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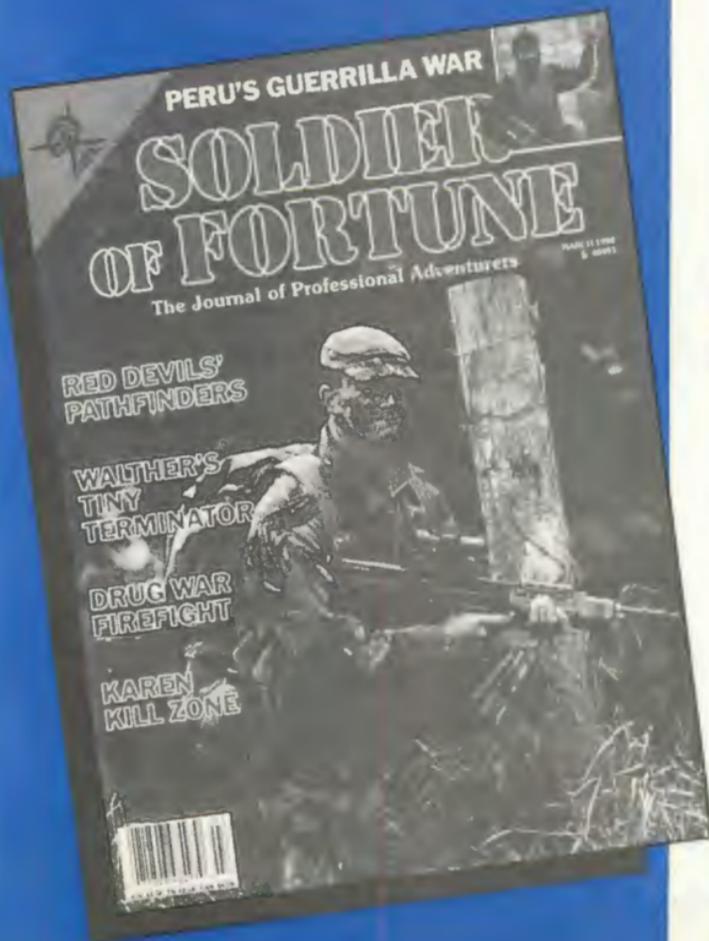
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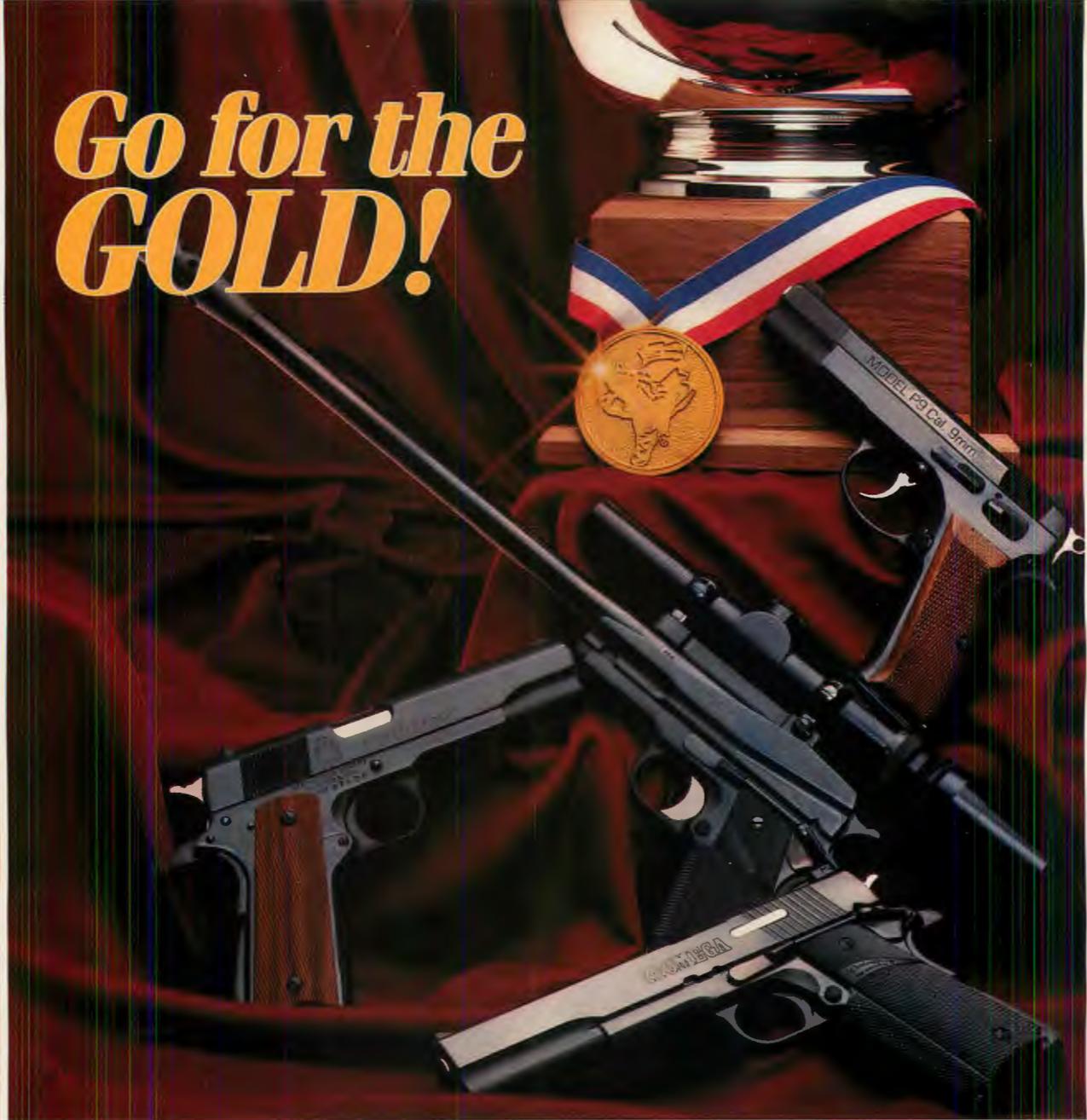
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## INSIDE SALVADOR'S TET

**Edward J. Bishop**

He thought he was visiting El Salvador for a simple friendship parachute jump. Instead, he woke up one day and found himself in the middle of the FMLN's version of the Tet Offensive, fighting alongside El Salvador's elite *paracaidistas*. Sound like an adventure novel? It really happened to American Ed Bishop, and SOF got his story 48

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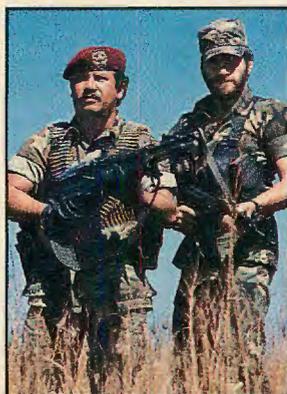
Peru's mysterious and violent Maoist guerrilla movement, known as the Shining Path, has the people of Peru terrorized. SOF's political/military analyst Tom Marks gives the clearest view we've seen of these weird warriors of Inca Land 56

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It's an assassin's bullet, taken from the communist FMLN arsenal in El Salvador, and it's the first time this silent killer has publicly surfaced in the West. SOF got the scoop on the FMLN's answer to the political process 60

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## COVER

**COVER AND INSET:** It was the communist FMLN's version of the Tet Offensive, and American Ed Bishop (inset photo) found himself smack in the middle of it, fighting alongside El Salvador's elite Parachute Battalion in the streets of San Salvador. As our cover photo shows, this was no walk in the park for Salvadoran forces, but superior firepower and training—and popular support for government forces—soon had the guerrillas on the run. Check out Bishop's frontline story, beginning on page 48. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel; Inset: courtesy Ed Bishop



# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

## "Shoot-Anything Rambos"

**T**HE gun control lobby is attacking on a new front.

After mounting a massive, year-long propaganda campaign aimed at delegitimizing the right to keep and bear arms for personal and collective defense, they have now turned their attention to a new target — hunting.

Indicative of the new tack was the cover story in the 5 February issue of *U.S. News & World Report*. It was entitled, "Should Hunting be Banned? Animal-rights activists declare war on blood sports." The article reports that animal rights groups, building on their successes in protesting fur wearing and the treatment of laboratory animals, are mounting a national campaign against hunting. It quotes Wayne Pacelle, the national director of the Fund for Animals, as saying, "We want to stigmatize hunting, we see it as the next logical target and we believe it is vulnerable."

America's 75 million gun owners should ask themselves: "Why is this issue even being raised? Why is the legitimacy of hunting being put on the national agenda just now, and why *U.S. News & World Report* choose the week of 5 February 1990 to devote seven full pages and its cover to it?"

The last question, at least, probably has a fairly straightforward answer. The week of 5 February was when Congress had been scheduled to take up anti-gun legislation, and national gun control organizations and the anti-gun Eastern press alike were whipping up anti-gun hysteria in anticipation of the debate. It's reasonable to assume the *U.S. News & World Report* article — which was peppered with phrases such as "shoot-anything Rambos," "slob hunters," "bloodthirsty nuts," and "thoughtless thugs" — was timed to coincide with the debate as well.

Animal rights activists say they oppose hunting out of concern for saving endangered species and in order to prevent cruelty to animals, but that is on its face preposterous. The most commonly hunted species — deer, rabbit, squirrel, duck, dove, quail, and pheasant — are not by any stretch of the imagination endangered. Should hunting be banned, there would be a population explosion among these species, followed by mass starvation. Culling these populations by hunting is no more cruel than culling the nation's stray dog and cat population by euthanasia, something the nation's humane societies do by the millions.

