the freedom of others, and who had served Panama's popular strong-man General Omar Torrijos as a deputy health minister. But after Torrijos was killed in an air crash, Spadafora cut his ties to the regime.

— Mike Acoca

Nunciature and was presently home to half the free world's press corps. We quickly checked into one of the last remaining rooms. After getting our press cards from Captain Mitchell Toms, the local PAO officer, we set off to see what was happening.

Operation Just Cause, like all military ventures, required a media center, in this case the officers club at Quarry Heights. The bar, however, was closed. We met with Colonel Swank, the OIC of the center. He was not in good humor. I suspect journalists had asked him 10,000 ridiculous questions over the past few days and it was starting to wear on him a little. He answered our questions but seemed ill-

disposed to offer much else. Major L.D. Walker, on the other hand was a different matter.

Walker was the Public Affairs Officer for the 7th Infantry Division (Light) from Fort Ord, California. He was wasting no time cornering any journalist he could find and telling them what a fine job the 7th was doing. The 7th was doing and had done a truly outstanding job, but they seemed to be getting the short end of the stick when it came to media coverage. They'd taken all their objectives by 0500 on the day of the invasion, lost only one man killed to enemy fire and had generally kicked ass in some of the heaviest fighting. Nonetheless even the *Army Times* had all but ignored them. The

problem was that they were mostly in Colon, on the Atlantic side, and in the western part of Panama. There is no happy hour in Colon and the press corps wasn't exactly flocking over there to see them. Walker promised a helicopter ride over the next day. Paul and I decided to go.

Back at the hotel preparations for New Year's Eve were coming along nicely. Anytime you assemble a couple of hundred journalists in one place it's difficult not to have a good time. Most of them, especially the TV Kens and Barbies, were spending their time hanging out on the balcony waiting for something to happen in the Nunciature. A betting pool was going on with odds on everything from when Noriega would come out to whether Elvis was in there with him.

The journalists devoted their evenings to serious discussions and light drinking. After about 10 minutes of that we switched to light conversation and heavy drinking. Conversation revolved around important issues such as how attractive girls in Panama are and why Panama beer contained only 3.7% alcohol by volume.

Another important topic of conversation was souvenirs. Reporters and troops seem to share an obsession with collecting worthless stuff in foreign countries that you couldn't give them at home.

Operation Just Cause T-shirts had already begun to appear; the decals came along a day or so later. Patches and insignia were in great demand. Pablo, a CNN correspondent, asked a Coca-Cola vendor if he knew of any souvenirs available, "Si," he replied, "I have a jeep." Sure enough the man had managed to get his hands on a PDF jeep, minus its engine. Pablo had to tell the dejected vendor it would be impossible for him to take a jeep home and went off to look for something more portable.

But the souvenir coup of the war belongs to another CNN correspondent, Charles Jaco. Troops from the 82nd Airborne had searched Noriega's office at the Comandancia after the battle and among other things had found Manuel's Heuer watch. A former Noriega bodyguard in their custody confirmed that it belonged to the former dictator. Jaco bought the watch from a soldier and wore it the rest of the time I was there. He particularly enjoyed shouting at the Nunciature from the balcony, "Hey Manny, you know what time it is?" "No, you don't, because I have your watch."

Shouted insults were the least of the harassment directed at Noriega. American troops had set up speakers outside and blasted the Vatican Nunciature with rock day and night. Some network correspondents maintained the U.S. did this not to harass Noriega but to prevent the networks from picking up information from the listening devices they had pointed at the Nunciature.

New Year's Day we headed over to Quarry Heights to meet with Maj. Walker and fly over to Colon. Colonel Keith

Kellog, a brigade commander in the 7th Infantry Division, met us on our arrival. He explained in detail how his men had taken their objectives, leaving the enemy with 32 dead, 27 wounded and 611 taken prisoner. Afterward we patrolled the streets around Colon and viewed areas where fighting had been heaviest. There were some remarkable things to be seen, not so much in Colon but with the troops themselves.

All had the new style flak jackets. Some senior officers did not, suggesting that the best equipment had been given first to the troops. Which of course is how it should be, but seldom is done. The morale and professionalism of the troops was apparent wherever you looked. They kept their weapons locked and loaded and maintained proper intervals when patrolling. As a former Marine, I never like giving the U.S. Army credit for anything, but these guys were some of the best troops I've ever seen.

We returned to Panama City late in the afternoon, in time for the Orange Bowl. What a war. Friendly natives and college bowl games. Things were getting back to normal in the capital. Even Domino's Pizza was delivering again. Ordering was easy because the employees spoke a local dialect known as Domino's English. They understood words like large and pepperoni and phrases like extra cheese and hold the anchovies. But if you said something like, "I think the 49ers will win the Super

Besides McDonalds, the 82nd also seemed impressed with the Panamanian women who, I gather, were a pleasant change from the women in Fayetteville, which, as one trooper told me, was "the only town in North America where fat girls could be choosy."

In general the Panamanians were very friendly people. How much of that was due to the United States having over 24,000 troops in their country is difficult to say. It is, however, safe to say that if you ever have a chance to go to a country in the wake of an American invasion which deposes an unpopular dictator, by all means go. At best, invasions have a way of improving the locals' attitudes about Americans. Failing that, they at least bring all the Yankee Go Home trash to a screeching halt.

On our last full day in Panama the locals staged a big demonstration just across the concertina wire from the American perimeter securing the Nunciature. I grabbed some beer and headed for CNN's suite on the 18th floor, which offered the best view. It was your basic garden variety protest. About 20,000 pissed-off Panamanians shouting "Noriega is a pig, a witch and an assassin." The only remarkable event I saw was a small group of Panamanians in a nearby building who were waving a large American flag. That was normal enough except that in the middle of the flag they had attached a large picture of Jim Morri-



Mortar crew of 1st Bn, 504th PIR, 82nd Airborne Division, employ new M252 81mm mortar in combat for first time. Photo: Cpl. Scott Defries/82nd Airborne PAO

Bowl," they'd look confused and nod politely.

I divided my time between getting anti-Noriega T-shirts and getting a tan. The troops were a little more relaxed and easier to talk to, especially if you happened to drop by McDonalds. The 82nd seemed to maintain a near constant presence there, which says something about MREs (Meals Ready To Eat, the current field rations).

son of the Doors. What significance this had, I have no idea.

That evening Noriega left the country as a guest of the U.S. government and the next day Brown and I left Panama as well. Earlier in the week there had been some seats on military flights leaving the country. I had a confused conversation with an army sergeant major about the availability of flights. GBC: Is there a possibility of my flying out on a military aircraft? SgtMaj: We stopped flying the press out when the airport opened. (The airport being open

Continued on page 85

SOF JUST CAUSE

U.S. WARRIORS TOPPLE PANAMANIAN

***“We Came, We Saw, We Kicked Ass”
— 82nd Airborne Graffiti, Balboa, Panama***

by Robert K. Brown



THUGS



TOP: Panamanian Defense Force snipers occupied top floors of this high rise next to the PDF Comandancia which housed Noriega's Headquarters. Photo: Robert K. Brown

CENTER: Charlie Co. of the 508th Light Infantry breached the compound wall with 40-lb. shaped charge at this location. Photo: Robert K. Brown

ABOVE: Noriega's Headquarters, the Comandancia, shows the effects of being hosed down by 40mm and 105mm rounds from Spectre AC-130 gunships. Photo: Robert K. Brown

EDITOR'S NOTE

Often in combat reporting you get the best stories in chance encounters rather than at press conferences, scheduled public affairs tours and staged photo opportunities.

A long distance look at results of Spectre AC-130 gunships employed against PDF targets in Panama City. Photo: Patrick Chauvel/Sigma

Such was the case in Panama City when I bumped into a group of troopers from Charlie Company, 1st Airborne Battalion, 508th Light Infantry, 193rd Infantry Brigade, a unit permanently stationed in Panama.

The troops were articulate and most eager to describe their part in defeating Noriega's goons. What follows is an edited and somewhat condensed version of my interview with them. I have eliminated my



ABOVE: Proud, lean and mean members of Charlie Co., 508th Light Infantry pose for SOF camera. Standing from left to right, E-6 David Lynch, 2nd Lt. John Shaw, E-5 Robert Pittman, E-5 Frank Adams and E-5 Robert Sure. Kneeling, left to right; E-3 Daniel O'Rourke, E-2 Richard Brown, E-4 Brad Morton and E-5 Hans Dengner. Photo: Robert K. Brown

questions to get in as many troop comments as possible on various aspects of the operation.

The Attack on the Comandancia

Lt. Shaw: Our mission was to seize and secure Noriega's headquarters, the Comandancia, inside the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) compound. We staged next to an elementary school located at the back gate of Fort Clayton. From that position we prepped for combat and received our operations order. Our phase of the mission was called "Operation High Anxiety!"

Sgt. Dengner: We got our briefing when we were at the elementary school, which was our staging area before we jumped on the trucks. Military Intelligence passed around this thick photo album. Color photos of the Comandancia and all the



Publisher Brown debriefs members of Charlie Co., 508th Light Infantry who breached wall and helped clean compound containing Noriega's Headquarters.

buildings in the PDF compound.

Lt. Shaw: The company loaded on six trucks about 0015 hours on the 20th and moved out at H-Hour, 0100 hours.

Once reaching our assembly area at the junction of 4th of July Avenue and A Street we dismounted. We started taking fire

immediately. There were a lot of mortar rounds landing, airbursts and small arms fire. Eventually our company cleared the bottom half of the compound and the Rangers the top half.

Sgt. Sure: We were about 1,000 meters from the objective. There was sniper fire,

air bursts, mortar rounds and total chaos. Everything was in flames. It became clear that a lot of the enemy heavy weapons had not been taken out; antiaircraft guns were still firing.

Pfc. O'Rourke: As we were going in we heard all the noise of our air support; they were still working on the objective. The idea was for them to prep it, take out as much resistance as they could and for us to go in and clear the rest.

Sgt. Dengner: We kept getting held up and had to pull back. Then the Spectres and some gunships came in to prep the area again, directing their fire on the Comandancia. We expected to receive some sniper fire from the area but the ratio of actual enemy personnel in the area and civilians was heavily in favor of the civilians. So instead of wasting the whole building and taking out a whole lot of civilians we had to actually fight our way through to get to the Comandancia.

Sgt. Lynch: I was the last person in the company movement. I had a two-man team with me. Our job was rear security. As we started moving through the housing area I saw sniper fire coming from the top of the high rise. As I looked around I could see people silhouetted by the street lights. As we moved through the houses and alleyways the sniper fire got more intense. Some of the buildings were on fire and it was spreading toward us. My squad was the only squad that was fired on by some type of heavy machine-gun fire. We couldn't identify the make because there was so much other noise.

At that point we took a grenade. Dengner was knocked unconscious. It was not more than 30 seconds after that, when we were trying to reconsolidate and set up our security again, that another grenade landed in the center of our position and we took three casualties.

We moved out of the building we were in and directed fire at the one where the grenades came from. Since nobody came out of the building it was deduced that the hostile force was eliminated and we drove on with our mission.

Lt. Shaw: At the pre-mission briefing it was estimated that approximately 150-200 personnel might be in the compound there. Presumably a number of those personnel were taken out by the preparation from the Spectre and other aircraft. There were still quite a few people left in the nearby civilian housing area and due to the rules of engagement the aircraft could not eliminate the snipers. Consequently we had a lot of fighting in the area. We created the breach in the PDF compound perimeter wall by having an M113 drop a 40-pound cratering charge next to the well. It blew a 12-foot hole.

Sgt. Sure: My squad was the first one to go through the breach. We sat in dark alleys for about four hours evading fire while waiting for the Rangers to move into position. When we finally moved in we fired two 90mm recoilless rounds into the

SMART MOVE

Several years ago, when the idea of forming "light" infantry divisions was first debated, the objection was raised that "modern" war is highly mobile and the exclusive preserve of armored and mechanized forces, with the example of the several Arab-Israeli wars as the lead argument. As a result, the Army in its wisdom created the 7th Infantry Division (Light), a state-of-the-art equivalent of what used to be called a "straight-leg" infantry division built around foot-mobile infantry riflemen.

Such a division makes a vastly smaller demand on air or sealift assets for deployment than the equivalent armored or mechanized unit. Also, by not being tied into several hundred tracked vehicles with all their maintenance requirements and the training effort required to learn how to fight a mounted-dismounted mechanized type of battle, they can really bear down on the dismounted infantry basics: marksmanship and individual weapons proficiency, physical fitness, scouting and patrolling, and the fine points of small-unit tactics. There was even a recognition that the "light" and the "mechanized" infantry divisions are really quite different animals. Although no one at Fort Benning would admit it in so many words, a mechanized division is really an armored division with a different proportion of armor and mechanized battalions, and has to be fought as such.

Well, Panama proved the point. Moving most of the 7th ID did not bankrupt the airlift capabilities of the Air Force, and the division accomplished its mission with classic efficiency. And it also showed that there really is a mission for this type of unit in the real wars that we sometimes have to fight in the real world, which sometimes do not closely resemble the "Active Defense of the Fulda Gap" and other exercises that occupy so much of the attention of the Staff Colleges.

— Alex McColl

breach, followed by four grenades to clear it out. We rushed into the breach and were followed by the rest of the company which fanned out and started clearing buildings.

Weaponry

Sgt Dengner: The standard squad is armed with two 203s [M16s with a M203 grenade launcher attached] and two M249s. The team leaders carry M16A2s.

Shotguns were issued [carried by one team leader in each squad] since we knew that we were going to be on a MOUT (Military Operations In Urban Terrain) mission and would use them as "door busters" and for clearing rooms.

I packed the shotgun laterally across the top of the rucksack just underneath my straps which I did not cinch all the

way down.

The M249s are more of a replacement of the automatic rifle. It used to be that you had your M60 and then within your fire team you had one 203. One guy fired his M16 on automatic (he was the automatic rifleman); the automatic rifleman has a M249 now which gives you a little more firepower.

MOUT Training

Lt. Shaw: I had known about this operation for probably 2-3 months and our training had been directed toward a MOUT scenario during this period. On the weekends we had been getting together with the company commander but due to the top secret nature we weren't able to tell the rest of the platoon what or where we were going to hit.

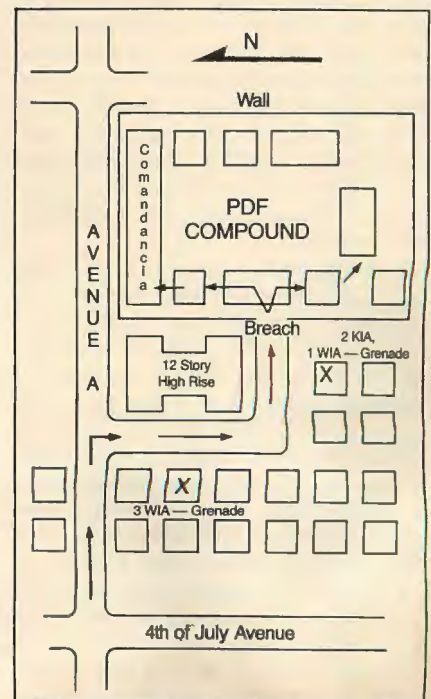
We would set up scenarios with different buildings and practiced passing platoons through each other. As time passed, the platoons and squads developed the ability to effectively work together in an urban environment. These guys trained hard and although they may not have realized exactly what they were training for everything fell into place when the time came. It went down just as planned.

Observations

Sgt. Dengner: For some months prior to Operation Just Cause, we were not allowed to go into the Comandancia compound because the PDF HQ was there. However we had a lot of aerial photographs and we could see the Comandancia from observation points like at Fort Amador. Our guys were familiar with the roads and therefore we were able to operate better than someone who had never seen the area. This was a great advantage.