There is no great mystery as to why hunting is suddenly under attack and why animal rights advocates who most Americans regard as neo-ludite cranks are suddenly being treated sympathetically by the Eastern press. Surveys have regularly found that more than half the Americans who own guns list hunting as a primary reason for owning them. Ban hunting and you eliminate the single most common reason for owning a firearm.

This fact has clearly not escaped the notice of the gun grabbers. How could it, when the rhetoric Fund for Animals founder Cleveland Amory uses to denounce hunters is virtually identical with the rhetoric used by the gun control movement use to denounce gun owners.

"Hunting," says Amory, "is an antiquated expression of macho self-aggrandizement, with no place in a civilized society." Sound familiar?

For more than two decades, the gun control movement loudly proclaimed that its sole interest lay in keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally unbalanced, and that it had no quarrel with hunters and sportsmen.

Well the leopard has now shown its spots. ☒

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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." 5½ x 8½, hardcover, 368 pp. **\$22.95**



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## PARADISE REJECTED...

The U.S. Coast Guard had a busy year in 1989, picking up floating refugees from the "First Socialist Paradise in the Americas" — some 391 were plucked from the water, no telling how many didn't make it. In January of 1990, 47 had made it as we went to press. That's the good news. The bad news is that the Coasties are busier than ever chasing drug-running boats which use Cuban waters as a safe haven. Cuban gun boats have even been observed running interference for the dopers. If Fidel gets caught red-handed in the drug business again, who will he sacrifice for the scapegoat this time?

## FORMER CIA, KGB HONCHOS CALL FOR COOPERATION...

At a meeting last fall, some 20 members of the private U.S.-Soviet Task Force to Prevent Terrorism met under the auspices of the Rand Corporation in California. Former deputy chief of the KGB's Second Directorate, Lt. Gen. Fjodor Sherbak, told the group, "Practical steps must be taken to combat the danger of international terrorism and eliminate the conditions under which it has operated with impunity." The group came up with a list of 30 recommendations for their respective countries. We'll throw in a couple more: check out why terrorists never blow a Soviet airliner out of the sky or take Soviet hostages, and why is it these assholes always seem to have ComBloc weapons and explosives? Could it be because a bear never bites its own?

# BULLETIN BOARD



**Airborne! (Part of The Way).** People at the Paris Air Show last summer got to see a new MiG-29 auger in after it went out of control. In upper photo pilot Anatoly Kutchur safely ejects, in lower photo he is very glad he did — suffering only a bruise under one eye. Photo: courtesy *British Aerospace Quarterly*

## LAST WWII VETS FINALLY QUIT...

About once a decade since VJ Day, Japanese soldiers would be found still hanging in there on some remote island. This may well be the last: Tanaka Kiyooki, 77, and Hashimoto Shigeyuki, 71, veterans of the Imperial Japanese Army who joined the Communist Party of Malaya at war's end — and who had thus spent some 45 years of continuous fighting in the Malayan jungle — finally packed it in on 2 December 1989 when the CPM agreed to call it quits. Stated Tanaka at a press conference, "I couldn't leave my comrades-in-arms while the fight was going on."

## BLACK SYPHILIS: UNWANTED WAR SOUVENIRS ...

You've probably heard legends (they crop up after each war) about the isolated, secret island (somewhere in the South Pacific) where unfortunates are sequestered to await their festering death from incurable (choose one: Jap, Nazi, Commie, VC) venereal disease, to avoid polluting the Homeland.

As far as we know, this island does not exist, but maybe it should: certain Asiatic forms of VD, particularly syphilis, may cause later problems for travelers and military personnel — even treated cases may reactivate unexpectedly. New research indicates that the "black syphilis" of SE Asia and "Saigon Rose" of the Philippines may be indistinguishable from AIDS to domestic physicians.

Progressing symptoms: weight loss, hair loss, persistent/recurring rash, impotence, visual/hearing loss, depression/personality changes, neurological problems and abnormal growths. Further good news: not only does it resist treatment, and recur, but it is subject to *probable* misdiagnosis due to ineffectiveness or failure of standard syphilis tests. Think you may have a problem? Wash your hands and write to: Biological Assessment of Syphilis and Immune Suppression (BASIS), 2811 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94703. And in the meantime, stay away from my sister.

## SOV SLANDER DOESN'T SLACKEN...

Despite promises from Mikhail Gorbachev himself, Soviet efforts at "disinformation" do not seem to have let up. They're still flogging the idea that U.S. scientists developed and spread the AIDS virus — which really doesn't show much creativity — but they published one in *Pravda* I rather like: that rich Americans are adopting poor South American children so their body parts can be used for organ transplants. Heh, heh, heh. Aside from the fact rolled tissue paper is virtually unknown, is it any surprise the commonest use for *Pravda* in the USSR is in the outhouse?

## CONVOLUTED LAW DEPARTMENT...

U.S. Justice Department barristers have agreed that Noriega is a POW [wish he were a MIA], under terms of the Geneva Convention. Might be funny, except that under treaties negotiated in 1949, as a "POW" the Pineapple is entitled to a monthly

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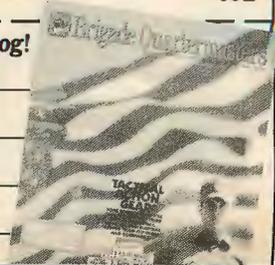
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salary from us of a minimum of 75 Swiss francs (\$50.85 at today's exchange rate), and subject to re-negotiation for a raise from the 1949 rates. Prison authorities will set up an account for him. Oh well, maybe he needs it now that his dirty drug money isn't immediately accessible.

## OFFICIAL STRESS...

"Our aim here is to take a pre-emptive strike against the impact that stress might have on our soldiers," said Maj. Scott Fairchild, director of clinical psychology at Ft. Bragg's Womack Army Community Hospital, in reference to an on-going program there to counsel men who took part in Operation Just Cause. In a nutshell, Army shrinks are of the opinion that stress of combat continues long after the sphincter relaxes, and when soldiers are ridden with guilt over such things as their inability to stop Noriega's "Dignity Battalion" from hacking civilians with machetes as they tried to flee to American lines, then it's a good preventive measure to talk things out. We agree, at least in principle, although we think a salty NCO often can be a more insightful counselor than a man in a white coat.

## BOUNTY HUNTERS, UNITE...

An organization has been formed to upgrade the professionalism of bounty hunters by providing training and accreditation. Write Timothy Blackwell, President, National Bounty Hunters Association, Dept. SOF, 4600 S. Ong, Amarillo, TX 79110, for details.

## ABU NIDAL AT HOME...

We usually don't do "lifestyles of the rich and infamous" but as we go to press, reports are that the infamous Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal is still under house arrest in Libya. Nidal, responsible for terrorist attacks which have killed or wounded nearly a thousand people in 20 countries since 1974, appears to be a man whose time has come and gone, according to Arab sources, who cite internecine warfare within the Fatah Revolutionary Council as a sign of its probable collapse.

## THOSE DIRTY SCUDDERS...

The Kabul regime has fired some 900 SCUD missiles, which cost the Soviets roughly a million each, in the Afghan war. They are fired with the help of Soviet military advisers, and as late as December were still being used. Does this mean the Sovs didn't really pull everybody out? State Department officials indicate that at year's end Soviet aid was flowing in at the rate of \$400 million per month, up from previous months' rate of \$250-\$300 million a month. It is not known if this is merely stockpiling for the days when the muj make the logistics more difficult, or if it represents an escalation in aid to Soviet surrogates in Kabul.

On 10 January 1990 a SCUD landed 160km inside Pakistan, inside a quadrangle formed by two ordnance factories, an aeronautical complex, and the Pak Army/Navy headquarters. No one killed, little damage. Accident? We doubt it.

## HELL HATH NO FURY...

Macio Aquino of Redwood City, California, forgot to pick up his girl friend at the sawbones. Knew he was in deep kimchi. Needed an excuse. Bright idea. Asked friend to shoot him in the arm with a .25 pistol ("Honest, honey, I'd have picked you up but I was busy being robbed and shot.") Friend obliged. Lucky shot. Aquino almost bled to death. Friend charged in shooting. Girlfriend showed up to take Aquino home from the sawbones.

## BATTLE SURGEONS MUSTER TO THE DRUG WARS...

Army wants to train its surgeons to handle wartime carnage. Good idea — so they're sending 'em to the front lines. Where are the front lines? Martin Luther King-Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles, where there was a gang-related killing almost every day last year, and enough gang-related gunshot wounds to keep the 4077th busy for a full season. Some 25% of the homicides in Los Angeles are now drug/gang related.

## OVER THE HILLS BROTHERS...

The San Francisco-based distributor of Hills Brothers, MJB and Chase & Sanborn, says they won't buy any more coffee from El Salvador, in response to expressions of "deep concern" from consumers. "Peace Activists" also hit on Proctor and Gamble, but they refused. Good for Mrs. Olsen. We'll opt for Folgers.

You have an opinion? Tell Hills Brothers, Box 7449, San Francisco, CA 94120 (phone 415-546-4600).

## THE SALVAGE MAN CAN...

An agreement between Japan's Mitsui and Iran's National Petrochemical Company to scrap plans for a \$4.2 billion petrochemical project is expected to clear the air and reactivate prospects for Japanese and other Asian companies to get involved in the huge task of cleaning up after the Iran-Iraq war. The Iranians get cash, and the Japanese get off the hook. The original deal was signed in 1971, but the 18-year delay caused by

*Continued on page 96*

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#AM4009-ALASKAN BOWIE, 12" blade.....	\$ 250.00	\$ 225.00
#AM4011-PATHFINDER, 14" blade.....	\$ 250.00	\$ 225.00
#AM3001A-SERE I, 2 3/4" blade.....	\$ 92.00	\$ 82.95
#AM3002A-SERE II, 3 1/4" blade.....	\$ 114.50	\$ 103.95
#AM3003A-SERE-ATTACK, 4" blade.....	\$ 195.00	\$ 175.95

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#CSMAT-MASTER, 5 3/4" blade.....	\$ 200.00	\$ 159.95
#CSRTN-ORIGINAL, 5 3/4" blade.....	\$ 150.00	\$ 119.95
<b>TRAILMASTER BOWIE</b>		
#CSBWC-KRATON, CARBON 5, 9 1/2" blade.....	\$ 225.00	\$ 179.95
#CSSBOW-STAG, 9 1/2" blade.....	\$ 275.00	\$ 219.95
<b>PUSH KNIVES</b>		
#CSUSK-URBAN SKINNER, 2 1/2".....	\$ 65.00	\$ 51.95
#CSTRM-TERMINATOR, 3 3/4" blade.....	\$ 85.00	\$ 67.95
<b>SHINOBU FOLDERS</b>		
#CSLGS-LARGE, 3 1/2" blade.....	\$ 85.00	\$ 67.95
#CSMDS-MEDIUM, 2 5/8" blade.....	\$ 65.00	\$ 51.95

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#DMTW12-12" STONE (F,C or XC).....	\$ 99.00	\$ 74.95
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- ✓ Includes Carrying Case, Guides & Clamp

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#LSSTD-STANDARD KIT (3 STONE).....	\$ 33.00	\$ 24.95
#LSDLX-DELUXE KIT (5 STONE).....	\$ 48.00	\$ 36.95
#LSCAMP-"C" CLAMP.....	\$ 20.00	\$ 13.95

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#GB5925-BMF w/out teeth, 9" blade.....	\$ 215.00	\$ 149.95
#GB5705-MARK II WASP 6 1/2" blade.....	exclusive \$ 89.95	\$ 89.95
#GB5700-MARK II, 6 1/2" blade.....	\$ 90.00	\$ 62.95
#GB5600-MARK I, 5" blade.....	\$ 75.00	\$ 52.95
#GB5850-GUARDIAN I, 5" blade.....	exclusive \$ 49.95	\$ 49.95
#GB5800-GUARDIAN, 3 3/8" blade.....	\$ 64.00	\$ 44.95
#GB7049-PARABELLUM, 4 1/4" blade.....	\$ 75.00	\$ 44.95

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#SSWDR2-SOGWINDER 2, 3 1/2" blade.....	\$ 90.00	\$ 69.95
#SSTEC2-SOG-TECH 2, 7" blade.....	\$120.00	\$ 89.95
#SSTGS-TIGERSHARK, 9" blade.....	\$140.00	\$109.95

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- ✓ 3" Pumaster Steel Blade
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## CLASS-ACTION REPLY...

To the legion who spotted the caption error in "Ladykillers" which identified a Polish Wz63 (PM-63) as "Hungarian" (SOF, February '90), author Dave Truby responds: "You know, I sat and wrote that right on the cutline sheet and never blinked."

We're sure glad we don't pay a bounty to sharp-eyed readers, as we wordsmiths get paid to catch things like that during the editing process, and in this instance we knew better. The photos for that story were lost "upstairs" and we had to get replacement photos from the author in a hurry, and when the art and text ended up being processed separately, this one fell through the cracks.

As far as I know, the Hungarians have never fielded an indigenous machine pistol, even experimentally. I did examine a Hungarian-manufactured M37 in a dark Austrian basement back in the early '60s which sported an odd-duck combination of a short flat-board shoulder stock which attached to a specially made left grip, a selector switch mounted on the right side of the receiver, and a Maxim-type suppressor permanently mounted to the barrel. It also had both the grip safety and M1911-style pivoting safety, but had no German markings. It was obviously professionally done, but whether it was a prototype, an official one-of-a-kind, or some gunsmith's pipe-dream I have no idea. I was told it was in .32 ACP. It was for sale but I didn't buy it, and never got to fire it.

— Don McLean



## FLAK



## FLAG BURNING DISHONORS DEAD...

Sirs:

Published news reports tell of a Vietnam veterans group that conducted a flag burning rally where over 1,000 United States flags were put to the torch.

Let me say that the Vietnam Veterans against the War have insulted the honored dead and many thousands of wounded Vietnam veterans who gave their all in Southeast Asia.

The Vietnam veterans group that burned those flags has disregarded their brothers' sacrifice. Those who brought the flags and burned them have given aid and comfort to the communists who killed their brothers. When Old Glory was put to the torch, they lost their right to call themselves Americans. Let them go back to the ashes and see their future.

I am a Vietnam-era veteran of the United States Army. Many of my friends' names can be found on the Wall in Washington, D.C. I will never burn an American flag. I will prevent the burning of that blessed symbol of freedom and liberty with every fiber of my being. I promise this before God and my fellow Vietnam veterans who died.

William James Herrmann  
North Charleston, South  
Carolina

Most of your fellow Vietnam vets share your amazement at the subsequent political machinations and psychological instabilities of the highly photographed and vocal few. We acknowledge and defend their right to their beliefs, and we acknowledge that the awful stress of war can scar even the stoic. However, the most succinct final analysis yet comes from SF Viet vet Peder Lund of Paladin Press, who observed that the Vietnam experience is similar to a computer — if you shoveled garbage in, you'll get garbage back.

## LET'S HELP THE FILMARS...

Sirs:

I am on active duty with the United States Marine Corps. I was recently privileged to train with the Philippine Marines. I say privileged because for a change a peacetime grunt got a chance to do something that will make a difference in the fight against communism.

We trained with the Filmars in basic combat marksmanship, tactics, and immediate action drills. The Filmars' weapons were mostly M16A1s of Filipino manufacture. However there were a few M16s of original Vietnam vintage, i.e. no forward assist. These weapons were in an all but non-functional state. Weapons cleaning and cleaning gear were non-existent.

The only preventive maintenance that was done was to spray paint over the rust! After first giving the Filmars cleaning gear and showing them how to use it (imagine 1/16th-inch carbon buildup), we started firing. It was amazing that any of these combat vets were still alive.

The Filmars had about a 50-percent malfunction rate — jams, double and triple feeds, primers blowing out of the cartridge, no gas rings, etc. Those that did fire were lucky to hit the target at 25 meters, and if they did many of the rounds were tumbling at that range.

Basic fire and movement, much less fire and maneuver, blew these guys away. One Filmar, 38 years old with 17-years experience and still a squad leader, asked me where had I learned such "advanced tactics." My god, here I was, a young, non-combat vet, trying to explain tactics to a 17-year veteran!

What made this experience even more mind-boggling was that in a few short weeks these guys were heading down to the island of Mindanao to Indian country. The Philippine government has been fighting the New People's Army (NPA) and the Muslims down there since back in the Marcos days. Unfortunately, their idea of a contact patrol is to wander around the bush until they surprise each other, dump a mag in the general direction of the bad guys and run.

You people at SOF and your readers did a lot of good helping those who kicked the Russians' asses out of Afghanistan. Why not start something similar for the Filipinos? Besides arms and ammo (these guys thought claymores and LAWs were new),



## SOUND DETECTOR

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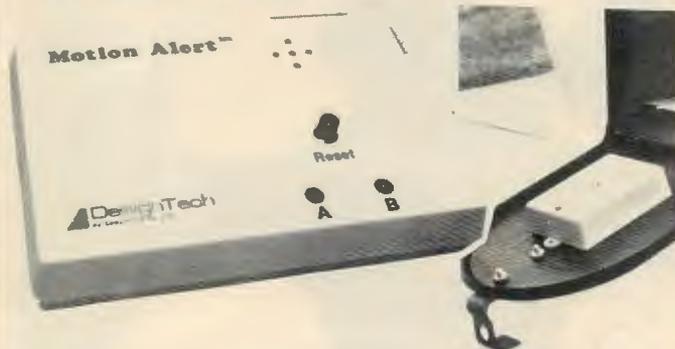
The VanSleek Farfoon generation of Distant Sound Detectors combines the best features of older models to bring you the most versatile unit yet developed. Utilizes a 3-1/2" built-in parabolic dish with "spider-mount" super-sensitive microphone for Sound Mirror effect, previously found only on larger, more cumbersome sound detectors. VanSleek features handy size (weighs about 2-lbs.), is easy to use in tight places. Made for professional hunters to hear approaching animals at great distance, the VanSleek has been discovered by the security industry. On city terrain, sounds leap across blocks and streets. Solid state-of-the-art circuitry. Sound cut-off. Powered by 6 penlight batteries for increased amplitude. Use VanSleek and enjoy mirrored sound gathering not possible with direct receiver products. Sold world-wide to government, military, police, hunters & fishermen. Discover the range of uses on land and sea; money back guarantee. \$148.00 postpaid.

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Hear through walls with the amazing Stealth Ear. Has specialized microphone and high gain electronic amplifier that actually amplifies sound 25,000 times! You can hear through solid objects such as glass, wood, plaster, brick or even 12" thick concrete! Comes with headphones and sound transducer "stethoscope"; everything you need to detect those pesky rodents in the other room. You can even use Stealth Ear to diagnose problems in appliances and cars. An audio limiter prevents loud sounds from reaching your ears. \$245.00 + \$3.50 shipping; each add'l unit \$230.00 each.