Some of the guys have been assigned

C Co., 1/508th attack on Comandancia (map not to scale).





American troopers score their biggest win since Vietnam. They were sharp, effective and knew how to shoot. Photo: S. Ferry/Gamma-Liaison

here two or three years and prior to one and one-half years ago the PDF military installations were not off limits. Some of us who had been here that long were still able to walk around and through those areas as we were still friendly with members of the PDF. So there were a few personnel who had intimate knowledge of the PDF compound and the surrounding area.

Sgt. Lynch: I have done a lot of MOUT training. I would like to point out like all animals, humans have a weakness: They fail to look up. As you are moving, you are always looking forward to see what is ahead of you, looking behind you to make sure that the guys are behind you and to the sides to make sure that nothing is coming from your flanks. But in a MOUT environment you have windows and balconies, trees, tops of buildings where it is easy for snipers to operate from. I always try to stress that with my men but as you start getting fatigued and tired, you start to have lapses. If we had been looking up, I think that we would have had three less casualties that first night.

Sgt. Dengner: Discipline held up really well as far as the individual soldiers were concerned. When you are in battle you are hyped up and ready to shoot at anything. We have all been out to the ranges, including live fire ranges, so we are used to the sound of live gun fire. But when we moved into the area of the 4th of July Avenue and saw first hand the incredible destruction and flames taller than the buildings, it hit everyone with a shock. The adrenaline starts pumping and it is easy to fire randomly. The troops showed excellent discipline in taking the time to identify their targets before shooting.

Pvt. Brown: I had only been here 10 days and what I learned the most during this op

was that the squad leaders and team leaders are people you can really rely on for guidance because without them I would probably be one of the guys sent to the States to be put back together.

Sgt. Morton: I think it is important to note that we didn't take very many casualties in this op due mostly to the quality of the preparation and the high caliber of the team and squad leaders. It seemed like we controlled our fire to a point where we didn't kill anybody that didn't need to be killed. If we had been left to our own guns and allowed to fire when we wanted I am sure that we would have killed a lot more people than we did.

The Assault

Sgt. Dengner [whose weapons squad was the lead squad]: The construction of the buildings surrounding the PDF compound was poor — wood and cardboard shacks essentially. The alleys were 4-5 feet wide and were referred to as piss alleys because they smelled like a sewer system. We started receiving heavy machine gun fire during the first prep. The fire had to be .51 or .50 caliber as there was plaster flying everywhere. It took at least 15 minutes for the second Spectre prep and then we began to move forward again. Spectre AC-130

Continued on page 86



TOP RIGHT: U.S. units clearing urban areas made extensive use of shotguns with 00 buck for door busting and room clearing. Photo: Patrick Chauvel/Sygma

ABOVE: Some U.S. troops, in counter-sniper role, took out PDF snipers at ranges up to 400-500 meters with M16A2s with iron sights. Photo: Alan Tannenbaum/Sygma

RIGHT: M203 grenade launcher also proved to be effective against PDF snipers in high-rise apartment rooms. Photo: Jose Angel Murillo/Sygma



THREE GUNS OVER VEGAS

SOF Blow-Out Heats Up Sin City

by William Burris



Range facilities for the SOF three gun match are extensive, high-quality and realistic.

THERE should be a warning for participants in the Soldier of Fortune Three Gun Match – one pass through will only *make you want* to come back for more. It creates the *anticipation* you used to feel for your birthday, your first car and Christmas, all rolled into one fast-paced event held each September.

If you carry a firearm professionally, this match will measure your skills as accurately as anything you have experienced short of an actual firefight. There are serious lessons to be learned, about yourself and your firearms. And this is a damn good place to learn them, since it's only your ego on the line, not your butt.

The match is built around several stages which test your abilities with a particular weapon, either pistol, shotgun, or rifle. It's common to use two types of firearm in an individual stage, thus simulating a transition brought about by the fluid nature of a

firefight. Plan on participating in two stages a day, for three days.

In preparing for the match, you must decide which types of weapons to bring. Your choice is declared at the time of registration, and you have to live with your selection throughout the competition. There has been no scoring advantage for hits with any particular caliber, but there are a wide range of targeting problems involved in each stage. The advantage of a 7.62x51mm rifle at longer ranges may be offset by the low recoil of a 5.56x45mm at mid-range or short-range multiple targets. A high-capacity 9mm pistol might be

just the ticket in one problem, while the more stunning effect of a .45 might make the difference when making a less than perfect hit on a knock-down target. The semiautomatic shotgun presents obvious advantages, but you may learn that it doesn't digest sand very well, at which point you may wish you'd brought a pump gun.

At one time or another over the last several matches I have second-guessed my own choice of firearms. My best advice is that you will probably do best with what you are most used to.

When you register for the match you also have the option of entering in one of several team categories, including police, military, corporate, and open. Team competition is really the best way to go if you can arrange it. Not only is it more enjoyable to compete with "comrades in arms," it also affords you greater opportunity to be a winner, individually or as a team member.

One of the keys to the success of this match is the high quality of each stage scenario. The Match Director, Michael Home, and his crew deserve the credit for this. They research actual firefights experienced by both police and military, and closely adapt them to each course of fire. The results are realistic, challenging, and sometimes very frustrating as you start to

COMPETITIVE COP

Bill Burris served in the U.S. Army as a field medic and clinical specialist, and as volunteer medical cadre in El Salvador under the auspices of Refugee Relief International. Now a deputy sheriff in Pierce County, Washington, Burris conducts firearms training statewide for the Criminal Justice Division, and on behalf of his own company, Delta International. Burris has competed in the last four SOF Three-Gun Matches as a member of the Pierce County Deputy Sheriff's Association team, which placed second in 1988.



Match sponsors with the Champ: left to right, Walter Sych (Sturm, Ruger & Co.), Dick Swan (A.R.M.S., Inc.), Paul Reed (Navy Arms Co.), Cap Hauser (Sigarms), and Lew Gosnell — First Place Champ.



World Champions, SOF Three-Gun Match: (left to right) Eddie Rhodes, Bennie W. Cooley Jr., Bruce Piatt, Bob Ryckman, Jim Clark Jr., Jerry Miculek, and Lew Gosnell — First Place.



Top Military Shooters: front row left to right, Mark Siciliano USN, Jim Erickson USMCR, Allen Heckart USMC, Dennis Schmauch USAFR, Tom Bullins USMC. Top row left to right: sponsor Paul Reed (Navy Arms Co.), Robert K. Brown, Chuck Bolding, Range Commander.



Top Law Enforcement Team: Oregon Board of Police Standards and Training. Left to right, Thomas J. Perritt, Scott E. Anderson, Alan A. Boruck, Ernest J. Hanson.



Top Women's Team: left to right, Beverly Vaughan, Leanne Woslum, Kay Clark Butler, Lorraine M. M. Ferns.



Top Law Enforcement Shooters: (left to right) Dick Swan A.R.M.S., Inc. (sponsor), Eddie Rhodes (Pueblo, CO PD), Bruce Piatt (Montvale, NJ PD) First Place, Lee Souter (Tuscon, AZ PD), Dennie W. Cooley Jr. (DOE, Idaho).



Top Women Shooters: (Al Mar Knives, sponsor) left to right, Lorraine M. M. Ferns, Kay Clark Butler, Leanne Woslum, Ann Livingston, Carmen Anderson. Kneeling, Al Mar, R.K. Brown.



Tyro winners: (left to right) Howard Levine, Bruce Piatt, S. Todd Salmon, Ted Kincannon, Barton Cox.

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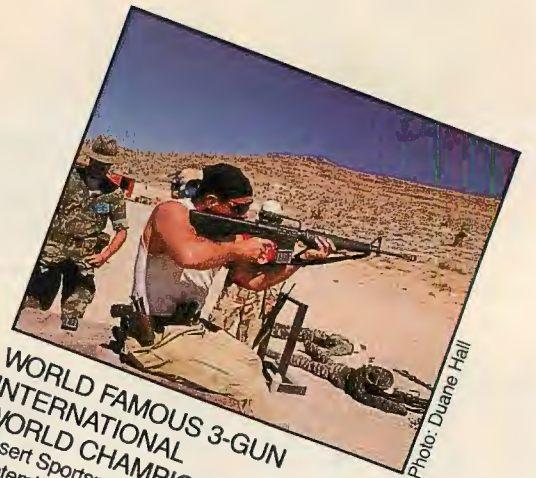


Photo: Duane Hall

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VIVA LAS VEGAS?

At each Las Vegas convention, rumors abound as to why the great yearly gathering is held at the Sahara Hotel and why we continue to come to Las Vegas. The fact is that I have been unable, during the last seven years, to find any other location that fulfills all the convention requirements. For example, approximately 20 states do not permit private ownership of Class II (fully automatic) weapons. Add to this the growing number of states which have banned semi-automatic weapons and the growing number of states and cities that are enacting ordinances banning gun shows and expositions, and the problem becomes obvious.

If you know your state has permissible firearms laws then read on, because I have listed the minimum facilities requirements for the SOF convention, Exposition and World Championship Three-Gun Tactical Shooting Match:

I. HOTEL: The convention location must be held in a hotel with a guaranteed room capacity of 600. Convention and meeting spaces for 350 must also be provided free of charge. The hotel must accept weekend conventions (the Sahara Hotel is the only comparable-size hotel in Las Vegas to accept weekend conventions).

II. EXPOSITION: The SOF Expo requires 40,000 square feet or more of floor space. The space should be within the HQ hotel or within walking distance.

III. THREE-GUN MATCH: The world championship SOF Three-Gun Tactical Match requires a range which can handle 250 competitors and staff plus 1,000 spectators, including space for parking and concessions. The shooting facilities require six stages to run concurrently. Rifle range must be at least 350 meters in depth. Most importantly, the range must provide a manpower pool from which to draw 50 volunteer laborers and staffers. SOF pays rental for 10 days usage of the range.

Do you know a location that fits all of the above? If so, give a call to Bill Brooks, SOF Convention Director, (205) 244-1916.

learn those lessons mentioned earlier.

Following an initial briefing at the Sahara Hotel, which also serves as the center of SOF Convention activities, approximately 200 shooters move out to the desert west of Las Vegas. There, on the grounds of the Desert Sportsman's range facility, individual competitors and teams report to their assigned stages.

The environment is rugged. Participants will find themselves moving against the



Advancing from half-track position in the Israeli Bus Rescue, where he engaged multiple targets with a shotgun, shooter advances into maze of shoot, no-shoot targets.

clock through uneven terrain full of sand, rocks, and man-made obstacles. Elbow and knee pads are a prudent precaution. On one stage, several years ago, I performed a maneuver that to a casual observer might have appeared to be intentional. While on the run, I tripped on a rock and found myself propelled through the air head first. Since I was headed towards the target anyway, I chose to land in a prone position and fire my rifle. Only I knew that this was an unintentional stop, but one of the rocks I encountered on the "LZ" cut through my knee pad and trousers, and tore a gash in my leg.

The climate can be a challenge as well. Although the worst of the summer heat may have subsided, it's not unheard of to experience temperatures in the 100-110 degree range during the afternoon. It's best to make preparations to keep yourself well hydrated, or you'll risk losing some of your physical capacity to shoot accurately.

The 1989 match's shooting stages begin with "Happy Valley," a POW liberation exercise if your orientation is military or a hostage rescue from a law-enforcement viewpoint. As in all stages except team shoot-offs, you go through the exercise as an individual. This one has 25 steel knock-down targets, which are engaged using a combination of rifle and pistol.

The shooter starts seated on a platform representing the helicopter used to insert the rescue team into a very hostile area. Your rifle is only loaded with 10 rounds, a limitation which has the practical effect of simulating a malfunction. You must engage the first 10 targets while remaining in the "aircraft." These targets are approximately 10-inch diameter plates at various distances. You then exit the aircraft bringing your temporarily disabled rifle with you.

What follows is a series of room-clearing exercises wherein targets are engaged with the pistol through barbed-wire-covered

windows, and doorways. Naturally hostages are interspersed with the bad guys in a manner which is calculated to afford the shooter maximum opportunity to shoot something he'd rather not. When the shooter reaches the final firing position, he may get his rifle back into action by reloading with 10 rounds of loose ammunition prepositioned there for that purpose. He then disposes of any remaining rifle targets and shoots the stop plate.

One of the lessons to be learned from "Happy Valley" is the wisdom of developing skill in range estimation, so that you can hit a small target whether it be at 25 meters, or 125 meters. No one tells you what the actual ranges are. This may seem easy on the range with a man-size target, but when you must hit something the size of a human face, against the clock, without a spotter, and with just enough ammunition to do it right the first time, things become more difficult.

Stage two, "Downed Airman," is a pistol stage simulating an escape and evasion problem wherein the shooter must engage 22 targets at various ranges while traveling uphill in a ravine. The goal is an extraction site where an aircraft and its crew await you. The premise is that it's a now-or-never escape from an area crawling with hostiles, some of whom are moving among the aircrew waiting for you. Shooters must be proficient at shooting from various positions, including prone, rapidly. Physical conditioning is certainly a factor in this event.

Stage 3, "Observation Post," is a rifle-only stage with 18 knockdown targets. The shooter must fire from three locations, each of which affords visibility of a portion of the total number of targets. In order to adapt to the cover at each of these locations, the shooter has to be able to fire from a variety of positions. Some of the targets are cut in a familiar silhouette pattern, but since their actual size is unknown to the shooter,



Female shooter in Stage 5, Israeli Bus Rescue, engages target with shotgun across hood of half-track.

an ability to estimate range is again a critical factor.

Stage 4, the "Crack House," held a particular fascination for me, as I had spent the previous months busting various real examples which litter the landscape around my home environs in Tacoma, Washington. It is a combination pistol/shotgun event in which the shooter engages a total of 21 targets.

Beginning from a position of cover behind an automobile, the shooter engages multiple targets with his handgun before moving to a location where a shotgun is situated with an ammo bandoleer, simulating recovery of the shotgun from a wounded officer. From this point you engage numerous targets, both from outside and inside the crack house. Shots fired inside require conforming to low cover

around and under furniture, culminating in firing several shots lying on your side from both left and right shoulders. This requires good manual dexterity while in circumstances of awkward confinement.

A particularly unsettling incident occurred for me in this stage. During the initial phase my pistol failed to go into battery, a malfunction which took an inordinate amount of time to clear. Later I learned that this was the result of some sand trapped under the extractor. Of course it was at this particular time that I was being filmed by a news crew. The lesson: take no shortcuts in weapons maintenance, particularly in this environment.

Stage 5, "Israeli Bus Rescue," simulates a terrorist attack in an urban area when a school bus and its occupants are threatened by multiple targets who are wreaking

general havoc upon everyone in sight. The shooter begins seated in a pickup truck as the terrorist attack commences in front of him.

While still seated, the shooter engages the three closest targets with his pistol. He then moves to the rear of the truck to retrieve his shotgun, then advances past a disabled (real) halftrack and two other vehicles, toward the threatened school bus. Along the way he engages numerous hostile targets, again with no-shoot targets complicating the problem. Reaching the bus, the shooter reverts to his pistol and enters. Once inside, several more targets must be dispatched as they attempt to surround and enter the bus.

Success in this stage demands that the shooter have a knowledge of the patterning characteristics of his shotgun at various ranges. Otherwise the shot spread will strike innocent bystanders.

Stage 6, "Pistol Exercise," is a straightforward test of skill with six strings of fire from a small structure, requiring assumption of various positions while engaging multiple targets, some of which are obscured by moving no-shoot targets. Fast and accurate shooting is the key to this stage.

Stage 7, "Rifle Exercise," is fired in five strings. The targets consist of two full-size IPSC silhouette targets — one with the body darkened out as only head shots are scored.