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Motion Alert is a motion detecting radio transmitter and receiver system with a whopping 300-foot range (that's a full football field!). The motion detector/radio transmitter alerts you when an object has been moved. It's easy to install anywhere you need to detect movement: attach to doors, gates; in drawers and cabinets; in your mailbox - applications are endless. Once the transmitter senses movement, it sends a radio signal to the receiver which lights up and begins to buzz. This wireless system is FCC approved. The receiver has two separate channels, so you can use multiple transmitters in a variety of applications. One year warranty. Order #MA-1 (transmitter and receiver), \$78.50; additional transmitters, #XMA, \$32.50 each.

## TELEPHONE VOICE CHANGER



Alter your voice when placing or receiving telephone calls. This West German device utilizes digital technology that lets you CHANGE THE PITCH, TONE AND TIMBRE OF YOUR VOICE. Men can become women; women can become men! Use at home, office or shop, or when travelling. The unit is small, battery powered and can fit in your pocket. A strap attaches the speaker to any phone. Even has a built-in dog bark feature: push the "dog" button and a guard dog is heard in the background. \$295.00 + \$3.50 shipping; each add'l unit just \$275.00.

## PHONE RECORDER



Electronic marvel tapes phone calls automatically. A "no hands" control for connecting cassette recorder to a telephone line, simply connect one cord to cassette recorder & the other cord into ANY modular jack in the house. Set recorder for "record" & whenever a receiver is lifted on any phone on the premises, the recorder will automatically record. When the receiver is hung-up, the recorder automatically stops. Just \$22.50 postpaid and that includes a FREE duplex adaptor.

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**Items on Left** (Clockwise from left.)

- #7033 SOF Magazine Binder. Sturdy black binder keeps your issues protected and handy. Holds 12 issues. **\$10.95**
- #5007 Urban Recon 6-pack carrier, grey. This insulated pack keeps beverages cold. (Not for use with ice.) **\$10.95**
- #7090 SOF Can Wrap, black with white logo. **\$4.95**
- #7070 SOF Coffee Mug, white with red logo. **\$6.95**
- #7050 SOF Luggage Tag, white with black logo. **\$4.95**
- #7110 SOF Ashtray, white with red logo. **\$4.95**
- #7120 Stein. 12-oz., clear with red logo. **\$7.50**
- #7100 Shot Glass. 4-oz., clear with red logo. **\$4.95**
- #7130 SOF Leather Coasters. Set of 4 with logo. **\$5.95**



**Patches** (From left to right)

- #7003 Shield Patch. **\$4.95**
- #7002 SOF Round Patch, OD. **\$2.95**
- #7001 SOF Round Patch, red. **\$2.95**
- #7060 SOF Patch, black. **\$4.95**

**Badges** (By vertical rows, from left)

- #7005 SOF Key Ring. **\$5.25**
- #7024 Beret Badge, black. **\$8.00**
- #7023 Beret Badge, silver. **\$8.00**
- #7021 SOF Lapel Pin, silver. **\$5.95**
- #7043 SOF Lapel Pin, gold. **\$5.95**
- #7020 SOF Lapel Pin, red. **\$3.95**
- #7022 Beret Badge, red. **\$7.00**
- #7053 Death to Tyrants Badge. **\$5.95**



**Items on Right** (Clockwise from left.)

- #2004 Black SOF Ball Cap with scrambled eggs. Col. Brown's favorite. **\$10.95**
- #2001 Maroon Beret. Sizes 6 1/2 - 7 3/4. (Beret badge not included.) **\$14.95**
- #2010 Khaki Field Cap. Lined. S,M. **\$22.95**
- (#2011 Unlined Field Cap. S,L,XL. **\$12.00**)
- #2021 SOF Ball Cap with Oak Leaf Cluster. Distinctive, brilliant white. **\$9.95**
- #7014 Web Belt, black. (No Buckle.) **\$3.50**
- #7012 SOF Silver Military Buckle. **\$11.95**
- #7013 SOF Black Military Buckle. **\$11.95**
- #2020 SOF Oak Cluster Cap, grey. **\$9.95**
- #5005 SOF Duffel Bag. Large size. Black, sturdy rip-stop nylon for hard wear. **\$29.95**

**Items Below** (Clockwise from left.)

- #7051 SOF Navy Blue tie. Oh, so subtle way of letting your presence be known. **\$15.95**
- #7200 SOF Mirrored Sunglasses. **\$9.95**
- #7140 SOF Money Clip. **\$5.95**
- #7045 SOF Zippo lighter. For those who value never-fail dependability. OD. **\$16.95**
- #7006 Ranger knife. 4 in. blade, 9 inches overall. Grooved grip. Black with bronze SOF logo. An impressive instrument. **\$39.95**
- #7161 SOF Watch. Red logo and black, waterproof band. 1-year warranty. **\$29.95**



**Items Below** (From left.)

- #5010 SOF Fanny Pack. Roomy pack frees your hands for important activities. Durable black nylon with SOF logo. **\$24.95**
- #5009 Omega Group Waist Pack. Convenient size when you want to travel light. Black nylon with white Omega logo. **\$14.95**



**Item Above**

- #5008 Otis Gun Cleaning Kit. A gun's best friend in the field holds cleaning rod, brass-slotted tips and "T" handles, patches, solvent, instructions. All in a pocket-size case with OD SOF logo. **\$29.95**

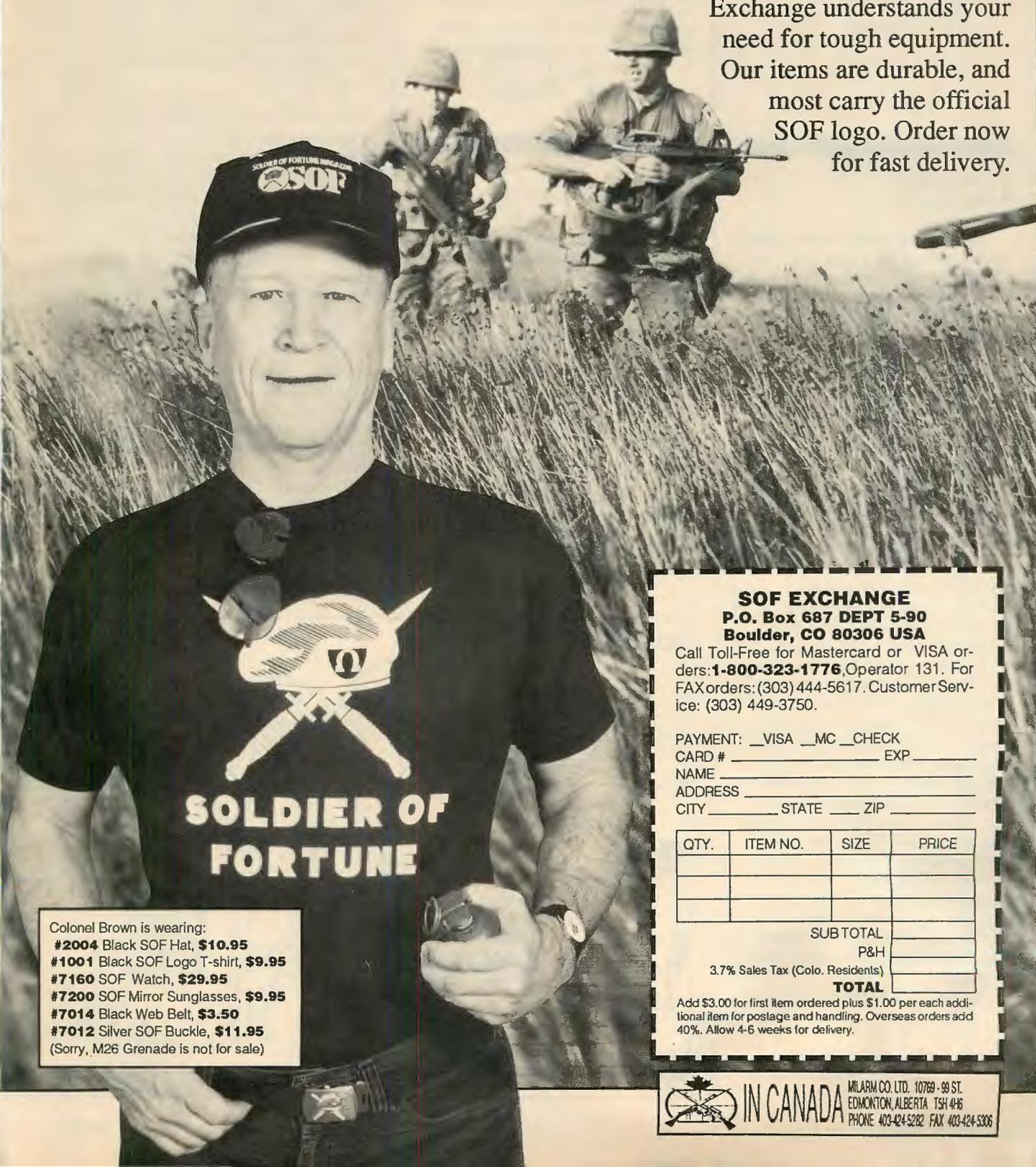


# “Tough vacations call for tough gear.”

Col. Robert K. Brown  
 Publisher of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine  
 Talking about his SOF Exchange

You work hard, you play hard, and you deserve gear that suits both your daily routine and your adventures into the extraordinary. The SOF

Exchange understands your need for tough equipment. Our items are durable, and most carry the official SOF logo. Order now for fast delivery.



- Colonel Brown is wearing:
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  - #1001 Black SOF Logo T-shirt, \$9.95
  - #7160 SOF Watch, \$29.95
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which we obviously can't send, they need tactical manuals, weapons cleaning gear, CLP or LSA, (the best thing we could come up with was 10w motor oil), 782 gear, medical supplies, and weapons manuals for the M16A1, M60E2, 60mm mortar, and 81mm mortar.

Whatever you think about the Aquino regime, these soldiers don't give a damn about politics. They are fighting communists and religious fanatics to preserve freedom in their homeland. I think they deserve as much as we can give them.

Semper Fi.

Name Withheld

### IS NAVY BEING SABOTAGED?...

Sirs:

The numerous stories regarding the epidemic of accidents that have plagued the Navy last fall all managed not to mention one possibility. I'm talking about the possibility of Soviet sabotage.

That possibility seems to have been overlooked due to the "new relationship" between the United States and the Soviet Union due to Mikhail Gorbachev. But there are several reasons to suspect that acts of sabotage might be involved:

1) All branches of the armed forces do have accidents, but one after another, all in the same week?

2) SOF did articles which exposed Spetsnaz (Soviet special forces) operations within our country, especially in Alaska. Should we believe the communists limit their deployment of such troops to Alaska?

3) An item appeared in the press last year (28 June 1989) reporting on the death of a former U.S. Navy seaman who defected to the Soviet Union in 1985. The article stated that the sailor in question, using the name Glenn Michael Souther, had enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1975. Souther passed vital Navy secrets to the Soviet Union until 1985, when he deserted and defected to the Soviet Union. Souther died of natural causes this year, according to the article, and shortly after his death the KGB announced that he was in reality a KGB junior officer sent to the United States as a sleeper.

The point is that if this phony can

join the Navy and send the Russians vital Navy secrets, then isn't it possible for others like Souther to carry out acts of sabotage against our ships and planes? The Navy has admitted that the powder magazine/munitions storage just below the ill-fated Number Two gun turret on the U.S.S. *Iowa* was sabotaged, although it has fixed the blame on one of the sailors killed — Seaman Hartwick — due to his supposed homosexual tendencies, which according to his family didn't exist. If the Navy admits the possibility of sabotage, why isn't it then looking into a Soviet connection to this accident, rather than accuse a dead sailor, who now can't defend himself?

Dave Goodwin

Riverside, California

### KUDOS, COLONIALS...

Sirs:

In response to your Command Guidance re the Military Option: The article in question hits a chord of agreement with a great many people here in Britain. Terrorism should be stamped on and stamped on hard! Unlike most countries, America seems to have the backbone to do it — first Libya and now Panama. Every other Western power, except Britain, disagreed with the U.S.A.'s response and it becomes obvious where their brains and courage are.

Yes, it is true: terrorism learned fear. America is taking steps in the right direction — keep it up. Let's hope Britain will soon follow.

Chris Bartlett

Newport, United Kingdom

### THANKS, VETS — FROM THE HEART...

Sirs:

Today was different and forever altered my long-suppressed thoughts of the Vietnam War in which I served, some 20 years ago.

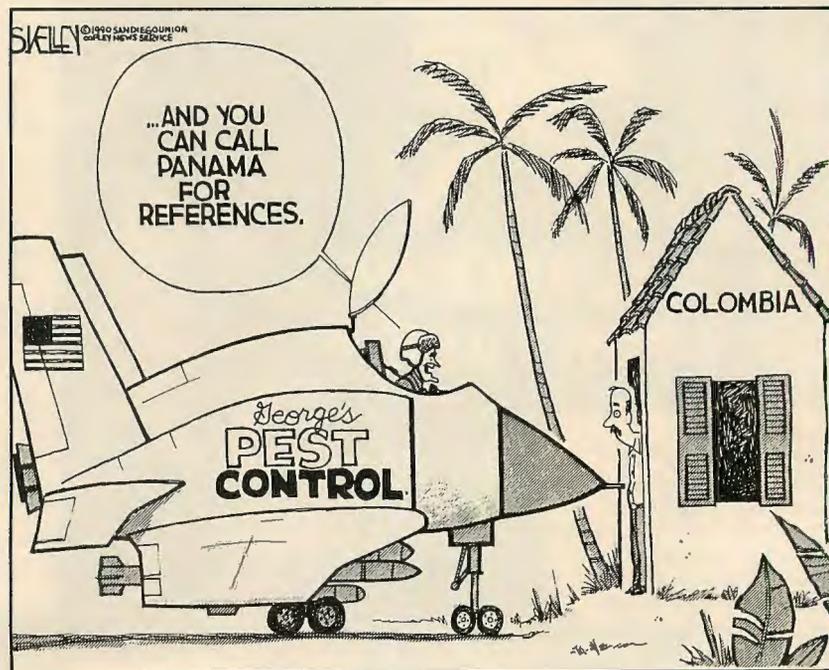
At The Golden Lion Chinese Restaurant in Poulsbo, Washington, I spotted a small picture frame on the cashier's desk. I was amazed to see two medals — the Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal — neatly framed with a picture of an American flag as a background. At the bottom a hand-printed note said, "Viet-Vets, The Manager Wants To Thank You."

As a long shot, when the manager came to greet me, I gave the traditional Vietnamese greeting "Chao Ba" ... to which he instantly responded, "When were you there?" A little sheepishly I said, "1969 to 1970, at Pleiku, An Khe and the Central Highlands."

Quickly the waitress seated my family, as a noonday crowd was gathering. The manager disappeared into the kitchen as we studied the menu and our three-year-old daughter "origammied" a napkin. He reappeared with a large plate of appetizers in hand and set them before us on our table; BBQ pork, egg rolls, pot stickers, etc., all steaming up. Quizzically I looked up at him. Then came the answer that will be with me as long as I live.

The manager looked me in the face, extended his hand in a sincere handshake and said, "Thank you for defending my former homeland;

*Continued on page 71*



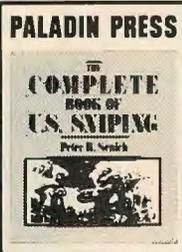
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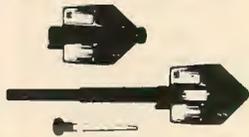
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## INCOMING

Now that their fine line of semi-autos has become illegal, accessories for H&Ks are becoming as elusive as jackalopes. But look no further than Delta Arms of Wilmington, Delaware, to fill your H&K needs. While they obviously can't sell you the gun, they can sell you the parts that constitute it. Bolt carriers, bi-pods, bayonets and other parts are their stock in trade.

Rest easy, knife aficionados. Though there's no mention of a new knife this month, there is a book about knife use. *Street Lethal* is the name, knife fighting, throwing, defense, stalking etc. ... is the game. Warrior Publications has the details and they even have a phone number. You can bet operators are standing by.

The only thing I can say about neckties is thank God I don't have to wear one. But for those less fortunate, check out Rappahannock Design's High Command Confederate Division tie. What the High Command Confederate Division is/was is anyone's guess, but it's still a nice looking 100 percent silk tie.

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

## DATASCOPE

KVH's DataScope, an innovative all-in-one navigation tool, caught the eye of one of our staffers a few months back and he proceeded to put it through its paces. DataScope is a fluxgate compass accurate to 5°, a 5x30 roof prism monocular, a quartz crystal clock and an electronic rangefinder, all contained in a sturdy, ergonomically designed waterproof



housing.

It gets thumbs up in most areas. The compass is internally gimballed so you don't have to hold DataScope perfectly level and it stores up to nine bearings. The clock, or chronometer, checked out OK and computes the time difference between when bearings were taken. As a monocular you can't fault DataScope's optical quality and sharp liquid crystal display. Its overall construction is solid and looks like it will hold up under hard use.

The rangefinder proved somewhat disappointing from a grunt's point of view, mainly because of the limits placed on it by the 5x30 monocular. While fine for sailing, hiking or hunting, I'd prefer a little more magnification when the other side can shoot back (often with the aid of more powerful rifle scopes). Programing in a reference point and lining up the size bar also proved awkward, particularly at longer ranges; the duress of combat would further compound this problem.

Still, DataScope will prove a welcome addition to many field kits. It's priced at \$445 full retail. For further information contact the manufacturer: KVH Industries, Dept. SOF, 110 Enterprise Center, Middletown, RI 02840; phone (401) 847-3327. U.S. Cavalry is among the companies carrying the DataScope: Dept. SOF, 2855 Centennial Ave., Radcliff, KY 40160-9000.

# ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by Tom Slizewski

## BLACK FALCON

Looking even more stoic than usual, SOF Editor/Publisher Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Brown models Cattle Baron's "Black Falcon" Bomber Jacket. This finely crafted leather flight jacket is fully lined, has an inside map pocket, two double front pockets with top flap and side entry and heavily padded elbows. It's even generously tailored to conceal big-bore shoulder holsters.



The Black Falcon is made of all top-grain leather, vat-dyed and nylon lined. It's available in sizes 38 through 52. Black Falcon is quality through and through, so don't be fooled by much cheaper department store imitations—this one's the real thing. The price of \$250 is more than reasonable considering the quality.

Black Falcon and many other fine leather products, as well as knives, jewelry and various collectables, are available from Cattle Baron Leather Co., Dept. SOF, PO Box 100724, San Antonio, TX 78201; phone (512) 697-8900. Catalog available for \$3.



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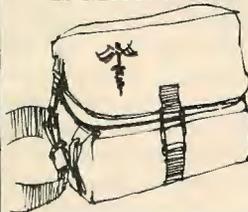


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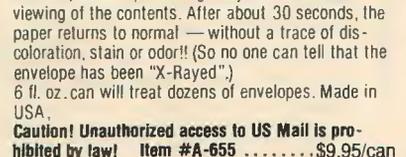
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I spent most of World War II in China, went there with the OSS in 1943, fresh from commando training in Washington, D.C. We flew from India over the "Hump" into Kunming, China. The pilots were always complaining about crossing the Himalayas. I never understood why everyone thought they were so brave. They went back to India, a hot meal and soft bed every night. Not like us on the ground. There were times we never saw a roll of toilet paper for months. Since the war, there are two things I never take for granted — Thomas Crapper's invention and clean sheets.