String one is fired from 250 yards. Starting from standing position, shooters assume a prone position and fire two rounds at each target, reload, and fire two more at each target, with a 40-second time limit. This firing sequence is referred to as "Dave's Drill."

String two is fired at 150 yards, beginning standing behind a horizontal board. Upon the signal to start, the shooter must fire two rounds at each target from above

GENTLEMEN, MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The 1990 Soldier of Fortune Convention and Three-Gun Match is scheduled for the Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada. Dates are:

- Convention registration, seminars and participatory events: Wednesday, 12 September, through Saturday, 15 September.

- SOF Exposition: Friday, 14 September, through Saturday, 15 September.

- World Championship Three-Gun Match: Wednesday, 12 September, through Saturday, 15 September.

- Firepower Demonstration: 0900-1300 Saturday, 15 September.

Registration information from SOF Convention, Inc., Bill Brooks, 3921 McCain Lane, Montgomery, AL 36106; (205) 244-1916.

One of the keys to realism in the SOF match — aside from excellent facilities — is the demand placed on the shooter to be proficient in all three weapons.



the board, and two rounds at each target from below the board. The time limit is 25 seconds.

String three is fired at 100 yards, the shooter executing a "Dave's Drill," from either a kneeling or sitting position, within 25 seconds.

String four is from 50 yards, the shooter firing one round at each target within six seconds. This exercise is performed twice.

String five is fired from 25 yards, in a standing position, one round at each target, reload, and one more round at each target.

This stage requires the shooter to rapidly assume firing positions, make accurate shots, and execute smooth reloads, all

under very challenging time constraints.

Top teams participate in a shoot-off exercise involving the simultaneous deployment of all their members from the back of a military vehicle. Each participant engages various targets within his zone of responsibility using one or more of the types of weapons used on the other stages. Teamwork is the key, and the time separating the winners from the losers is very short indeed.

In addition to the match itself, all SOF Convention activities are open to shooters while they are not on the range, including various seminars covering a wide range of topics. Featured this year was a fascinating

dissertation by Jeff Cooper, who discussed the role of automatic weapons, and much more.

The products exhibition alone is worth the trip to Las Vegas. The array of equipment, weapons, and other worthwhile gadgets, is truly impressive. Whether your needs are for organizational or personal use, you'll find what you want here.

If you want to participate in a challenging, realistic test of your professional shooting skills, there is only one place for you to be this coming September — the SOF Three Gun Match. Entry slots are limited, so get your application mailed early. I'll see you there. ☘

RAT-A-TAT STATS

Place	Overall Scores	Name	71	421.97	Shows, Russ	143	326.54	Beken, Robert
1	644.59	Gosnell, Lew	72	418.16	Waldo, Dwight L.	144	323.11	Yaegle, Bill
2	611.54	Miculek Jr., Jerry	73	417.84	Bullins, Thomas J.	145	322.81	Proudlock, Ron
3	611.35	Clark Jr., Jim	74	417.56	Rakea, Steve	146	322.68	Dust, Gregory P.
4	591.80	Ryckman, Robert G.	75	415.07	Askeland, Tore	147	320.48	Verbanic, Von A.
5	590.14	Piatt, Bruce	76	411.70	English, Don	148	319.99	Pollock, Steven
6	581.94	Cooley, Bennie	77	411.19	Jenkins, Wayne V.	149	318.73	Anderson, Carmen N.
7	575.23	Rhodes, Eddie C.	78	410.66	Cook, Joseph	150	318.47	Allen, Eugene R.
8	569.33	Sourter, Lee	79	409.11	Woffe, Bud E.	151	314.42	Hagler, Glen
9	568.04	Gaines, Joe	80	405.22	Dillingham, K.L.	152	313.90	Forrester, Larry
10	559.67	Hamilton, Joe	81	404.92	Cody, Tom L.	153	312.21	Pickens, Dave
11	556.79	Wilson, Stewart	82	404.79	Elgin, Scott	154	309.51	Livingston, Ann
12	552.38	Cox, Barton L.	83	401.84	Sullivan, Mark	155	309.11	Taflinger, Joseph W.
13	549.56	Morton, Larry	84	401.82	Bauques, Sam	156	306.08	Medlar, Terry R.
14	548.29	Salmon, S. Todd	85	400.94	Davidson, Thomas D.	157	306.07	Markheim, Richard
15	544.41	Siciliano, Mark	86	397.73	Havens, Todd	158	305.23	Pivrotto, Paul
16	537.58	Miller, Paul M.	87	397.50	Finn, Edward	159	299.97	Smith, Forrest
17	535.64	McCartney, Angus J.	88	397.06	Greenwood, Wiley B.	160	293.01	Lashbrook, Tom
18	533.39	Hockwitt, Mel	89	394.00	Haughn, Neil	161	291.69	Vaughan, Beverly J.
19	519.71	Smith, Daniel E.	90	307.41	Mount, Robert	162	291.46	Tobias, Jim
20	512.82	Christiansen, Ned F.	91	384.68	Dexter, Sean R.	163	290.76	Kelsey, Bruce E.
21	510.29	Kanaley, Tony	92	382.04	Markwell, John H.	164	288.77	Jacobs, Melissa
22	508.75	Slater, Patrick B.	93	378.35	Jorgensen, Kyle	165	287.96	Hotsko, James
23	506.58	Kincannon, Ted	94	374.89	McMurtrey, Joel	166	284.32	Bridwell, Terry
24	503.61	Levine, Howard	95	373.77	Richter, Richard C.	167	284.22	Earl, Una
25	500.70	Anderson, Scott	96	373.68	Widener, Ron	168	281.87	Joyce, James
26	498.52	Cook, John	97	373.04	Jason, Alec	169	280.17	Perry, Raymond
27	494.59	Smith, James M.	98	371.45	Doeden, Wayne	170	279.76	McLees, Morris J.
28	489.74	Leedham, Don	99	370.83	Baillister, A. Michael	171	278.92	Faes, Julio
29	461.51	Italiano, Peter C.	100	370.51	Young, Gregory R.	172	276.22	Davidson, William
30	480.15	Erickson, Jim	101	370.17	Solhelm, John	173	275.46	Maycott, George D.
31	475.24	Furbee, Daniel R.	102	368.62	Spees, Wayne	174	274.92	Groseclos, James
32	475.12	Bespflug, Larry	103	367.06	Dhalliwai, Scott S.	175	268.96	Hersey, Fred
33	474.87	Wheeler, David	104	366.98	Thomas, Richard C.	176	267.26	Economou, Steven
34	471.40	Hall, Allen	105	366.48	Smith, John J.	177	265.70	Weissenhofer, Dr. Werner
35	470.22	Hubbs, Ken	106	366.23	Simpson, Rick	178	264.88	Rupp, Larry
36	467.50	Elliott, Michael	107	365.12	Gentzvein, Dave	179	264.09	Sandervill, Scott
37	464.23	Hammer, Chris	108	364.67	Anspach, Mark	180	260.83	Cantrell, David J.
38	463.56	Callan, Robert E.	109	364.06	Woslum, Leanne	181	259.66	Murray, Duncan
39	461.43	Main, Stan	110	363.46	Butler, Kay Clark	182	256.75	Consear, Allen
40	461.35	Woslum, Edd	111	362.34	Sanford, Ralph	183	254.76	Shattock, Thomas
41	460.29	Buckwaiter, Robert	112	360.21	Thorburn, Robert	184	252.34	Peters, Jeff
42	460.13	Bumgardner, Rich	113	359.20	Kwan, William	185	251.20	McClain, Mike
43	459.11	Nixon, Bill	114	355.59	Dompa, C. Charles	186	248.11	Cherry, Mark Lynn
44	458.61	Appel, John C.	115	354.69	Gwozdek, R.	187	247.16	Franisco, Jerry L.
45	457.42	Peterson, Lyle Wade	116	354.05	Navarro, David	188	246.06	Vouchilas, Leonidas
46	456.93	Watson, David	117	353.44	Ferns, Lorraine Marie-Martha	189	240.00	Garcia, Steve
47	456.82	Hackathorn, Ken	118	353.06	Hartley, James	190	237.05	Smith, Robert E.
48	454.47	Heckart, Allen W.	119	352.93	Miller, R. Keith	191	237.00	McQuats, Eric D.
49	452.93	Duckett, Larry L.	120	350.13	Borchardt, Fritz	192	230.31	Carter, Paul E.
50	452.15	Paizzolo, William	121	349.98	Noval, Joseph R.	193	230.02	Santerre, Paul O.
51	450.62	Perritt, Thomas James	122	348.41	Kostelic, John T.	194	221.24	Mowery, W.A.
52	449.03	Boruck, Alan A.	123	347.67	McKinney, Michael	195	219.94	Betts, Hugh
53	444.52	Struka, William	124	344.78	Parmelee, Bill	196	215.62	Brokaw, Jim
54	443.09	Dominquez, Salim S.	125	344.70	Canham, Chuck	197	214.97	Dalland, Jacques
55	442.87	Furr, Jack C.	126	342.38	Schwartz, John James	198	211.05	Cantlin, James L.
56	442.04	Richter, Paul	127	341.88	Ramsay, David A.	199	210.23	Mir, Ai
57	441.64	Schmauch, Dennis M.	128	341.76	Livingston, L. Roscoe	200	210.15	Nance, Chet
58	441.18	Gray, Greg	129	340.17	Jones, Brian Lee	201	209.46	Campbell, John L.
59	441.05	Vaughan, Samuel E.	130	339.86	Fadden, Gary	202	204.09	Andrews, Joe R.
60	434.74	Saier, Robert	131	339.84	Nolan, Thorpe E.	203	201.69	Dutkiewicz, Edward P.
61	433.11	Basaraba, Paul	132	339.75	Colombo, Jim	204	201.34	Ljorens, Daniel S.
62	432.07	Jones, Kelly	133	338.47	Hoffman, Daryl K.	205	199.01	Cazzi, Ted
63	431.04	Randolph, Jim	134	337.36	Thomson, Bob	206	186.74	Buxton, Don
64	429.77	Harris, Gregory P.	135	336.75	Molina, Ignacio	207	182.15	Toler, Charles
65	429.32	Nickler, Jeff	136	335.77	Driz, D.M. Tony	208	189.73	Faes, Chris
66	425.75	Karst, Rick	137	335.02	Brossia, Robert J.	209	169.40	Graf, Carl F.
67	425.74	Terrillon, Rick	138	329.62	Redding, David L.	210	161.82	Nedurlan MD, Gregory
68	424.29	Reed, Paul	139	329.38	Papworth, Brett	211	157.82	Zehring, Phillip R.
69	424.08	Fillingier, Ronald	140	328.75	Keck, V. David	212	129.99	Shillig, Bill
70	423.19	Hanson, Ernest J.	141	327.76	Daugherty, Bill	213	102.91	O'Neal, Robert
			142	327.73	Burris Jr., William Earl			



The Spectre pistol's accuracy potential can be maximized by employment of a modified Weaver position. However, its weight, more than 5 pounds with a loaded magazine, precludes protracted firing from this position.

GHOST GUN

Dubious Features Haunt Italian 9mm Spectre

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

AS a class, selective-fire weapons chambered for pistol-caliber ammunition — submachine guns — are for all intents and purposes moribund. Production during World War II of the British Sten, German MP40 and Soviet PPSH41 was numbered in the millions. Today, arsenal racks throughout the world are filled with hundreds of thousands of SMGs of this vintage and later (such as the UZI) that collect nothing more than dust and go begging for customers at almost any price.

No army fields submachine guns in large quantities anymore. In the sound-suppressed mode, they linger on in small numbers with clandestine operations groups. Law enforcement agencies concerned with over-penetration will sometimes select them over short-barreled as-

sault rifles chambered for more powerful cartridges. Their success now is measured in series production of tens of thousands only. Production of numerous modern designs, such as the Steyr MPi69/81, Jati-Matic and Sterling has ceased. Yet, efforts to design new specimens of this 75-year-old genre continue unabated. Why?

Since the beginning (i.e., since the Bergmann MP18/1), submachine guns have generally operated by means of unlocked pure blowback. This simplicity taxes neither the engineering limitations of the designer nor the production facilities of the manufacturer. They can be fabricated quickly and cheaply. Hence the appeal, for example, of Lieutenant Uziel Gal's weapon to the desperate Israelis in 1949.

Introduced in 1983, the Spectre submachine gun was conceived as a clever attempt to retain simplicity of design and ease of manufacture, while overcoming objections to previous designs through some startling innovations. Created by Roberto Teppa, who gained valuable experience in the French Foreign Legion, the 9mm Parabellum Spectre is manufactured by SITES S.p.A., an Italian company that specializes in military small arms.

Most of us will never examine a Spectre submachine gun. In its selective-fire form it can be imported as a Class 3 dealer's sample that can be transferred only to a law enforcement agency or to a Class 3 dealer who can provide the required letter from a police department requesting a demonstration of the weapon. Very few have been

imported under these parameters.

It is theoretically possible, however, to import a semiautomatic-only version of any Title II firearm. Previously, there were two authorized configurations of semiauto variants of submachine guns imported to the United States. In their "carbine" configuration, the barrel length had to be greater than 16 inches and a shoulder stock was allowed. A carbine version of the Spectre, although prototypes exist, can no longer be imported as the wizards in Washington have decided they are too menacing and serve no "legitimate sporting purposes." SOF has already covered the nature of this charade in detail.

So-called semiauto "pistol" versions of an SMG can have any barrel length, but there can be no shoulder stock and the BATF usually requires that any vertical front support grip be removed as well. Most important, the firearms, as imported, cannot be "readily" converted to full-auto. It was in this latter form that SOF received a BATF-approved specimen of the Spectre for test and evaluation from its importer, F.I.E. Corporation (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 4866, Hialeah Lakes, Hialeah, FL 33014; phone: 305-685-5966). Most of the Spectre submachine gun's more interesting features have been retained or modified only to negate selective-fire capability.

Chambered for the ubiquitous 9x19mm Parabellum cartridge, the Spectre HC (High Capacity) pistol weighs 4.8 pounds, empty. Overall length is about 14¼ inches. Maximum thickness is approximately 1½ inches and that dimension is derived from its magazine. This is not a concealment-oriented envelope.

A square-shaped tube in overall configuration, the receiver body has been constructed from stamped and welded sheet-metal of substantial wall thickness (2.5mm — in contrast, Soviet AKM receiver bodies are fabricated from 1mm-thick sheet-metal). Four so-called "ventilation chambers" run the length of the receiver. They are positioned on its four corners and extend out to the chamber end of the barrel. They serve several purposes. First, they reinforce the receiver walls. Second, they serve to trap foreign particles and debris associated with carbon fouling that may enter the receiver's interior. Finally, as the bolt's configuration matches that of the receiver, while reciprocating they act as pumps which force air toward the barrel to lower the ambient temperature. Since the Spectre, in even its selective-fire form, fires from the closed-bolt position, this feature reduces the possibility of a cook-off. A barrel jacket with four longitudinal cooling ports on each side and the top and with two on the bottom has been formed from the receiver's forward extension. The receiver has been finished with a matte black enamel baked over a phosphated surface.

The fixed ejector, integral with the sheet-metal magazine guide and feed ramp, is located opposite the ejection port, which



Spectre HC pistol with 30-round magazine. Note safety lever above trigger and de-cocking lever to the rear. Both are ambidextrous. Trigger pull weights vary from 2 pounds in single-action to 14.5 pounds in double-action.

is on the right side of the receiver. This assembly is punch-welded to the receiver's interior.

A slot on the top of the receiver accommodates the black plastic, ambidextrous cocking handle, which is pinned to a sheet-metal bar that drives the bolt mechanism rearward when the handle is retracted. The cocking unit is non-reciprocating.