Generally, we led the Chinese in night skirmishes against the Japanese, but we were in a few larger battles too. The really tricky raids we usually did ourselves. Mainly because we could trust one another. There were problems with the Asians. They fought each other as much as the Japanese.

Take Ho Chi Minh, for example. He was an absolute pain in the neck — always reminded me of a southern evangelist because he couldn't talk about anything but his religion, communism. Just getting up in the morning was socially significant to him. "I want to fight the Japanese who have taken my homeland," he would say, but he wasn't dependable. Once we planned a joint attack with our army of coolies and his rag-tag gang. At the last minute, Ho and his cronies heard about some anti-communists acting up in Vietnam, so they left and killed them instead.

Of all the Chinese I met, I never suspected Mao would become the leader after the war. Had anyone asked me, I would have said, "If the communists win the civil war, which is doubtful, Chou En Lai will lead them." Chou was a terrific person, urbane, casual, witty and quite brilliant. Must have spoken half a dozen languages. Chou was the spokesman; Mao was a peasant, a farmer's son, and showed it. Mao could only grunt. I guess he learned it from the pigs on the farm.

I met Mao and Chou only a few times. They were usually in the north, but when they came south, they visited the OSS command post to exchange information on the Japanese. I enjoyed Chou very much. He was good company, erudite and well-informed. The last time we talked was after a strategy meeting. "Let Mao handle the bourgeoisie," he said, referring to the OSS officers. "You and I have more interesting things to talk about." Over warm Chinese beer, we chatted about democracy and his life in Paris. "American democracy is very well for a small and literate population," he said, "But here in China,



# I WAS THERE

by Patrick Dillon  
as told to N.J. Hayes

## Mao, Chou and Mr. Kai-Shek



**Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek (center) with usual entourage pays a visit to Sun Yat Sen's tomb. The Generalissimo worked at maintaining a high public profile both in China and the U.S. during his 22-year rule of the mainland.**

where the people are many and only 3 or 4 percent read and write, it simply wouldn't work. A powerful hand is needed to put things in order, just to make my country function. Besides, your government hasn't resolved social problems as we will. Too many Americans still live in poverty." He grinned impishly to me, "Especially, Chinese immigrants." I made no response, not being in the mood for debate.

He loved living in France. He attended some very fine schools, but his education was not limited to the classroom. His knowledge of fine wines and French cooking would have made him the envy of any gourmet. "But," he concluded, "I find any good Chinese chef can easily top the French. Wouldn't you agree?" "I wouldn't know," I said, with an edge of sarcasm in my voice. "Lately anything that doesn't move is a gastronomic delicacy to me." His philosophical expression indicated he was aware I ate poorly because his troops constantly raided our supply trains. "Ah, yes," he nodded. "In times of war, one must eat what one can."

In those days, meeting with Mao

and Chou was simply encountering soldiers in the field. Meeting the Generalissimo and Madam Chiang Kai-shek was quite another matter. Chiang was the official leader of what was left of China after the Japanese took control. Before the war, it was generally agreed if Chiang could get all the squabbling factions settled down, his reign would be long and fruitful. I still think he would have done a good job if he had had the chance. Unfortunately, the Japanese invasion ended such speculation and by the war's end, Mao had politically and militarily outmaneuvered him. I only met the Chiangs in a few formal situations, but they always graciously remembered my name. Let me tell you why that was.

After our small OSS group had been in China for about a year, someone decided Chiang should recognize us for our bravery and aid in the preservation of China or some such thing. Chiang was to pin wings on our uniforms and give us certificates of commendation. Since meeting the Generalissimo was a great honor, we naturally wanted to make it a special occasion. Paratroop drops were still a novelty in China, so we decided Chiang, his entourage, local dignitaries and whoever was interested, should gather at our small airfield. We would parachute in and form a line in the center of the field, facing Chiang. I love jumping — the first few moments of free fall are a thrill second only to sex — so naturally, I prided myself in developing a graceful technique. I could land on my feet, which was highly dangerous and an unusual accomplishment in those days. "Dillon, you'll jump last and impress them with your standup landing," the Captain told me.

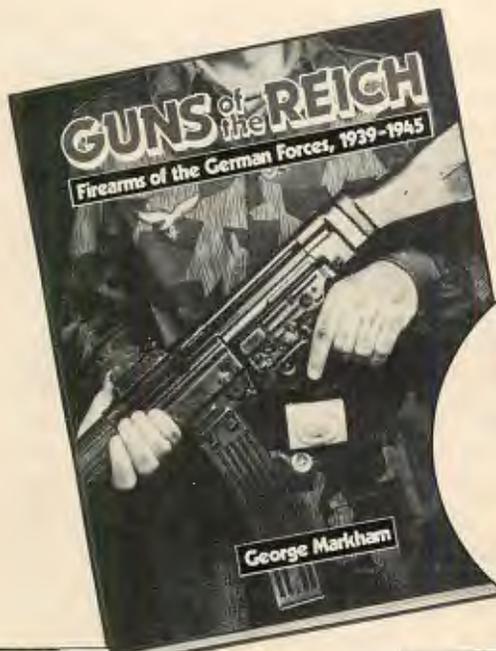
The great day was warm and clear with only the smallest suggestion of a breeze. I felt clean and confident as I buttoned my freshly laundered shirt and stuffed my trousers into highly polished jump boots. Later, in the plane, I was at ease as I watched those ahead of me leap into space. I waited a few seconds when my turn came, to

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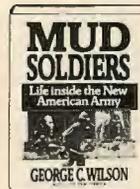
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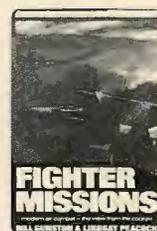
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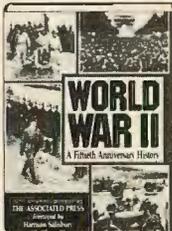
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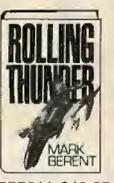
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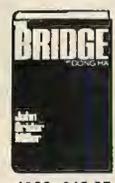
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be certain my timing was right. I wanted everyone's admiring eyes on me when I landed. After the euphoric free fall, the chute opened with a reassuring jerk and I prepared myself for arrival. Because there is little to do in the Chinese countryside, everyone turned out.

I could see Chiang standing at attention. His aides, assistants and the mayor with his crowd stood politely a few paces to the rear. The locals formed a large group still farther back. I used Madam Chiang's white dress to gauge safe distance for landing. Suddenly as I neared the ground, a huge gust of wind came from nowhere and thrust me viciously forward! I was headed not down field as planned, but directly at the Chiangs. Across from the viewing area, the horrified faces of the Americans added to my consternation. I struggled to regain control, but it was for naught.

There was no question of landing on my feet. I would have to roll. The first thing I saw was the panic stricken crowd running in all directions. "Just let me land without killing myself and the Generalissimo," I prayed. I had just rounded my shoulders before plunging, skidding, tumbling and crashing forward on the spinning earth. I came to a dirt splattering stop, spread-eagled, with my face to the

ground.

All was quiet. I heard not a sound. Catching a breath, I raised my head as much as I dared and saw the shiny tops of the Generalissimo's shoes about 4 inches from my nose. Looking slightly higher, I could see the stunned crowd, frozen in mid-flight, staring at Chiang. The Generalissimo had not moved. He stood rigidly at attention, staring straight ahead. I looked from the Generalissimo to Madam Chiang. She had stepped slightly back. Her white silk dress splattered with dirt. I did not know what to do. I had never heard of any protocol for this situation. I changed my mind about surviving and wished I were dead. I could feel the surrounding tension down to my fingertips.

Then, with quiet dignity, Madam Chiang stepped forward and resumed her place next to her husband. She smiled down at me. "I had heard American paratroopers could land with astonishing accuracy," she said, "But I never expected anything as wonderful as this." Those who could understand English laughed hysterically in relief. The remark was quickly translated for those who spoke only Chinese. The peasants and coolies yelled and enjoyed her wit enormously. Embarrassed dignitaries began resuming their positions. The

tension was broken. I released the harness of my chute, jumped to attention and gave the most enthusiastic salute I had ever mustered. "Sergeant Patrick Dillon reporting, sir," I said. Expressionless and staring straight ahead, the Generalissimo returned my salute.

"You really blew it this time, Patrick," said my friend, as we stood at attention. "I thought you were going to kill him and get us murdered, too." The Generalissimo and Madam Chiang, along with their entourage, crossed the field. I watched as Chiang pinned wings on each man's uniform, shook hands, and said, "Thank you, corporal, lieutenant ..." and so forth down the line. I awaited my turn nervously. At last, the Generalissimo stood in front of me. I didn't look into his face, but stared straight ahead. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Madam Chiang had brushed most of the dirt from her dress and she looked beautiful.

The Generalissimo, expressionless still, pinned the wings to my uniform and I raised my arm to shake his hand. Instead, he leaned forward, like a Frenchman, and kissed me on both cheeks. Then with a firm grip, shook my hand. "Thank you, Sergeant Patrick Dillon," he said. His eyes twinkled mischievously, "Well done!"

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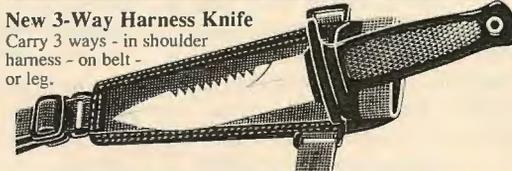
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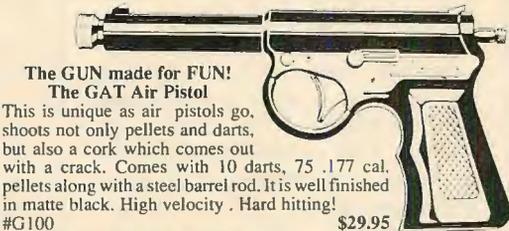
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**T**AKING license in a column normally reserved for book reviews, I want to talk about Oliver Stone's "tributes" to Vietnam vets: **Platoon** and **Born on the Fourth of July**.

I went to see **Born on the Fourth of July** only because I thought Stone did a fair job with **Platoon**, a feeling not shared by any of the other Vietnam vets here on staff, and judging by the letters we received from our readers, not by many of them either. Although **Platoon** managed to compress everything wrong with the U.S. military during its two-decade stint in Vietnam into a two-plus hour movie, I don't think Stone lied to us. Technically, **Platoon** was accurate (things such as "Don't drink the water; you'll get malaria" notwithstanding), his combat scenes as confused and loud as the real thing, and I've spoken with enough vets who were in Vietnam at different times to believe it when they say they saw part of their tours up on the screen. I saw some of mine there, too.

What left me unsettled about **Platoon** was the negativism Stone obviously wanted to impart, the feeling that only the bad, the worst and the most stupid of men served in Vietnam. Stone's characters acted like a composite of losers from **Psycho**, **Easy Rider** and **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**, and if you're a vet with a shaky self-image, **Platoon** was guaranteed to drop it another 10 notches down the esteem ladder (as evidenced, at least for public consumption, by the professional vets who cried and slobbered and hugged each other on camera for our everlasting benefit after stumbling glassy-eyed from the theater). If you didn't go to Vietnam, God knows what you think of us after seeing **Platoon**. And, along with a jarringly uneven and meandering screenplay and underachieving overacting, **Born on the Fourth of July** is just as negative, just as debilitating.

I'm not going to comment on Ron Kovic, whose story this is, except to say that the guy went through hell and obviously hasn't come back yet. If Ron Kovic didn't exist, Stone would've found another like him, or made one up. What Stone's done with this movie is to perpetuate, and ghoulishly glorify, the most ethnocentrically destructive myth to take hold in this country in the last four decades — the myth that says: "Every Vietnam vet is a fucked-up loser because Vietnam was a fucked-up war run by a fucked-up fascist system."

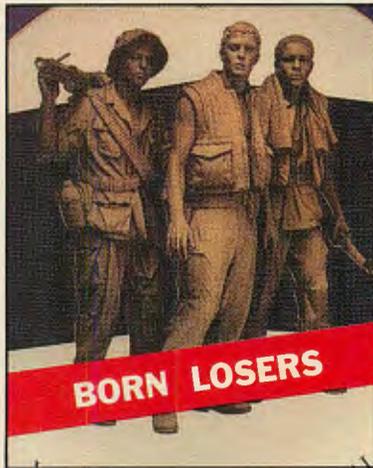
But I can live with that because it's only a myth, a fiction that forms part of the ideology of a society; stereotypic imagery of Vietnam and its vets created by media and others for their own

## IN REVIEW



by John Coleman

purposes, then foisted upon the American public as truth. Fortunately, clear-eyed people who lived the era have, during the past 15 years, seen this myth for what really is. They've finally seen that the vast majority of Vietnam veterans were normal people when they went over to Vietnam and were, given the cross of combat to bear, normal when they came back. They're starting to see — at long last



—that the gibbering, camouflaged baboons wailing on the 5 o'clock news are that figurative one percent who were society's misfits before Vietnam, and who are even worse off now. And we're all starting to put Vietnam, and its effect on our country, into some sort of manageable personal perspective, unclouded by the hatred and meanness that rent this country in the 1960s and '70s with the same devastating effect it had in the 1850s and '60s.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who'll watch this movie to whom Vietnam is nothing but distant history, as contemporary to them as the Civil War. And those people will be swayed by Oliver Stone's myth because it's on the big screen and the professional vets are still crying and slobbering and hugging each other, and because reviewers (whose understanding of Vietnam is based on **Platoon**) will say "this is the way it was." They'll accept **Born on the Fourth of July** as reality and history, and they'll believe and perpetuate the myth that every Vietnam vet is a fucked-up loser because Vietnam was a fucked-up war run by a fucked-up fascist system.

**Born on the Fourth of July** has, in one fell swoop, managed to take the American people — especially younger people — a quantum leap backward in their understanding of Vietnam and its warriors, and of the United States itself during the war. Stone would have us believe that this manic-depressive microcosm is "The Truth" whereas, as with all revisionist histories, it bears only a distorted, passing resemblance to reality.

We've come a long way since the first Vietnam vet was labeled a drug-crazed, psychotic baby killer. Most vets, who fought their war and came home again to pick up their lives, suffered in silence because that was the myth television and newspapers and movies told America to believe, and who were they to dispel an American myth? As time passed and people started seeing what was real and what was not, the myth started to crumble and America, her civilians and her vets, began to get on with their lives.

Not every scar left by Vietnam has healed, but America and her Vietnam vets are at least talking to each other now, and understanding each other more than ever before. Oliver Stone, whether knowingly or not, has created yet another wedge between that understanding with his **Born on the Fourth of July**, angrily ripping at those wounds that have healed and pouring his own personal venom into those still open.

If this was meant to be some sort of catharsis — a purifying or figurative cleansing or release of the emotions or tension through art — for Stone, I hoped it worked for him. If it was meant to be a catharsis for America, it failed miserably. If **Born on the Fourth of July** was meant as a catharsis for Vietnam veterans — hell, if Stone opened up a Pandora's Box of new nightmares for even one combat vet, then damn him.

Postscript: Surprisingly, even the *Army Times* loved **Born on the Fourth of July** as evidenced by their article, "I Was Really Stunned" (29 January 1990). We'd like to hear what you think. Send your comments — favorable or otherwise — to John Coleman, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306, and we'll print the best. ✎

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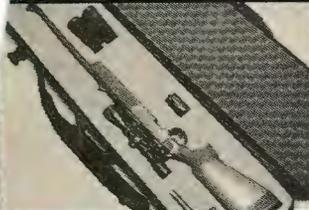
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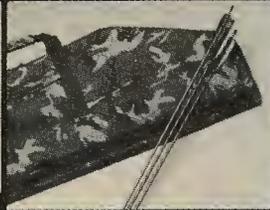
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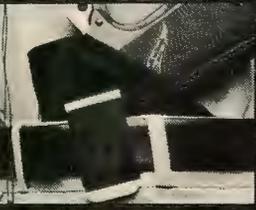
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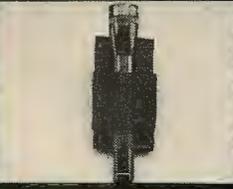
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Although bunkers come in all shapes and sizes (I've seen three-story company bunkers along the DMZ in Korea), a typical bunker usually resembles that shown in cross-section in Figure 1. As you can see, a bunker presents an extremely small target. The firing port is only a few inches high, and that's the only part (except for the roof) that projects above the ground.

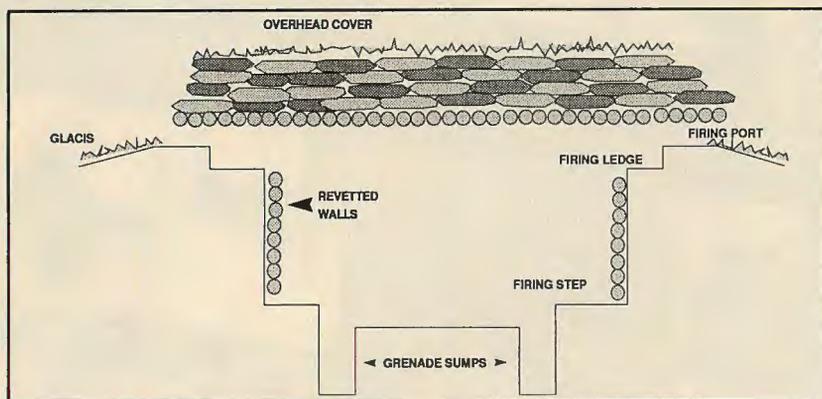


Figure 1: A typical bunker, showing method of construction.

Usually a bunker will be 7 or 8 feet deep — requiring a firing step so the men inside can see and fire out. A firing platform provides a place to set a machine gun tripod, or simply a place for the defender to rest his elbows if he's using a rifle or bipod-mounted machine gun. Should you be lucky enough to throw a fragmentation grenade through the firing port, it can be quickly kicked into the grenade sump, where it will be relatively harmless. For this reason, a white phosphorous grenade is preferable for attacking a bunker.

Although you won't often run into a bunker that can withstand a direct hit from artillery or bombs, most bunkers will have about 18 inches of overhead cover in the form of sandbags, dirt-filled ammo boxes or packed earth. Usually the interior will be revetted (braced) by logs and woven brush or other material. This means the bunker can withstand shell fragments from air bursts, and probably won't be collapsed even by a near miss. Normally, the roof will be covered with sod and small bushes, which make excellent camouflage — and since it's covered with natural material, the bunker is usually undetectable with thermal sights as well.



# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

## by Munremur MacGerrcinn Bunker Busting

Another problem with bunkers is that they come in sets — there will be several bunkers, each sited to protect the others, and they may be linked with trenches, tunnels or both. This means that a party attacking one bunker can be cut up by fire from

holes, and tunnels. More than one assault party has gotten a nasty surprise when the defenders of their target bunker slipped out through a tunnel and caught the attackers from behind.