Because the unlocked-breech, blow-back-operated Spectre pistol fires from the closed-bolt position and has a double-action trigger mechanism, its peculiar bolt and trigger groups need to be explained as interdependent systems. When the bolt group is retracted and the cocking handle is released, the bolt body moves forward to strip a round from the magazine and chamber it. The machined-bolt body, approximately 3.9 inches in length, weighs almost a pound and contains the spring-retracted, two-piece firing pin, the spring-loaded extractor and a slot on the left side for the ejector.

The hammer, a steel block matching the bolt in configuration but only about 1.2 inches in length and weighing no more than 5 ounces, is meanwhile held rearward by the sear, or "operating lever" which engages a spring-loaded catch-tooth on the underside of the hammer. When just 2 pounds of pressure are applied to the trigger, a T-shaped operating lever control bar at the bottom of the trigger housing is pushed to the rear by a trigger lever, permitting the catch-tooth to drive the sear downward and allow the hammer to fly forward and strike the rear face of the firing pin. The sear, or operating lever, then rotates upward and the disconnector is rotated downward to push the trigger lever down and allow the spring-loaded operating lever control bar to move forward and

block the sear from being pushed down again by the catch-tooth. The trigger must be released to permit the disconnector to rise and then pulled once more to fire another shot.

When rotated downward to the "S"-marked position, an ambidextrous safety mechanism, with black plastic levers on either side of the trigger housing just above the trigger, pushes the trigger lever down and out of engagement with the operating lever control bar. On the submachine gun version, these levers select only the firing modes, either semiautomatic or full-auto.

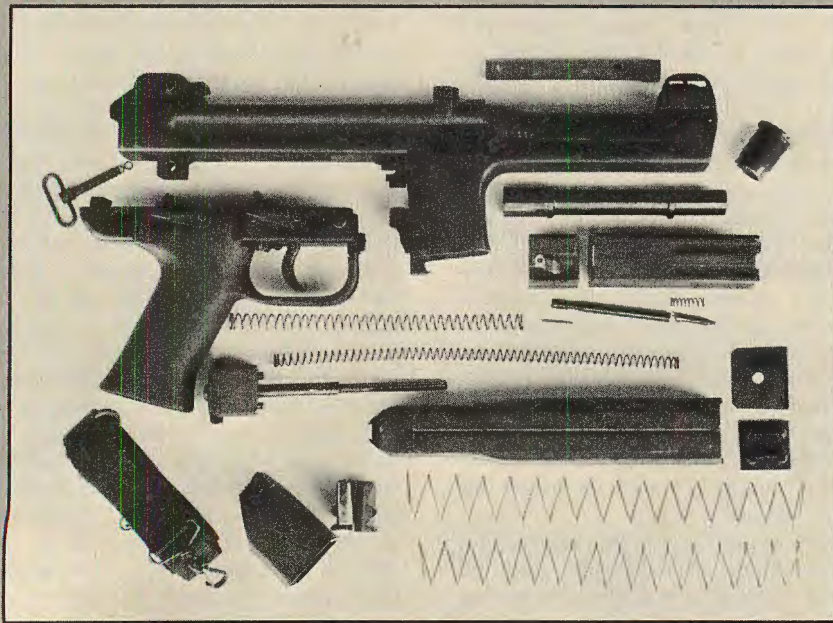
To the rear of the safety levers, and above the pistol grip, are a set of ambidextrous, plastic de-cocking levers. When either of these levers is depressed, they rotate a bar with a sloped face downward to push the operating lever control bar rearward and permit the hammer to travel forward, stopped short of the rear face of the bolt body and firing pin by another lever, called the "double-action rod." The weapon can be carried safely with a loaded chamber, the safety off and the hammer in this position. Now when the trigger is pulled, with 14.5 pounds of force applied, the double-action rod is rotated back to drive the hammer rearward. With the double-action rod completely down and clear of the hammer face, the operating lever control bar, which has also moved rearward, allows the hammer's catch-tooth to drive the sear down so the firing cycle can be completed.

During the recoil cycle, two nested coil springs, on a stepped recoil spring guide rod (all of which ride through a hollow in both the hammer and bolt) are compressed until the rear face of the hammer strikes the steel plug on the receiver's end cap, from which protrude four spring-loaded steel buffer rods. The recoil spring guide rod is bolted to the end cap.

All of this has been designed specifically to reduce response time during counter-terrorist operations — the presumed principal current application of submachine guns.

SPECTRE HC SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:**9X19mm Parabellum.
Operation:Unlocked blowback; fires from the closed bolt position; double action trigger mechanism; hammer block separate from bolt body; ambidextrous safety and de-cocking levers.
Feed mechanism:30-and 50-round, two-cell, single-position-feed, detachable box-type magazines.
Barrel:Six grooves with sinusoidal rifling.
Barrel length:5.1 inches.
Sights:Round, post-type front sight, adjustable for windage and elevation zero. Fixed, open square-notch rear sight.
Finish:Black enamel over phosphate.
Trigger housing:Pebble-grained, black plastic.
Weight:4.8 pounds, empty.
Overall length:Approximately 14 1/4 inches.
Thickness:Approximately 1 1/2 inches (derived from magazine width).
Price:\$718.20 with sling, sight tool, magazine loader and one 30-round magazine. Spare 30-and 50-round magazines, \$56.75 and \$78.75 each, respectively.
Manufacturer:SITES S.p.A., Via Magenta 36, 10128 Torino, Italy.
U.S. distributor:F.I.E. Corporation, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 4866, Hialeah Lakes, Hialeah, FL 33014; phone: 305-685-5966.
T&E Summary:Heavy. Expensive. Double-action mechanism of dubious value. Extended barrel life projected. Excessive stripping pressure results in unreliable magazine performance. Adequate for informal target shooting.



Spectre HC pistol, field stripped.

It is asserted that manual safety levers are difficult to manipulate and sometimes forgotten by law enforcement personnel during high stress scenarios. I do not agree.

If the safety mechanism has been ergonomically designed (i.e., as in the Sterling submachine gun) and the operator properly trained, its manipulation becomes an automatic function during the weapon's presentation onto the target. For example, those of us who routinely pack, and have been correctly trained to employ, the Colt M1911 series pistols in Condition One

(round in the chamber, full magazine seated in place, hammer fully cocked and the thumb safety engaged) can clearly attest to this. Whatever time is gained by deletion of Condition One training, is more than lost again in the amount of practice required to overcome the usually unacceptable group dispersion that inexperienced operators encounter between the first double-action shot and subsequent single-action fire (as a result, in the case of the Spectre, of the 12.5-pound difference between the respective trigger pull weights). Furthermore, let

us never forget Jeff Cooper's Rule III: keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.

The pistol grip and integral trigger guard are fabricated from high-impact plastic with a pebble-grained texture. Both the grip-to-frame angle and the shape of the grip itself are reminiscent of those found on the Israeli Galil, which in turn were patterned after the Hungarian AMD-65. They are all excellent. Although there is no hinged trap-door, small cleaning accessories can be stored in the pistol grip's hollow interior. The vertical foregrip attached to the receiver under the barrel of the Spectre submachine gun has been deleted.

With an overall length of 5.1 inches, the Spectre's six-groove barrel features so-called "sinusoidal" rifling, a variation of the polygonal rifling used on Heckler & Koch P7 and Glock pistol barrels. The sharp corners between the lands and grooves have been replaced by cornerless notches. There are three purported attributes to this type of rifling. The coefficient of friction between the bore and the bullet are somewhat reduced. In addition, the bullet fills the bore more completely and thus reduces the forward escape of propellant gases. The dual effect is to slightly increase the projectile's muzzle velocity. Finally, since it is not necessary to cut sharp edges in the rifling, softer metals, such as lead steel alloys with dry-lubricating qualities, can be used to inhibit bore wear. The manufacturer quotes a barrel life of 20,000 rounds for the Spectre. This is probably conservative. Modern steels coupled with pistol caliber cartridges equal long barrel life. HK MP5 barrels, which are not polygonal-bored, will commonly shoot well over 100,000 rounds without serious degradation of the group dispersion. In one recorded instance, an MP5 barrel maintained its specified integrity after more than 600,000 rounds were fired through it!

Unfortunately, the Spectre barrel on SOF's test specimen had severe chatter marks near the muzzle end (which, however, did not appear to affect the accuracy potential), produced, no doubt, by the rifling cutting tool. In addition, the extractor notch was incorrectly located and caused the extractor topeen the chamber end of the barrel adjacent to the notch.

The barrel is held to the receiver by a threaded collar at the muzzle end. The front of the collar has four notches to accept an armorer's spanner wrench, which is not included. The operator should, under normal circumstances, have no reason to remove the barrel. If this should be required, a small brass drift punch can be used to turn off the collar after an allen-head set screw through the front sight base has been loosened. A 3/32-inch allen-head wrench will suffice for this purpose. The barrel can then be tapped out toward the rear end of the receiver body.

The Spectre's sights are crude, but more than adequate for the weapon's potential. The front sight, a round post-type (approx-

mately 0.118 inches in diameter) rests within a U-shaped section of heavy-gauge sheet-metal welded to the top of the receiver with a single longitudinal slot on each of the protective ears. The post can be adjusted for windage zero by loosening a 10mm nut and sliding the sight laterally either to the right or left. To adjust the sight for elevation zero, loosen the 8mm nut above the windage-adjustment nut and turn the post up or down. A tubular socket wrench is included for these corrections. Remember, when adjusting a front sight you must move the sight in a direction opposite to the desired change in the strike of the bullet.

A open square-notch on the black plastic, spring-loaded receiver end-cap latch serves as the non-adjustable rear sight. The latch pivots on an axis pin mounted between another U-shaped section of sheet-metal, which is also welded to the receiver body.

The Spectre's 30- and 50-round magazines have been billed as unique. Compactness in these squat, bottle-shaped magazines — overall length is only 6.4 and 8.4 inches, respectively — has been achieved by means of two cells in the thicker portion of the body, each of which contains two columns of cartridges. In the bottleneck portion of the body the capacity narrows to a more conventional double column. Both the body and floorplate have been fabricated from stamped sheet-metal. There are two follower springs. There is a single bottom spring guide and follower. Both are made of plastic, but the follower has a chromed-steel roller, somewhat similar to that of the Sterling SMG, although Sterling magazine followers have two rollers. Spectre magazines are of the single-position-feed type. For enhanced reliability most modern SMGs use two-position-feed magazines.

Fifty years ago compact 50-round detachable box magazines were fielded for the Swedish Suomi Model 37/39 SMG. They were almost impossible to load without a tool. A plastic magazine loading tool is provided with the Spectre for the same reason.

The Swedish 50-round box magazine was prone to frequent stoppages. Similarly — no matter what the headstamp — the first eight to 10 rounds in the 50-round Spectre magazine would typically fail to chamber completely during a firing cycle. This problem seems to be generic with large capacity (more than 36 rounds) submachine gun (and some assault rifle) magazines. Spring technology appears to have changed very little during the last half-century. The UZI 40-round magazine was eventually dropped from production, as was Heckler & Koch's 40-round magazine for the HK33, both because of inadequate reliability. The 50-round Galil/R4 magazine is notorious for its unreliable performance. If you have enough spring pressure to hold the last rounds tightly up against the feed lips, you will probably



While it looks tough, firing the Spectre from the hip assault position results in low hit probability.

have too much pressure when the magazine is loaded to full capacity. As a consequence, until the magazine has been partially emptied, there is usually too much "stripping pressure." When the bolt drives forward in counter-recoil it meets with excessive resistance as it attempts to strip the next round from the magazine. With this loss of energy, the bolt's forward velocity is reduced to such an extent that it will often fail to go completely into battery. While this stoppage requires only seconds to clear, it could prove fatal to combat. When the 50-round magazine is loaded with no more than 40 rounds, failures to chamber are reduced significantly. The Spectre's 30-round magazine is more reliable.

The magazine well is formed from the receiver pressing. The spring-loaded magazine catch is fabricated from sheet-metal. The grooved, plastic magazine release button attached to the catch fits through a cut-out in the front portion of the trigger guard. It should be pushed forward to remove a magazine. Magazines do not fall freely away from the magazine well and must be pulled out with some force.

A black nylon web sling with rotating spring-hooks at each end is included with the Spectre pistol. The trigger housing's retaining pin has a swivel at one end to which the rear of the sling should be attached. The retaining pin can be inserted into the trigger housing and receiver body with the sling swivel on either the right or left side. SITES' factory brochures show the front end of the sling attached to one of the longitudinal slots on the front sight's protective ears. This should be avoided as the sling can interfere with the sight picture when attached in this manner. Instead, the front sling hook should be clipped to the strip of sheet metal between the barrel

jacket's ventilation slots on either the right or left side.

While there is nothing mysterious about field stripping the Spectre, the instruction manual is more concerned with safety procedures than explaining the disassembly of the weapon (and with some justification, since product liability litigation has loomed as an important front in the attack on firearms ownership).

First, remove the magazine and clear the chamber by retracting the bolt group. After visual inspection of the chamber, let the bolt move forward into battery under control. Lift up the coil-spring clip on the end of the trigger group's retaining pin. Withdraw the pin. Pull the trigger housing group down and away from the receiver. Press down on the front of the receiver latch and withdraw the end cap/buffer with the guide rod and recoil springs. Retaining pressure on the receiver latch, slide out the hammer and bolt. To remove the firing pin and spring, drift out the chrome-plated retaining pin from either side of the bolt. The extractor is held in place by a roll pin and should not be removed unless replacement is required. The magazine can be disassembled easily by depressing the projection on the bottom spring guide which protrudes through the floorplate and sliding the floorplate off the magazine body. The other components can then be removed from the bottom of the magazine.

No further disassembly is usually necessary. SITES' literature states, "The weapon does not require lubrication." The instruction manual also states that "The insides of the magazines MUST NEVER BE OILED." Don't you believe it. The last time we received advice of this sort it wreaked havoc with the M16 early on during the Vietnam War. Use All Weather Weapons Lube (THIEM, Dept. SOF, 5151 Dennison Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102; phone: 216-651-2010) on the bolt rails and

Continued on page 73

The Boat That Flies



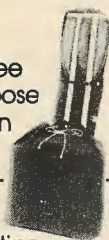
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NIGHT NARCS

Continued from page 39

tools through some apartment house parking lots. It dawdles along until the narcs have to pass it, and then speeds up. It takes six drivers to handle the intricacies of the strictly covert rolling surveillance. I wonder if the driver knows he's being followed.

"They usually don't," says Terry Demmel. "Headlights all look alike when they're behind you at night."

Finally, the Lincoln stops at a 7-11, and the narcs stop at four points of the busy intersection. Someone in position reports that one person got out of the car and went into the store. Everyone waits — five, then 10 minutes.

"What're they doing?" someone asks impatiently.

"Standing at the register visiting," comes the reply. "Looks like a mugsy or a faisel."

The slang refers to an ugly woman or an Iranian.

"Could be a drop," says Demmel. "Dealers have been known to use convenience stores as drop offs."

Then an excited voice comes on the radio: "Looks like he's coming out."

The Lincoln heads north, and the narcs scramble into a line behind. It pulls into an apartment building parking lot, and the door slowly opens. This is Sergeant Mahoney's case, and he gives the directive to apprehend the driver. Within seconds, the narcs converge on the Lincoln, ready for a confrontation. An older, white woman emerges wearing a flowered blouse and white capris.

"Stop, police," yells Mahoney.

A look of confusion crosses her face. She looks like someone's grandma. I remember Bernie Montoya's words about there being no innocents in a crack deal; Mahoney knew all along that the car had been used in drug deliveries, that it had earlier left the house of a known drug dealer. But even the narcs are surprised to see the woman. They handcuff her.

"We think we got a flyer, and it's an old lady," mutters one of them.

"A mugsy," says another.

Terry Demmel asks, "Did you know we were following you, ma'am?"

"No," she says.

I hate to think that's her normal driving pattern. Someone dumps the contents of her purse. It holds a Trojan condom and several brown containers of what seems to be prescription medicine.

"My stroke medicine," she whines.

The narcs begin to toss the car.

"You'll save yourself a lot of trouble if you just tell us where the dope is," Mahoney tells the woman.

"In my bra," she says in a whisper.

But the woman is only the foreplay to the main event. A uniformed cop whisks her off, and Mahoney hatches a scheme to serve his warrant on the house the Lincoln earlier

visited. This has been a long, involved case, I'll learn later, with the surveillance and investigation dating back nearly five months.

"The point is to get both the man and woman to the door," Mahoney tells two uniformed officers. SWAT won't be in on this bust. "Then we'll go in."

It's 0200 when the uniforms knock on the door of a house in one of Denver's nice, white neighborhoods. A man and woman answer, and Mahoney serves his warrant. Within a moment, a blond woman sits handcuffed on the couch in the living room, along with her black husband. A white, older woman is also handcuffed, and an adolescent girl whimpers at her knee.

The narcs begin their search. In the bedroom, on the closet floor, two fat plastic bags of suspicious-looking white powder have been carelessly tossed in among wads of loosely folded cash. Two leather briefcases hold more powder, plus piles of cash in every denomination — a tossed salad of greenbacks. The woman and man have made no attempt to conceal the dope or cash from police or a rip-off.

"It's like they don't have any respect," says Jim Nash.

"These people, they always know it's a matter of when, not if," says Rick Castricone. "I think they're almost relieved when we finally catch up to them."

They don't look relieved; they wear the dejectedly helpless expression of an animal caught in a leg-trap.

The narcs begin piling the evidence on a countertop in the rec room, and Terry Demmel starts inventorying it. Cash must be counted on the spot. Every shred of evidence must be placed in manila envelopes listing what it is, who found it and where. Demmel begins to sort the cash into denominations, stacking hundred dollar bills until they threaten to topple over.

"Hell, that'd pay off my mortgage," says Mahoney.

Someone presents him with the yield from the bra of the woman in the Lincoln: six little paper squares of cocaine amounting to 3.77 grams. She had \$936 on her, too. Mahoney breaks into a grin and gives Jim Nash a high five. His voice is exuberant.

"This ain't no dry hole," he says. "I had some kind of intuition about this bust."

This is the wall-hanger that makes the job worth it.

"What makes it even better is they were supplying 10 or 15 little drug dealers," he says. "And we stopped that."

Jim Nash searches through the closet, plucking one handbag after another from a neat pile, and finds a handgun. Other narcs find more guns, plus gram scales for weighing out dope and cut for bulking it up. Someone turns up some food stamps and lays them next to the piles of money. At nearly 0400, a rough count of the cash totals \$46,000. There are two S&W .357 Magnum revolvers that are found to be stolen, a .25 semi-auto Titan, and a .25 Raven. There's a 200 channel scanner with

the frequency of the crack task force and nearly a kilo of cocaine. The people have been carted downtown.

"It's a wrap," Mahoney says happily. "Let's load the stuff."

I ask him if the goods found in the house are enough to put these people in jail. He shrugs.

"If they have this much money here, they probably have lots more in bank accounts," he says. "They've probably got enough money for the best drug lawyers in Denver."

But whether Denver's dealers will serve jail time or not doesn't cloud the narc team's exuberance over a successful bust. A narc's job is to catch bandits, not to keep them behind bars. That's the job of the legal system.

The woman and her husband were out on bond the next day. ✂

I WAS THERE

Continued from page 21

give him the biggest round of applause. As this was primarily a Marine base, it was no contest. I looked to my right and left and there were two Air Force colonels.

Then, my mind went into a spin, my stomach turned over and I almost fell off the log when Hope started, "And gentlemen, one of your own, and my neighbor from California, who just happens to be married to your favorite girl, Raquel Welch. Here he is, the envy of every man here, Patrick Curtis! Stand up, Patrick." Stand up, what the hell was he talking about? By now I was trying to dig my way under that damn log. The two "helpful" colonels figured Hope must be talking about me, by the way I was trying to make a punji stake out of the log, and threw me to my feet. Screw you, Air Force, now and forever more. I was met by a sound that no other man in history had ever heard. I was booed by 85,000 Americans, and God knows how many VC, who always had us surrounded. During the worst moment of my life, I would have gladly sat on a claymore, just to sit down. Thanks a lot, Bob.

The rest of the Christmas tour of '67 was fantastic. The few shows that I was able to catch were much more enjoyable for me. I made damn sure that I was never again introduced from the audience or anywhere else for that matter. I was happy to be just another clown in green.

Four or five hundred thousand vets can take pride in the fact that they helped Raquel find happiness in being Raquel. And at least 85,000 might smile when they remember making a fool out of me. ✂

GHOST GUN

Continued from page 71

a non-viscous lubricant like G96 Gun Treatment (G96 Design Tech, Inc., 707 Commercial Ave., Carlstadt, NJ 07072; phone: 201-523-1907) on the other components.

Re-assemble in the reverse order. Make certain you insert the hammer with the large hole to the rear and the hammer catch-tooth to the bottom.

Eleven different lots of 9mm Parabellum ammunition were fired during SOF's 600-round test and evaluation of the Spectre pistol. Commercial ammunition included Black Hills 125-grain lead round nose (LRN), PMC 115-grain Full Metal Jacket (FMJ), Federal 115-grain Jacket Hollow Point (JHP) and Sandia Die & Cartridge 148-grain FMJ subsonic. Military ball ammunition consisted of British (headstamped "RG 57 9MM 2Z"), Portuguese ("FMN 81-4" with NATO cross in circle), Finnish ("VPT 44" — cases loaded in the 1960s), Malaysian ("MAL 9MM 10-83"), Yugoslav ("11 * 49 *" and "PPU60 KAL 9mm") and Israeli black-tipped SMG ammo.

The British Radway Green ammunition, manufactured in 1957, had some dead primers. Federal's JHP round would not feed properly and consistently stubbed the head of its flat-nosed bullet on the Spectre's feed ramp. The previously mentioned failures to feed because of excessive stripping pressure occurred with all 11 lots of ammunition tested. The ejection pattern was 6 to 9 feet to the right.

Without a shoulder stock, there are but two positions from which the Spectre pistol can be fired. While the hip assault position matches the celluloid fantasies that currently crowd movie screens throughout the land, it results in abysmally low hit probability.

To maximize whatever accuracy potential the Spectre is capable of, it must be fired at eye level from a modified Weaver position making full use of the sights. With the support hand wrapped around the magazine well and that arm dropped down and pulling toward the shooter, the arm of the firing hand, which is on the pistol grip, should push outward. This provides the control necessary from isometric tension between the push of the firing arm and the pull of the support arm. However, the Spectre's weight, more than 5 pounds with a loaded magazine, precludes protracted firing from this position.

There are no law enforcement or military applications for the semiautomatic-only Spectre pistol. Its primary function is to provide entertainment in the form of informal target shooting. Billions of rounds of ammunition are expended in each year in that innocent pursuit. Let us emphasize that no other justification for possession of a material object should be required in a free society, providing the object's owner uses



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#106 August 1986: AFTER ACTION REPORT —American bombers over Libya; CENTRAL AMERICA —Insurgent hardware in El Salvador; ELITE UNITS —French Naval commandos; WEAPONS —Combloc Sniper Rifles; AWARDS —Britain's Victory Cross.

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#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.

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#139 May 1989: AFGHANISTAN —SOF correspondent inside Kabul; Interview with Abdul Haq, commander poised to take the city; VIETNAM —Downed American flyer in Hanoi prison camp; POW/MIA video "We Can Keep You Forever" review; WEAPONS —M60 quick fixes.

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Because its principal application is recreational shooting, the Spectre pistol's less than reliable magazines and other idiosyncrasies can be dismissed as no more than irritants. Its appearance is a close approximation of a genre of weaponry most will never be permitted to own. Carrying a suggested retail price of \$718.20 with a 30-round magazine, it's an expensive plinker. However, if measured, albeit cynically, by the cost per pound, the Spectre is certainly less expensive than any number of other modern, and no more reliable, 9mm whiz bangs. Spare 30- and 50-round magazines cost \$56.25 and \$78.75 each, respectively.

Its lack of truly violent applications will not assuage those who judge firearms by no more than appearance, and the Spectre's ferocious mien will, no doubt, rattle the cages of the anti-gun tweety birds. That they will shortly swing from their perches singing for its banishment from our midst, I am certain. ✂

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

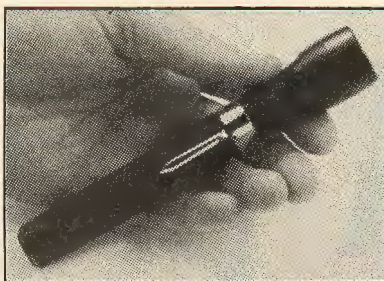
Continued from page 24

his own driver. This accidental radio transmission was the first news that Kilo Troop's commander heard of the battle. The troop commander's radio operator heard it, recognized the voice, and deduced from the tone that the 1st Platoon was in trouble.

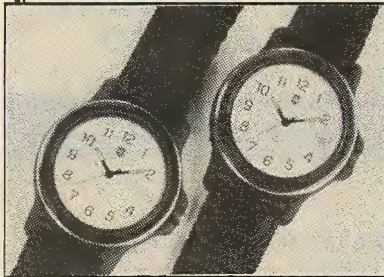
With the platoon sergeant aboard, K11 was now brought to a stop between K13 and K14. The platoon sergeant managed to get a radio message to Gia Ray Relay before abandoning the vehicle. This was the first "official" report from the 1st Platoon, but the rest of Kilo Troop was already on the way.

The platoon sergeant, with five men, formed a perimeter and fought until the main body of Kilo Troop arrived. In the meantime, K16 reached the now-silent tank, M34, and then, believing its crew dead, turned around and started back out of the ambush. Stopping at K14, it picked up wounded and continued on until it met a South Vietnamese army column near the junction of Routes 1 and 2. The platoon's final disposition is shown in figure 2.

This stark account of the action at Soui Cat shows that the 1st Platoon was shockingly unprepared for battle, and that it paid dearly for its lack of preparation. Although the platoon was armed with powerful weapons, it failed to use the most powerful weapon of all — the radio. Most of the men who died, died because the platoon leader failed to transmit a



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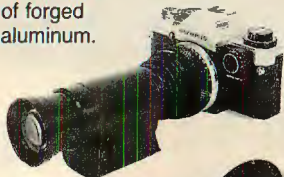


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report as soon as the ambush opened. In the same vein, the platoon never requested supporting artillery fire or air support — both of which were available on a moment's notice.

The platoon was poorly trained. They had not worked out and practiced any counter-ambush actions, and their response under fire was uncoordinated. In the end, it amounted to "every man (and vehicle) for himself."

The platoon was poorly disciplined. Such "sloppiness" as allowing the platoon sergeant to ride the wrong vehicle (with only one set of radios), and allowing M34's loader to ride on top of the turret, cost lives. And not until the very end of the action, when the platoon sergeant formed his tiny defensive perimeter, did any of the NCOs take charge.

There was no attempt to reestablish command and control within the platoon during the action. The final move by K16, leaving the scene of the ambush, is indicative of shock and paralysis.

The lessons of Soui Cat are clear. To begin with, the first duty of a leader is to keep his men alive. The best way to do this is through rigorous enforcement of the standards of professional discipline, backed up by constant training and practice.

Once action is joined, leaders must act swiftly and automatically. One of the first things they must do is to inform superior leaders of the situation and to request any available support. There is no excuse for allowing soldiers to die while massive firepower, in the form of artillery and air support, is left idle.

Leaders at all levels must keep control of the men under them, no matter what happens, and must seek to reestablish the chain of command whenever it is broken or disrupted. By failing to do this, the NCOs of the 1st Platoon contributed to the disaster.

The ambush at Soui Cat was a profound shock to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The action became a case study that was thoroughly dissected by all leaders as a part of the newly established regimental training program, and major changes were made in training at all levels. The 11th Cavalry learned the lessons of Soui Cat. They should never be forgotten. ☒

PRISONERS

Continued from page 47

hasty and like to stop to chat with all those they encounter on the way. In the Hazarajat they were ever keen to make haste, preoccupied with getting away from the

area as fast as possible.

There were frequent roadblocks on the main road that dissects the Hazarajat east to west. At each we would be asked from where we came and to where we were going and to produce a letter from the political faction we represented and authorizing the journey. The Hazaras viewed the escort produced with curiosity and suspicion but allowed us to continue.

Late one morning we arrived in Siakhok, which was to be our last stop in the Hazarajat. Siakhok could boast only one street, lined with small, closely-packed shanty shops and several tea houses. It is also a major terminus for motorized traffic through central Afghanistan and we saw dozens of large trucks waiting to be hired.

We settled into a verminous tea shop, home to hundreds of flies and untold thousands of fleas. On the walls were the usual run of posters of Mecca next to garish ones of Swiss alpine scenes. Dominating them were large posters of Ayatollah Khomeini, whose austere gaze looked down on us with evident distaste. Next to the posters were tattered and yellowing pages from Iranian newspapers, with photographs of soldiers on the Iran-Iraq war front. A set of cheap, tin-pot speakers blasted out loud Afghan music distorted into a nerve-grating, rhythmic screech. From across the road came a counterpoint of loud metallic banging as grease-covered mechanics battered a bit of machinery into submission. I hoped our stay in Siakhok wasn't going to take too long.

Sipping the tepid tea and stale nan (unleavened bread) that the tea shop offered its customers, we whisked flies away and watched the busy street life. Hawkers and vendors called out the wondrous quality and worth of their wares and services. Knots of Afghans stood outside the small shops and held shouted debates over every purchase they considered and commented in the same loud manner on the purchases of friends and strangers as if their lives depended on it.

Surprisingly, I saw in the crowd what looked like Iranian Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) ambling about in twos and threes. These, it turned out, were Afghans from Sazman-i-Nasir (Organization for Victory), an Iranian backed Shi'ite fundamentalist group. They wore the same tight fitting, and very un-Afghan, mustard green uniforms of the Iranian Pasdaran and walked with the same cocky self-assurance of men who knew others were afraid of them. With a wave of the hand they would break up groups of Afghans gathered in the street. Having visited Iran earlier that year I must admit I was a little uneasy at the sight. It was obvious that these men were of the same mold as the loony fringe in Iran. It paid to be wary of them whilst sitting in their patch. I didn't like Siakhok from the second I reached its foul-smelling street and liked it even less now.


Two of the "Nasir" men walked toward the tea shop in which we sat. The proprietor

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quietly pulled out the Afghan music cassette, and replaced it with a tape of Koranic prayer chants played at an equally distorting volume, which made me miss the music! The Nasir men walked into the tea shop and cast an inquisitive eye over those seated inside. Conversation, such as was possible above the wailing tape deck, dried up and everyone suddenly seemed preoccupied with sipping their tea or picking their noses.

Afghans, as a rule, are a very easy-going lot and like nothing better than to idle away their days gossiping over glasses of hot sweet tea. Siakhok was beginning to feel more like Iran than Afghanistan, a feeling I was distinctly uncomfortable with.

The two Nasir men spotted us sitting discreetly tucked away in a corner but made no move toward us. Instead they quietly asked those sitting closer to the door who we were. Nobody really knew and the two Nasir men left the shop. One of them crossed over to a small stall opposite and sat under a canvas awning keeping an eye on us while the other vanished into the milling crowds.

We had to buy feed for the horses before we could move on as there was going to be little available along the way. But we now had every incentive to get out of Siakhok quickly. Just as we finished our tea and prepared to attend to the horses a short, stout Afghan, with the look of a Tadjik from northern Afghanistan, barged into the

tea shop. Dressed in the brown corduroy top popular in the north he stood full frame in the open door and surveyed the room. When his eyes grew accustomed to the dark interior he stormed straight up to our table and demanded to see our travel documents. As Mullah Ashrief had refused to leave us these essential bits of paper when he abandoned us we were reliant on being vouched for by Guldin and his men. The Afghan now demanding our papers appeared to be just a belligerent local and offered no explanation for his stormy attitude.

He became ever more hysterical until it was obvious that to calm things down we would need the services of Guldin and his men. At this point we realized that in the confusion Guldin's men had quietly left the tea shop and we were only just in time to stop Guldin leaving and ask him to explain who we were. The gathering crowd turned toward Guldin and the belligerent Afghan asked him to vouch for us. Guldin looked like a rat in a trap as his eyes darted wildly about for an escape, but the tea shop was now full of shouting Afghans, effectively blocking every exit. Asked again what he could tell them about Philippe and me, he point-blank denied that he knew us. This really set the cat down among the pigeons.

Guldin insisted that he had arrived in Siakhok at the same time as us by nothing more than chance. It was obvious that he was anxious not to be drawn into what he

clearly saw as our problem. He seemed unconcerned that his attitude was making matters worse for us. All he wanted was to slip away as fast as possible.

The Afghan who had caused the scene demanded our detention whilst he went to find some Nasir mujahideen. He vanished into the agitated crowd in one direction just as two Nasir mujahideen struggled through the crowd from the other. Immediately everyone in the shop loudly tried to give details of what was going on. There were as many different versions of this as there were men in the tea shop, each trying to out-shout his companions.

The bigger the problem, the more we required Guldin and his men as witnesses that we were bona fide journalists traveling with the mujahideen. Not, as was by now implied, two Russians trying to spy on the mujahideen.

In a few minutes, more Nasir mujahideen arrived and waded through the crowd to escort us to the Nasir committee in charge of Siakhok. Events were beginning to occur with a momentum of their own. When we left the tea shop the crowd seemed certain that we were two Russians who had just been caught. As a result they were turning hostile and to ward them off we now needed the Nasir men. The Nasir ordered Guldin's men rounded up and kept in the tea shop until things were sorted out. Guldin kept insisting that only chance misfortune had resulted in him arriving at



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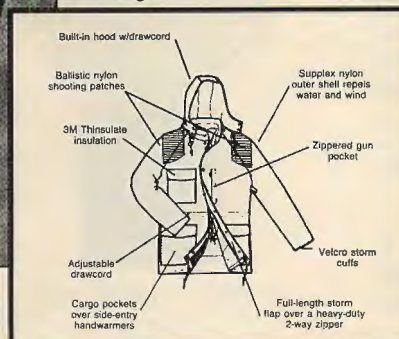
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the tea shop at the same time as the two strangers. Had we not needed him, in the hope that he would eventually speak up for us, I could willingly have throttled him.

We were escorted along the street trailing a column of the curious in our wake. The committee building was one of the few two-storied buildings in Siakhok but like the rest of the place it was in a state of serious neglect and decay. At least we hoped to sort the problem out by explaining clearly who we were to the man in charge. The crowd waited outside as we stepped into a small corridor where lots of idle Nasir sat on benches or stood talking in groups. A door leading off to the right opened and we were ushered into a large room, which seemed very dark in contrast to the bright sunny street. Shadowy men sat all along the walls and more sat in a circle in the center.

They made space for us to join the circle in the middle of the floor. No one spoke to us but those in the circle kept up a low murmur of chat. The door flew open and a few figures briefly silhouetted against the stark light from outside before they quickly stepped into the room. The door closed and sealed us in near darkness again. Everyone stood up while one of the new arrivals made his way to a pile of cushions set in the circle next to the window with a blanket draped over it to keep out the light. Once this man sat so did everyone else. Obviously this was the man to speak to.

I hoped that in the more subdued atmosphere of the committee things could be sorted out. The commander seated on the cushions asked for more light, as he too was having trouble adjusting to the dim interior. A mujahid leapt up and pulled the blanket from the window, flooding the room with light and briefly dazzling us. Now it was possible to see clearly and who should be seated on the pile of cushions, obviously the Nasir commander of Siakhok, but the stout belligerent Tadjik who had berated us in the tea shop!

He glowered at us for 10 long, silent seconds and then screamed, "Spies!" Any hope of a quick rational resolution to the problem faded. For the next 10 minutes Commander Amin, for that was the name of our antagonistic host, directed a tirade of accusation and damning invective against us.

He stopped every few minutes to allow another man, Engineer Sadiq, to translate. Engineer Sadiq spoke good English and conducted the translation calmly. That offered us some hope of being able to deliver a lucid account of our travels and explain the sad circumstances that had finally led us to Siakhok without travel documents. His calm delivery was offset by other members of the committee who interrupted the translation to shout and dismiss our account as lies.

Outside the crowd swelled as word of the arrest of two foreign spies spread. Inside

we kept up a spirited defense to ever more outlandish charges. For all the theatrics on display we were sinking ever deeper into a serious situation, one that could lead to being shot out of hand. Then the tirade of accusations against us personally shifted to a more general condemnation of western countries and culture. Particular vehemence was reserved for President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

All the twisted logic of these religious zealots convinced of their divine righteousness was now channeled into threats of the fate awaiting the west and the above-named political leaders when Islam swept out of the east to convert the world. While the reality of such a threat was hollow it was unnerving to be in the presence of men totally convinced not only of its possibility, but of its desirability! It had at least diverted their immediate attention from the charges leveled directly against us and seemed to keep everyone in a mood of happy contemplation of a future they perceived as just around the corner.

The fact that they represented a minority faction of Islam in Afghanistan and would first have to conquer their countrymen before this grand plan could begin was lost on them. To keep the conversation going along these lines we asked for details and assured them their plans had much merit.

The hot afternoon ground on as we continued a battle of wits. We tried not to offend their sense of divine right but still

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**SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
MAGAZINE**

tried to justify our travels as necessary to Afghanistan's desire to rid itself of the Soviet invaders. They lived under the firm and often-stated conviction that they captured over 80 percent of the arms they needed from the Russians. In reality the west supplies over 90 percent of the mujahideen's arms. The United States bankrolls the vast majority of those arms, yet it was toward America that these men seemed to harbor the greatest hate. A hate which even surpassed that held for the Russians!

During the afternoon, frequent rounds of tea were brought, but none offered to us, the accused. It was important that we were able to have some as it would subtly change our position from prisoners with no rights to something closer to uninvited and unwanted guests. The social laws of hospitality existing within Afghanistan, in theory anyway, treat as sacrosanct the safety of any guest. Once you have accepted hospitality you must be protected by your host while under his roof, even if you are his sworn enemy. Of course it has often in the past proved an unreliable custom as Afghan history is full of deeds of treachery whereby the host has slaughtered his guest at the feast.

The right of hospitality was a thin straw to latch on to. As such I made frequent requests for tea and swiped two glasses when the first round of tea arrived, but these glasses were dry when the tea came around. The next time a kettle came around I managed to have some sugar put into a glass but still no tea. Only on the third round was tea, more by accident than intention, poured into our glasses when I thrust them out suddenly as the kettle made another round. The significance of being offered hospitality, however grudgingly, would not be lost on those present or so I hoped.

It was now late afternoon and it would soon be time to for the Salah, one of five obligatory daily prayers for all Muslims. As it is considered to be of greater merit if you pray with many others in a mosque the committee members were keen to head there. This provided a natural and convenient break in the proceedings. The committee rose up and told us we would have to return the next morning at 0900 for a decision. Meanwhile we were to be escorted back to the tea shop and forbidden to leave Siakhok.

Things still looked decidedly dicey. It was with an uneasy mind that we left the committee with three Nasir mujahideen as escort and headed back to the tea shop. Guldin leapt about like a cat on a hot tin roof desperate for information about what had happened in the committee meeting.

He seemed relieved to see us, sadly, I presumed, only because he saw his salvation in our safe return to the tea shop. He ordered tea for us and sat next to us, urging us to tell him what had happened with all the joyous enthusiasm of a child about to hear his favorite story. The Nasir guards

left to attend to their prayers saying they would return for us in the morning.

When Guldin heard we were still under arrest he jumped up in alarm and dashed out to consult his men, loitering on the steps outside. In a few minutes they came running back in and began to gather their few possessions. All the time conducting a running argument among themselves about what to do next. Guldin angrily screamed that his present misfortunes were our fault and that the Nasir planned to shoot us the next day. He paced back and forth saying he had to escape immediately!

Outside the Nasir mujahideen prowled the streets. It was now early evening and the shops began to close as the crowd dispersed. Any attempt to leave at such a late hour in the emptying streets would be conspicuous and immediately arouse suspicion. Realizing this, Guldin gave a wail of despair, threw his cloth bundle of possessions at the wall and went to sulk in the corner. His men surrounded him and harangued him as he sat in a broody silence.

Having no wish to discover the hard way if what Guldin had said was true it was obvious that we would have to escape. Of course if caught trying to sneak away it would seriously weaken our claims of being innocent journalists just passing through. The problem was when to escape. Too soon was to invite immediate arrest by the numerous and vigilant Nasir patrols, too late was to risk being shot before we could escape.

The street emptied as the dark night closed around Siakhok like a shroud. The yellow lamp light from shop doorways cast abstract patterns on the street, through which occasional stragglers scurried, causing stray dogs to bark and Nasir patrols to stop and question them about who they were and where they were going at such a late hour.

Other customers kept well clear of the tea shop, not wanting to risk being drawn into the problem. The lack of customers hacked off the proprietor, as was evident not only from what he said but from the poor fare served for supper. After the evening meal he gave up hope of more customers and left for the night with a few carefully chosen curses thrown at us.

Keeping the kettle topped with boiling water, Philippe and I prepared to sit out the night as Guldin and his men stretched out and slept as if they had not a care in the world. Such is the fatalism of the east,

The moon came up early, large and bright and swept away the dark shadows, making any concealed movement outside impossible. It was becoming obvious that if we were to escape we would have to rely more on boldness than stealth. Philippe and I sat sipping hot tea to ward off the night chill and tried to come up with a feasible plan. After we had exhausted ourselves in planning complicated and theatrical escapes, all doomed to fail, it was already late. Then we hit upon an idea that was

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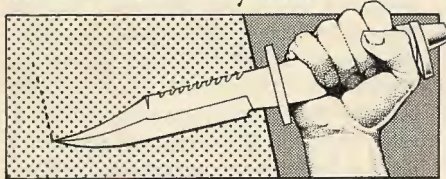
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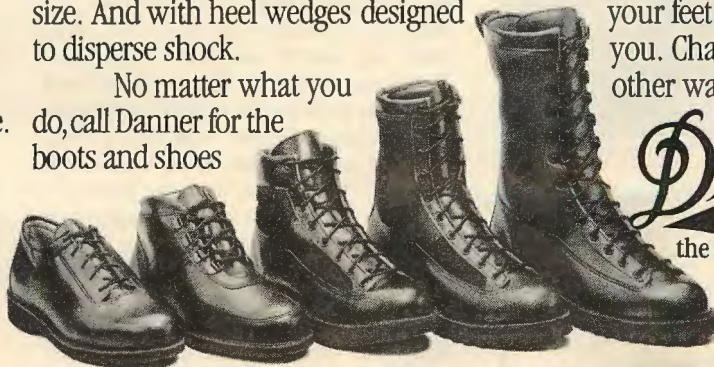
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simplicity itself, yet seemed bold enough to work.

We decided to wait for morning, until the streets were just beginning to fill. Two hours from our scheduled meeting with the committee we would saddle up casually and walk out in full view of everyone. Relying on our open carefree exit to lead those not in the know to think we were free to go and trust to luck that no one who knew otherwise would spot us. While pleased with this plan sleep still eluded us as we contemplated the fate Guldin said was waiting for us should we remain in Siakhok.

The night seemed endless as Philippe and I sat discussing past adventures to stave off morbid concern about the present one. Just before dawn shadowy figures began to move about as men hurried to carry out the ritual ablutions required before the sun rises above the horizon.

Guldin and his men prayed in the tea shop in communal solidarity. They felt as alien and as threatened among the Shi'ites as we did. I wondered at their fatalism as they bowed in prayer seemingly resigned to whatever the day would bring.

As soon as the sun was up we told Guldin our plan. At first appalled, he refused to join us, saying if caught things would be much worse for us. I thought being shot later that morning was as bad as it could get!

Guldin and his men sat silently staring at us as we packed away our bed rolls and went to saddle the horses housed under the tea shop in a semi-basement. Just as we had finished Guldin rushed in and implored us to stay. We told him he was free to do as he wished but we were leaving. For a second he stared at us hard, as if to check if we were just pulling his leg. Then he said if we stayed they would certainly shoot us and maybe him and his men as well. If we left without him they would definitely shoot him and his men, so he would come with us.

Having decided what to do he went out to tell his men. When we had backed the horses out of the stable they were all outside read to go. Philippe and I tied bags of hay and oats onto the horses and then casually walked down the center of the street leading the horses by the reins.

The street was just beginning to fill with people as shops began to open and no one paid much attention to us, except some Nasir who silently watched us amble past. The open manner of our departure and confusion about our exact status worked to our advantage. Siakhok was only a small town but as we walked down the street it looked as if it stretched to the far horizon.

Guldin and his men were unusually quiet as they walked along beside us. After passing the last houses we picked up the pace. Once Siakhok disappeared from sight Guldin and his men hurried along even faster. We were all aware that as soon as the Nasir mujahideen missed us they would be on our heels like a pack of hounds. This

served as a strong incentive to push the pace and distance ourselves from Siakhok.

Whilst the road allowed for easy travel, motorized pursuit could quickly overtake us, so we plunged off cross-country toward the mountains. Soon we climbed a high ridge and dropped into the next valley, hardly daring to stop to catch our breath. Our trail was now a little less easy to follow but still we pressed on with frequent checks over our shoulders to spot any dust clouds kicked up by pursuers. Around lunchtime we at last left the Hazarajat behind, entering Maidan province.

Next month, watch for Part II of "Prisoners of Nasir." ✕

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Continued from page 33

The forward FAPLA tactical group had driven along here four days earlier, flattening bush and trees with their armor. Three 150-meter-long semicircles of staggered foxholes with interlocking fields of fire had been dug across the trail, each position manned by heavily armed troops. Lieutenant Colonel Daniel explained that on the approach to this position Claymores had been mounted in trees, trip wires set high to catch tank and APC antennas. Because of the heat the vehicle commanders invariably stood in the open hatches. "The claymore makes a big mess of the commanders," he laughed. We walked the length of the quarter-moon ambush site, allowing me to inspect the preparations. Daniel stopped at each hole to encourage his grim-faced troops. Stopping armor here was far more difficult than in the area east of Cuito Cuanavale. Because of the heavy bush, long range wire-guided missiles were useless. Here it was up to close range RPG fire. We fell back another 100 meters where my security force began setting up our own defensive perimeter.

Seth explained that the trail had been made by the main body of the FAPLA 1st Tactical Group which was now waiting desperately for resupply. The resupply column, still stalled, was two kilometers in the opposite direction. We were, in effect, sandwiched between the two. The plan now was to try to encourage the combined 2nd and 3rd Tactical Groups to begin moving. There were only two options for them: retreat away from us and their isolated comrades, or drive forward with the needed supplies. If they moved forward, they had to come through this position. When I asked Bibi what would dislodge them, he pointed to Col. Seth who was working a PRC-25 tactical radio. "The colonel is talking to our artillery," Bibi explained. "He's telling them that we're in position, and that they can begin firing."

There was a sharp report to the east and I heard the familiar moan of a 107 passing overhead. Thirty seconds later the sound of the explosion reached us through the trees.

The officers gathered near the radio, monitoring the transmissions from UNITA's forward observer. "He says the first shot was 200 meters short," Bibi translated. Within seconds there was another launch and the sound of the rocket in flight. While it was still in the air I heard the deeper bang! of a 120mm mortar tube from the same general vicinity of the Type 63. Both landed in quick succession, the 120 sounding the more serious of the two. When the FO's voice came over the radio Col. Seth nodded and raised his fist, thumb up: on target! A full load of 107s left the Chinese-made rocket launcher. My eyes followed the noise speeding over us toward the FAPLA position.

For the next three hours a steady barrage of steel crossed the blue Angolan sky en route to the target. There was no indication that UNITA suffered from a shortage of HE ordnance. At one point we felt the ground tremble, then heard a massive secondary explosion. The radio crackled, the forward observer confirming that a dug-in vehicle loaded with ammunition had received a direct hit. The men around me smiled grimly and nodded in approval. Having once been on the receiving end of a 20-minute SWAPO 60 and 82mm barrage, I tried to imagine the terror FAPLA troops were living — and dying — through. I was relieved I was here and not under what the FAPLA 2nd and 3rd Tactical Groups were experiencing.

When I wondered aloud about air strikes from the MiGs we could hear, Seth explained that we were too close to the enemy. From their "safe" altitude, the Angolan pilots were as likely to hit their own people as us. We were monitoring the MiGs' radio frequencies. So far there had been no request from FAPLA for an air strike. It appeared the FAPLA commander was more worried than we about their pilot's accuracy.

By early afternoon it was obvious that the communist forces were unwilling to either withdraw or advance; by moving from their dug-in positions they would only expose themselves to more punishment. A message came in from Gen. Luwawa at the FCP: another FAPLA unit 10 kilometers to the northeast had been hit hard and were withdrawing. Colonel Seth motioned Bibi over to translate for him. We might stay here for days, he said, waiting for something to happen; or, we could return to the FCP and head for the new location first thing the next morning. As things stood, there was a better chance of seeing some action if we moved. We would still be looking at another very tough five-hour walk from Brig. Luwawa's position, and it might be over before we got there. It was a gamble either way. What did I want to do?

"Let's move," I said, turning to repack my rucksack.

The next morning, with Col. Seth still in command, I took my place in the middle of the column and we moved out. South of the Lungue-Bungo River I was surprised to see

six Land-Rovers waiting in cover. Each was mounted with either a 106mm recoilless gun or KPV 14.5mm heavy machine gun. Seth explained that they comprised part of a quick reaction force. If the enemy broke through, they would move immediately to take up ambush positions in the tree line bordering the river.

Shortly after crossing the Lungue-Bungo we entered the toughest terrain I had yet encountered: a series of steep ridge lines that had us constantly climbing and descending. Behind us, still firing on yesterday's target, I could hear steady barrages of mortars and rockets. So far I'd heard no counter-battery fire from FAPLA, indicating they were conserving ammunition. Unable to insert forward artillery observers, the best they could accomplish would be blind salvos in hopes of hitting something. It was symptomatic of poor morale and motivation that the tactical groups — in spite of their superiority in tanks, armored personnel carriers and self-propelled BM-21 MLRs with their 122mm rockets — were stalled while UNITA hit them at will with mortars, 107s and probing guerrilla attacks. FAPLA, simply by brute force and weight of equipment, should be able to punch through the relatively lightly armored units opposing them. But if they did, it would cost them dearly. The determined faces around me guaranteed it.

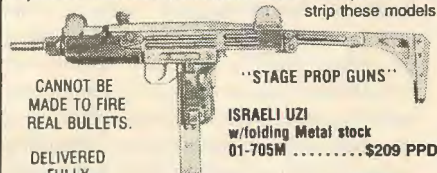
Four hours into the march a company of over 100 guerrillas materialized out of the bush ahead. The commander sat down with Col. Seth and briefed him on the situation. While they talked I sat against a tree trunk, gulped a few mouthfuls of water and massaged my legs. I was definitely dragging ass. Eventually, he waved Bibi and me over to him. "This captain says the position the enemy abandoned yesterday is not far from here," Bibi translated. "Our artillery hit an ammunition truck and when it exploded the bush caught fire and they had to pull back quickly. He says they are less than 2 kilometers beyond that place, so it is necessary to be very careful. If they attack we do not have enough men to stop them. We will have to retreat. You must be prepared to run, if necessary. God, I prayed, wiped out by the heat and steepness of the terrain, *don't make us have to run*. At that point I was absolutely sure there had to be easier ways to make a living.

It wasn't long before we came to a wide area black with burnt leaves and undergrowth. Rotten logs lying in the ash still smoked. As we crossed it Seth pointed to a fresh trail cutting from north to south. His eyes lifted toward the untouched tree line, searching for any sign of danger. Seth touched the trail with the muzzle of his AK-47 and looked at me. "FAPLA," he murmured, the hint of a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. The guerrilla company which had fallen in with us had already moved ahead, throwing out a security cordon to our front and both flanks. I looked at Bibi, who had been burdened by UNITA's president with the

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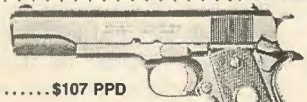


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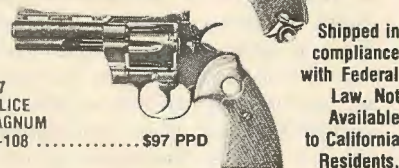
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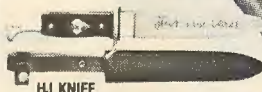
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responsibility for my continued well being. Bibi wasn't smiling at all.

We moved silently into cover, weaving through the thick bush until hitting another freshly made trail. But this one hadn't been made by Soviet-supplied boots — the clearly defined patterns of at least two types of tracked vehicles were pressed into the reddish earth, accompanied by imprints of heavy wheeled vehicles. Seth pointed to a tree that had been pushed over. Straddling either side of the two-foot thick trunk were the imprints of wide tracks. T-55. I squatted and picked up a twig torn from the flattened tree, holding it to the colonel who nodded in understanding: the leaves were still fresh and shiny. A 10-man reconnaissance team conferred quickly with Seth before moving in the direction the trail led. In seconds they had melted into the bush. Waiting 10 minutes, we stepped onto the trail and backtracked in the opposite direction. A Cuban-made helmet lay to one side. A few minutes later we came on a new Soviet carriage for a 120mm mortar. The box was opened and tools passed around to be stowed in packs. Dry brush was piled around the carriage and set alight. The box flared as loose powder charges ignited. Heavier branches were thrown into the fire and we continued our cautious advance. I reached down and picked up a piece of paper. It was the vaccination record for Private Joaquim Pinto Castro, Company 15, 1st Tactical Group. He hadn't been in

the army long; his yellow fever and tetanus shots were dated less than two months earlier.

There was no doubting that this element of the 1st Tactical Group had withdrawn in some haste. A second heavy mortar carriage rested on the other side of the trail; a new tire for a BTR lay abandoned not far from a wooden case containing a 122mm rocket and two fuses. Blood stained and ripped, a camouflage FAPLA bush jacket had been ground into the dirt. Blood soaked wound bandages hung from a bush and littered the ground. Another helmet. Crumpled canteens. I picked up a coverless tactical field manual printed in Spanish, the Cuban flag clearly printed on the spine and a shrapnel hole torn through the center. Ahead was a scene that mirrored what I had photographed 10 days earlier at the Cunzumbia: in the middle of a fire-blackened expanse squatted what remained of a large wheeled vehicle, thin smoke rising from underneath a bare wheel rim. On the metal frame of the driver's seat sat a scorched helmet, paint and liner burned away. There must have been a field kitchen alongside; badly damaged cooking pots blown in an uneven arc to one side rested forlornly among hundreds of rounds of unexploded mortar and cannon ammunition. Linked rounds for a twin-barrelled 14.5mm ZPU-2 hung uselessly from one of the weapon's ammo boxes.

I was snapping photos of it all and

wondering how many millions of dollars worth of Soviet-supplied equipment FAPLA had lost when I heard the faint sound of a diesel engine starting. Fifty heads, mine included, snapped around to look in the direction we had come from. Another one starting. And another. A routine start-up? Had a patrol spotted us and radioed the information? Seth spat orders as Bibi hurried to my side. "We go now, Mr. David. Quickly, quickly!" Routine or otherwise, there was no percentage in hanging around to find out. Seth's RTO ran to him, handing over the handset. He listened, spoke rapidly in Portuguese, then pointed toward the thickest part of the unburnt bush to our south. "The FAPLA are moving!" Bibi almost shouted at me. "Go that way, please. Follow the colonel!"

My entire body protested as I jogged with the others, but the sound of Soviet-made armor behind us gave me ample encouragement. Bastards! A firefight was one thing, but T-55s and BMPs was rather unsporting, I thought, chest heaving as I dodged between trees. A mile further on we had slowed to a fast walk. When the radio crackled Seth grabbed the handset from his RTO and listened intently. He looked back at me and nodded. The enemy vehicles had advanced to the position we'd been examining, seen the footprints of well over 100 guerrillas in the ashes and stopped. Seth, knowing the psychology of his enemy

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better than I, brought us to a halt in the cover of a narrow ravine. We all sank to ground, gasping for air in the heat. *Football games*, I decided, *that was the thing to cover. Sitting in an air conditioned private box with a beautiful woman and a cooler of chilled Budweisers had to be the way to go.* I closed my eyes, tasting that icy beer. My fantasy evaporated as Bibi collapsed next to me, took a long drink from his water bottle and passed it to me. The hot, murky river water was a far cry from a cold Bud.

I watched Seth sitting cross-legged, a topographical map spread across his knees. He spoke slowly into the handset of the PRC-25. "The colonel is preparing a little present for FAPLA," Bibi offered. A minute later the welcome sound of a 107 whined overhead. Moments later we heard the detonation. Seth listened intently to the radio, then jabbed the air with his fist. Yesterday's coordinates had been cranked in to the Type 63: the first round had landed exactly where he wanted it. Three rapid salvos shrieked through the air, the impacts sending trembles through the ground under us. Exhausted heads lifted from knees and relieved smiles spread across sweating faces.

On the march back a massive thunderstorm was building to the east. A cool breeze sprang up and there was a dull rumble of thunder. It was the first sign of the coming rainy season. Within weeks the rains would turn the dry ground into a

soggy morass. Even if FAPLA managed to advance, the armored battle groups would have to retreat before the rains trapped them and severed their already tenuous supply lines. Nature had joined forces with UNITA in the struggle for Angola.

An hour before dusk we slogged tired and filthy into the Type 63 site that had given us fire support. I thanked the officer in charge and asked if I could add something to the next salvo. He nodded and led me to a pile of 107 rounds. Taking the indelible pen I used for marking my film canisters, I squatted and carefully wrote the message along the length of the green rocket. Bibi leaned over my shoulder to read it, laughed and turned to translate it for the others. It was immediately picked up and loaded into the squat MRL. The crew retreated and the launch officer slipped on his ear protectors. There were shouted commands, each acknowledged by the crew — then *FOGO!* and a tremendous fireball enveloped the 12-barreled weapon, sending *BEST REGARDS FROM SOF* screeching toward the communist position.

With another hour yet to go to the FCP, we shouldered rucks and prepared to move out. The CO and his crew crowded around to shake hands and wish me a safe journey home. "He thanks you for coming to tell our story," Bibi said, "and asks when you will return." I looked at the faces of the freedom fighters, men who had struggled against incredible odds for the last 14 years.

Without the armor, gunships or fighter-bombers the other side had in abundance, these men had prevailed, sustained by faith, courage and a commitment to democracy. If ever there was an African movement that deserved the support of the free world, this was it. To hell with covering football games.

"Just give me a call," I said. ✕

“MERCING” AROUND

Continued from page 55

was news to me.) GBC: So the airport is open? SgtMaj: Yes. GBC: So we can fly out? SgtMaj: No. GBC: Why? SgtMaj: They closed the airport because of radar problems. GBC: Since the airport is closed again can we fly out with the military? SgtMaj: No, because they opened the airport. GBC: But then they closed it again, right? SgtMaj: I guess so. GBC: Never mind. SgtMaj: Have a nice day.

We flew out on COPA, the Panamanian airline, with complimentary champagne served after takeoff.

As we were leaving Panama a local newspaper printed a story about Paso Canoa. Junior, with the approval of American authorities, was still in control of the town. Junior had stated that he was not interested in joining a reconstituted security



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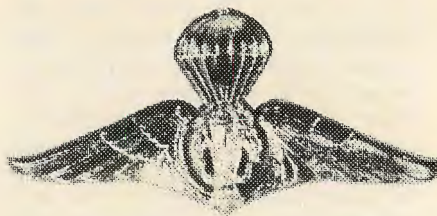
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force. He planned to get his business in order and perhaps go fight against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. But in the meantime he planned to "maintain his forces in Paso Canoa until the country is in an orderly state."

FLASH (not having much money tied up in stationery) had changed its name to the "Hugo Spadafora Liberation Commando." When the Panamanian journalist met with Junior she reported that "he was wearing a denim cap with a SOF patch sewn on the front." ✕

U.S. WARRIORS

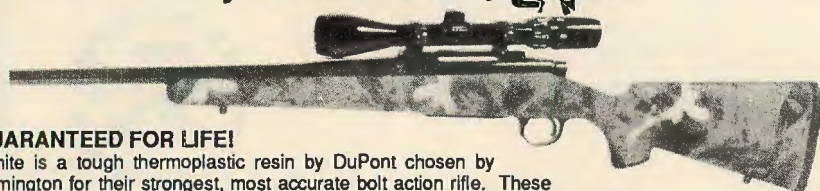
Continued from page 60

gunships were plastering the target area with 105mm rounds and the 40mms.

Sgt. Dengler: I had two M60s with me and we were bunched together in an alleyway. After the heavy machine gun fire came in we all hit the ground. One of my AGs (assistant gunners) for the M60 was up on a little stairwell, providing security from the second floor. Part of the wall and the stairwell collapsed from the machine gun fire. As the wall and the stairwell collapsed from the machine gun fire Sergeant Lynch fell down the stairs. He was knocked out cold and fucked his knee up. Morton and our medic tried to bring him around when Specialist Hicks said that he had seen or heard something toward the alleyway. The alleyway had been left open in the chaos. Morton and I went to the end of the alleyway to cover it. We were crouched down in a corner of this wall and the next thing I know there was this blinding flash of light and an explosion. A grenade had gone off and I was thrown across the room to the wall on the opposite side and knocked out. Hicks was killed right there. I was out cold for 20-30 minutes.

Sgt. Sure: Immediately outside the compound is a little tenement house made of real cheap cardboard. I was taking shots into the Comandancia with the M24 sniper rifle and on the floor below me were three of our troops inside a big room. I could see them through the holes in the landing. I had just squeezed off a round when I heard a big explosion. I looked down through the landing and a bunch of green and black smoke was pouring out of this room and two of our guys walked out screaming, dripping with blood from head to toe. The other guy who was still in the room was dead instantly. He had an arm blown off. They drug him out later and he looked like fucking hamburger. One of the two guys who walked out died in the intensive care unit at the hospital and the other had a wound to the leg and they medevaced him to the States where he is in stable condition. We figure the grenade came from a higher elevation and was dropped on top of them. As I understand it they were right next to a high rise building that was filled with

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snipers and a number of PDF lived in there. From that vantage point grenades could have been thrown down in their general direction through holes in the walls and the roofs of these poorly constructed houses. It had to be a fragmentation grenade from the wounds the soldiers received. The grenade must have been awfully powerful and went off in two separate and opposite directions. It could possibly have been homemade.

Sgt. Lynch: As we moved into the compound we fired semi-auto. I used tracers to mark windows where sniper fire came from. The 203 gunners would put a round right in the window which was very effective. Once we got into the building, I would fire three round bursts which was great for knocking off locks on doors, clearing rooms, breaking thick glass and bars on doors. The 203s were great.

Lt. Shaw: Our Alpha Team leaders carry shotguns and they are designated as door busters. We go in with a 12 gauge usually with double-ought buck which is very effective in busting open doors and clearing a room. I carried a Winchester 1300 which carries four in the magazine and one in the chamber. We don't use extended magazines. We confiscated a bunch of Remington 870 Lawmakers with the full-length stock and so we will be using those from now on.

Counter-Sniping

Lt. Shaw: Regarding sniper suppression, I saw good use made of the M203 with high explosive rounds. A sniper may take a shot at you and then duck behind the window ledge. Having a 203 gunner put a round through the window takes care of that sniper no matter how covered he thought he was. An H.E. round results in a giant explosion that rips everything up in the room.

Sgt. Pittman: I used tracers to designate targets. It is desirable for a squad leader to carry all the tracers and it is his job to mark the area that he wants suppressed by automatic weapons or 203s. That is how you control your fire.

Sgt Lynch: We were receiving sporadic fire from distant buildings at this point. We numbered the buildings on the horizon from right to left, one through four with building one being 500-550 meters away and building four being about 300 meters away. We had people constantly scanning the windows with binoculars. We marked certain windows — ones that had towels, blankets, sheets or a lot of clothing in the window to cover movement. We numbered the windows as well so when the spotter would say "building one, down three levels, to the right two" we would automatically know what window it was and were able to put fire on it real quick. Wentworth and I rotated as spotters, so we would not tire looking through the binoculars constantly.

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dim lights in the background as well as shadows silhouetting across the lights. Sergeant Wentworth would report if he saw people in the windows. Of course, he couldn't verify them as combatants. But if they came to the window more than twice with binoculars, we had orders that we could shoot at them to warn them. The only time that we shot to kill was when we could verify a person holding a weapon and that was the criteria Sgt. Wentworth and I used to take out one sniper piece.

Spec. Morton: Sergeant Lynch took out his man about 1400 hours. I was serving as his spotter when I saw a flash of glass up on the side of the high rise. I put my binos on it and saw a guy leaning out the window with a scoped rifle of some kind. I called to Lynch that there was a target, down four and in three from the side of the building. He fired once and the guy tumbled out the window. The range was about 500 meters.

Sgt. Sure: We never did find Lynch's dead man's weapon because it was out of our sector. We did find a number of weapons as we fought through the neighborhood on our way to the Comandancia. Apparently, a lot of people just dropped their weapons and ran or else might have been caught up in the prep from the Spectre. We found AKs, RPGs and a lot of ammunition.

Comments on the Remington M24 Sniper System

Sgt. Sure: I carried that thing the entire time. It is a beautiful rifle and it is extremely accurate but it is just not practical for combat use. I was able to make five kills, including two kills during the attack on the Comandancia, with it and the farthest distance was 700 meters. On the negative side it doesn't have a flash suppressor and the optics are terrible. It is bolt action instead of semi which makes it impractical for combat use. The fiberglass stock has a bunch of holes in it from wear and tear. The only thing good about it is that it is accurate and has a nice trigger.

I have also shot the M21 which is what I used when I went through sniper school. It is beautiful, perfect. It is semi-auto and has a flash suppressor so you don't have to worry about this 17 foot flame coming out every time that you shoot so that they can pinpoint your location. We are given National Match ammo to fire. The M24 is great for what it was designed for: bulls-eye shooters at Ft. Benning. When I went to sniper school you could make 1,200 meter shots with the M21 and I would not feel confident shooting past 800 with the M24. The accuracy and distance of the 21 is superior to the 24 because the optics are matched better to the rifle. We are using the Leupold M3A optics as contrasted to the Leatherwood ART2. I like the Leatherwood better because it is a superior scope with a cam on it. You don't have to sit there and do seven years worth of

Continued on page 96

ADVERTISERS INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE		
A.G. Russell	75	Pioneer & Co.	.87
Auto Ordnance	76	Police Bookshelf	.76
Brigade Quartermaster	75	Shooting Systems	.78
Collector's Armoury	83	SOF Convention	.64,85
Combat Exchange	Cover 4	SCF Exchange	.10,11,15,25,90
Conservative Book Club	.7	S.T.A.N.O.	.75
Consolidated Mktg.	79	Sturm, Ruger & Co.	.4
Cutlery Shoppe	Cover 3	Thompson Cigar Co.	.87
Danner Shoe Mfg.	81	Time Life Books	.13,17
Doubleday Military	23	Your Supply Depot	.27
Dutchman, The	9	SUPPLY LOCKER	
Edge Company, The	13	Adventurer's Outpost	.89
Excalibur Enterprises	84	American Pistol Inst.	.89
Executive Protection	77	American Schools	.89
Greene Military Dist.	19	Cloak-n-Dagger	.90
Guardian Prod.	24	Consolidated Mktg.	.89,90
Hans Klepper Corp.	72	Eden Press	.91
Int'l Assoc. of Airborne Vets.	86	Firepower Illustrated	.90
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Otis Gun Cleaning	80	U.S. Cavalry Inc.	.91
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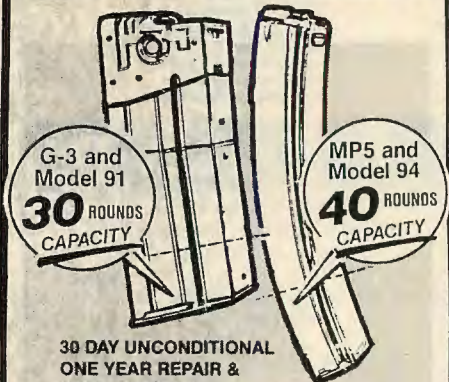


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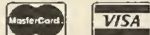
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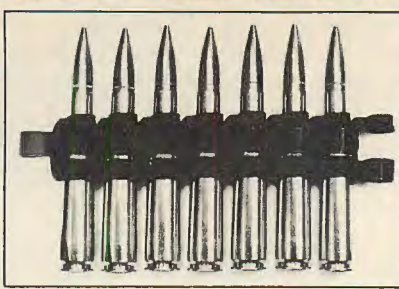
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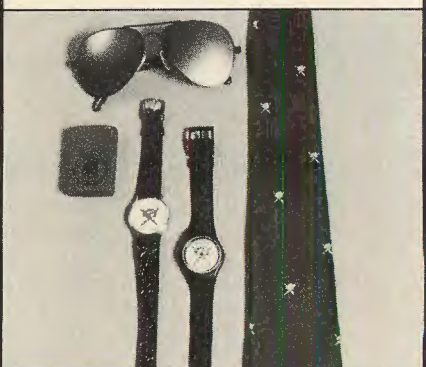
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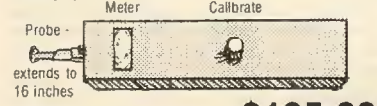
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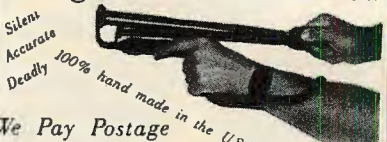
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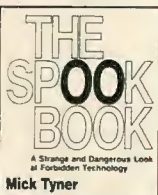
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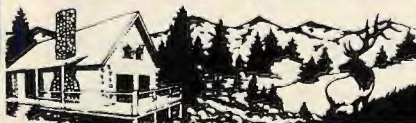
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Mechanized Support in the Assault

Sgt. Sure: The enemy did employ RPGs. After going into the Comandancia, I was attached to the mechanized unit, M113s [the 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized)] out of Ft. Polk, Louisiana, because they were having sniper problems and being the company sniper I counter-snipered for them.

They told me that they had lost an M113, to RPGs and recoilless rifle during the initial assault into the city. The 113's rolled in and set up a perimeter around the whole neighborhood. From there they were able to direct fire with the .50 cal's on the high rise to help cover our movement through the neighborhood toward the PDF compound.

Once we were inside the PDF compound we were pretty much on our own. While the mech unit was back at a perimeter about 2-3 blocks away the shit was falling on us. But they had moved in as close as they could. They shot over the tenement buildings and hit the high rises. The Comandancia was three stories high. They also set up to insure that Noriega's reinforcements could not come in behind us. That was part of their job, to prevent anything coming in the back door while we were in there doing our work.

Sgt. Dengner: They also supported us with our immediate medevac problems. Besides having the regular line medic in our platoons the two mechanized companies also had medical tracks with them, 113s that served as rolling ambulances. In my case, for example, when I got medevaced out after I was hit by that frag they pulled us out of the buildings and put us on the back of one of the 113s and pulled us out to a makeshift battalion aid station that was set up at Balboa High School and from there we were put on regular ambulances and brought to Gorgas Army Hospital. I received a heavy concussion and a couple of small pieces of shrapnel in my left leg. I was really lucky as the explosion shredded my flak vest.

Personal Comments

Spec. Morton: Cross-training (having everybody know everybody else's weapons and jobs) pays off because there are times when people are hit and you have to pick up and do someone else's job. For example, I am cross-trained as a medic and when our medic was injured by the grenade blast I gave first aid.

Sgt. Dengner: Another example of this is when I got hit with the first grenade and medevaced out of there: The rest of my four guys, two gun teams by themselves of which the highest ranking soldier was an E4, just drove on without supervision and did an outstanding job even though there was no NCO watching over them.

Another point that I want to make is this op showed how well we worked together. We only took six casualties, two dead and four wounded, and considering the adversity of being in an enclosed area with people bunched up where we really couldn't control the situations I think we did well.

We were like a well-oiled machine. Everything clicked. We told a lot of the privates "you just do and don't ask questions a lot of the time." And when we finally went out there we did what we had to do, implementing the SOP just came naturally. The last point that I would like to make is that perhaps the Rangers are the elite of the infantry and the 82nd is the home of the airborne and the 7th I.D. are the "light fighters" but Charlie Co., 1/508th are the "Comandancia Crushers".

TALE OF TWO COURSES

The U.S. Army's training in Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) comes in at least two quite distinct flavors.

The version conducted by Fort Bragg, XVIII Airborne Corps and the 82nd Airborne Division takes place in a "MOUT Site," a collection of one-, two- and three-story concrete buildings laid out like a city block, with doors and stairs and windows, but no glass in the windows. The basic layout can't be changed, but obstacles can be set up or dismantled to vary the scenario. This version is mainly used by company- or battalion-sized infantry units variously task-organized with supporting armor and so on. The training uses blank ammunition and is mainly aimed at teaching small-unit tactics, techniques and coordination as applied to clearing city blocks.

The five-day MOUT course conducted by the 7th Infantry Division (Light) at Fort Ord, California, teaches individual soldiers and small teams how to stay alive while fighting at point-blank range. There are six stations in the course.

Grenadier Gunnery: From 100 meters away, soldiers fire 40mm practice grenades from M203 launchers at targets near windows inside a building.

Dodge City: Squads execute the mission of clearing a multi-level building, one or more teams assaulting and the other providing supporting fire.

Vault and Fight: Soldiers get over an obstacle and clear a building.

Destiny Doorway: Two teams of soldiers move down a street. Targets pop up; one team assaults the building while the other provides fire support. The teams are working within 3 or 4 feet of each other.

Search and Kill Inn: Four men, in two-man teams, use fragmentation grenades and point-and-shoot techniques to clear a multi-room building.

Urban Defense Building: Teams use primary and alternate positions and sectors of fire to occupy and defend a building.

Live ammunition is used, mainly in three-round bursts, at least in the M16A2 rifles. Emphasis is on individual and small team tactical techniques and especially on individual firing skills in the very close ranges and short reaction times peculiar to combat in built-up areas. It has more than a little of the character of a set-piece scenario or battle drill.

Each of these approaches is valuable and necessary, as it covers a significant part of what an infantry unit needs to know and be able to put into practice. We respectfully suggest, however, that each covers only part of the problem: Fort Bragg should go take a look at what Fort Ord is doing, and the other way around. In the ideal world, the infantry soldier would get both courses.

— Alex McColl

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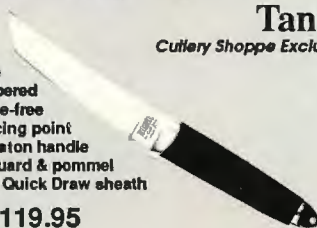
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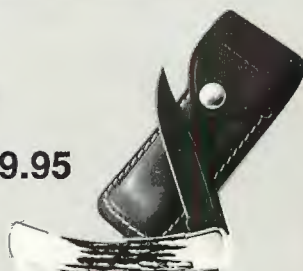
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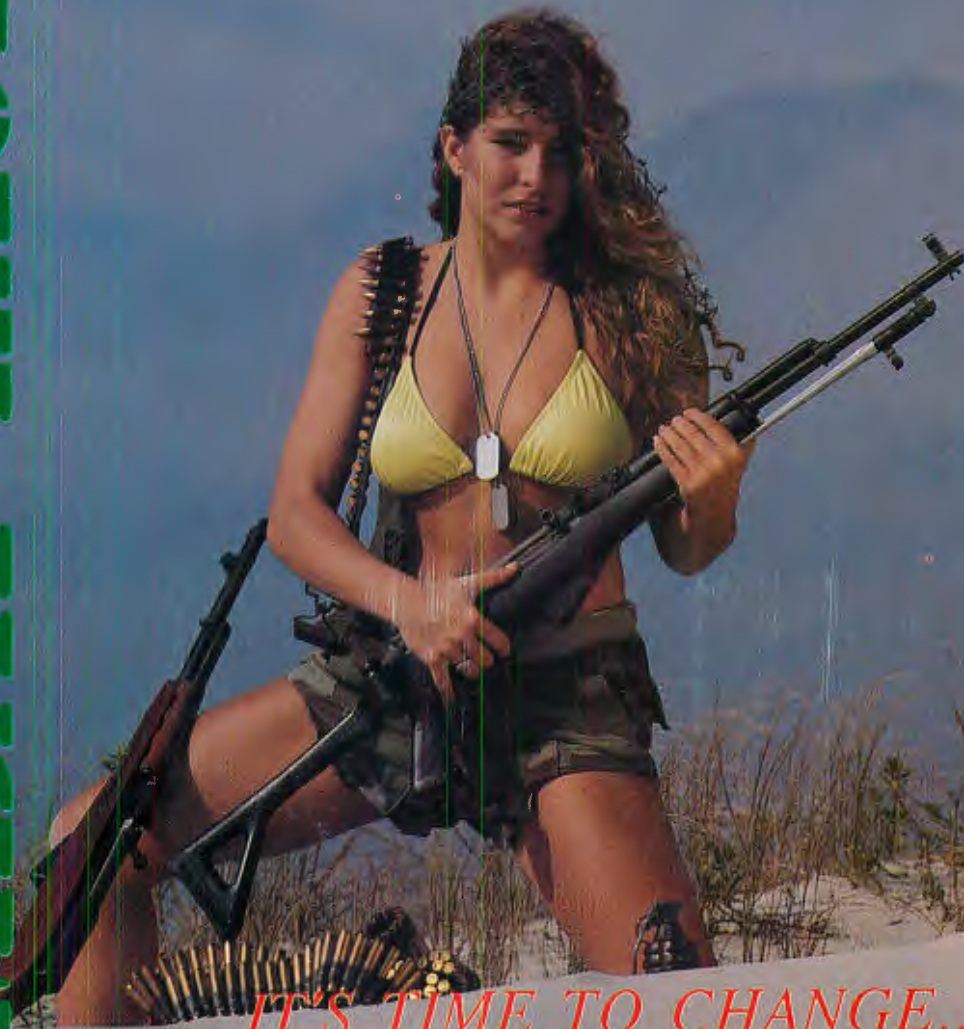
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