The assault party must work like a well-oiled machine, and that kind of teamwork begins with organization. A successful bunker-buster force is usually composed of three teams:

A support team which suppresses fire from the bunker being attacked.

An assault team which actually knocks the bunker out.

A security team which protects the support and assault teams from surprises.

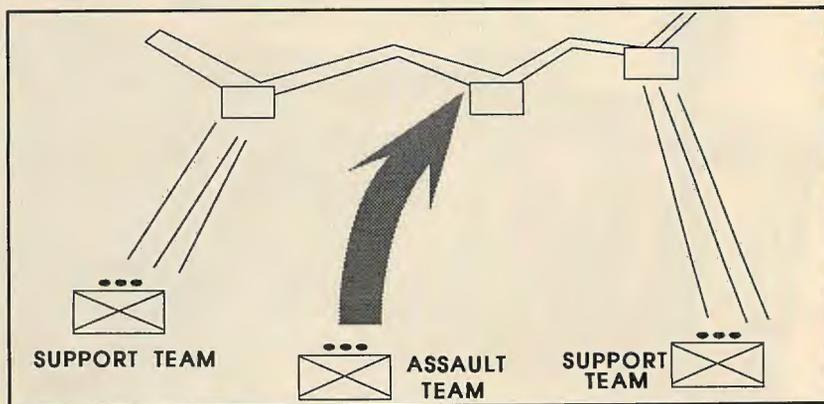
Figure 3 shows a typical bunker-busting squad in action. Notice that the support team is positioned to one side, to allow them to keep the bunker under fire as long as possible without endangering the assault team. The security team is not concerned with the attack on the bunker — their mission is to protect the other two teams, and their attention is directed outward, away from the bunker and toward any suspicious location where an enemy counterattack might materialize.

The security team goes into action first, to clear the way to a point where the support team can place effective suppressive fire on the target bunker. The support team moves up following the route established by the security team, while the assault team is held under cover as long as possible.

adjacent bunkers, and the enemy can move under cover from one place in the defensive position to another. This also means that an attack on a bunker complex requires at least a platoon: two squads to provide suppressive fire on bunkers adjacent to the selected target and a third squad to make the actual assault, as shown in Figure 2.

Once the platoon has successfully suppressed the adjacent bunkers, the assault begins. This is the toughest part of the operation, since the assault party usually has to move up through a rabbit warren of trenches, spider

Figure 2: Platoon attack on a typical bunker complex.



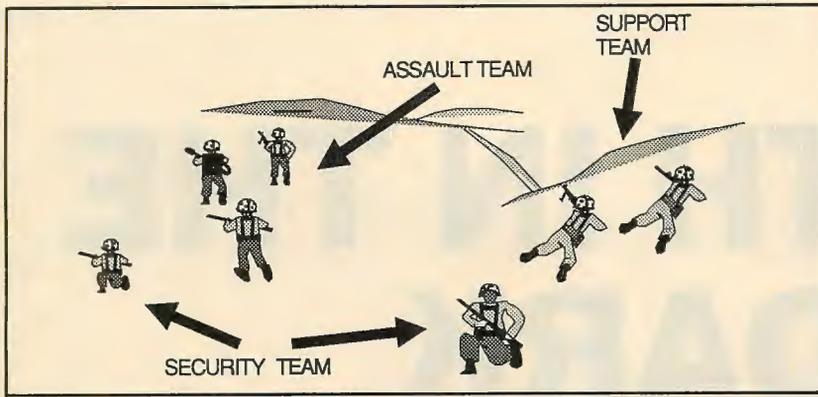


Figure 3: A bunker-busting squad in action.

Once the target bunker is suppressed, the assault team moves rapidly forward, getting close to the bunker and blasting their way in. Once the bunker is knocked out, it must be thoroughly searched. Any tunnels or other escape routes must be either sealed with explosives or guarded — in VC and NVA base camps, the tunnel nets were often so extensive that the enemy was able to withdraw through them, then return once the assault force had gone on to take another bunker.

Bunker-busting weapons are a neglected area. Antitank weapons, like the M72A2 Light Antitank Weapon (the LAW), and the M67 90mm recoilless rifle are about the only stand-off weapons that can really damage a bunker, but don't expect miracles from them. They were designed to punch small holes in armor, not to create the overpressure necessary to collapse a bunker. Both of these weapons are obsolete, and their replacements are even more specialized toward the armor-killing role.

The M202A1 Multishot Rocket Launcher (the FLASH) is a development of the M72A2 LAW. It fires four 66mm rockets with incendiary warheads. It's good for suppressing fire, but it's even less of a bunker-buster than the M72A2.

In most cases, your best bet is explosives — lots of explosives. A 20- or 40-pound cratering charge will usually finish a bunker, especially if you can place it on the roof. Pole charges — several blocks of C4 lashed to a 10-foot pole and double primed with non-electric blasting caps, a short fuze, and a pull-ring igniter — can be wedged into place and used to rip the roof off, which will usually either drive the defenders out of the bunker through their escape tunnel (if they have one) or kill them.

The champion bunker killer, if you can get your hands on one, is the old M1 flame thrower. The old "crispy critter maker" is heavy and cumbersome, though, and gives a distinct silhouette to the man carrying it. It will

draw fire — an NVA flame thrower team got into the perimeter of A Company, 1/61st Infantry, during one of three sapper attacks made against A Company over a period of five nights in the spring of 1969. I never saw so many people try to kill one man — even the medics were shooting at him!

Flame throwers can use either thickened or unthickened fuel. Thickened fuel gives you more range, and is good for situations where you can concentrate a stream of fuel on an opening such as a window or door. You usually won't be able to use it effectively against a bunker, since the stream of fuel has a sharply curved trajectory, and the overhang of the bunker roof will protect the firing ports.

Unthickened fuel is a short-range proposition and creates a billowing cloud of flame. It kills by suffocation as much as by heat — it simply consumes all the oxygen in the bunker — and is usually highly effective. Mechanized flame throwers are more spectacular than effective — they have a tendency to come apart at the seams when hit by an RPG. If you're going to use one of these, try to persuade someone else to drive it into the enemy position for you — preferably someone who doesn't owe you any money.

A very effective bunker-busting weapon, if you can get it into position, is the Browning Ma Deuce .50 caliber machine gun. In attacks on base camps in Vietnam, there were a few cases where mechanized infantry could bring up their APCs and use the concentrated fire of several .50s to pulverize a bunker.

We can't leave this discussion of bunker-busting without paying tribute to our buddies, the tankers. They claim that a tank is the ideal bunker-buster — it can simply drive over the bunkers and crush them. The only time I've seen this done, it worked just fine — the tank went through the roof of the bunker and ended up buried to the turret ring.

Ever try to dig an exit ramp for an M48A3 with just an entrenching tool?

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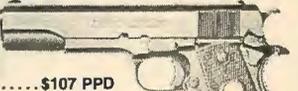
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# DEATH IN THE DARK

## *Israeli Night Vision Equipment Denies Night to the Enemy*

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



**S**ENSUNTEPEQUE, El Salvador, 1985. We were on a small hill 300 feet above the surrounding countryside in an "A" camp just north of the cuartel of Destacamento Militar No. 2. Our hill, the site of a CIA communications center, was no more than 17 clicks from the Honduran border. There were only 50 of us. In addition to the M16s with which we were all armed, we had a Ma Deuce, an M60 GPMG, an M1919A6 caliber .30-06 BMG, an M79 blooper and a 60mm M19 mortar. Sunset was all too swiftly approaching.

Several nights before, a broadcast from

Radio Sandino in Nicaragua had identified our camp's location and purpose. They had also announced that the camp and communications center would be destroyed by the People's Revolutionary Forces. Intercepted radio traffic indicated the Gs probably would attack our position that very night. Their force was estimated at between 500 and 1,000 in number. They would most likely assemble on the hill adjacent to our "A" camp and move across the connecting saddle to assault our perimeter.

While the mortar crew began to plot on-call fire for the 60 mike-mike onto the

When attached to an M16A2, the Israeli WILD CAT™ NL-100-3 second generation night-vision scope and AIM-1D laser designator provide accuracy potential at night that at least matches iron sights in the daylight.

hill across the saddle, I placed the M60 and about 1,500 rounds of ammo, linked four ball to one tracer, on the edge of my trench. I had an excellent view of my primary fire sector, which faced the saddle. Using a broken antenna pole, I set a limit stake to the left to avoid firing on the Ma Deuce

crew, which we had positioned for better cover and concealment about 100 meters to my front. From the half-case of M67 grenades in the bottom of the trench, I put three, with pins straightened, on the top ledge of the pit along with the bandoleers of HEDP M433 (M550 fuse) 40mm rounds for my M79.

I secured a secondary sector of fire 20 meters behind my pit at the edge of the hill and stashed some of the ammo behind a large tree a few yards away. Then I settled in to scan the sector in front of my gun. I was told that the Gs would most likely move on us between 2400 and 0400 hours. In anticipation of this, I attached an AN/PVS-2 passive night-vision scope to the M60.

At about 0100 hours, dogs began to bark all around the base of the hill. Someone was moving about in the area below our camp. The scope revealed lights and movement on the south slope of the hill creeping toward my secondary sector. Rather than disclose our firing positions by opening up, we heaved grenades down the hill. Whoever was probing our position failed to make their play. Although the anxiety level had approached 10, the evening's pucker factor had been considerably reduced, at least for me, by my ability to cut through the night's ominous blackness with the AN/PVS-2 and observe the hill across the saddle. It gave me the important edge that all combatants pray for when they grope about in high tension darkness.

My first exposure to night-vision equipment had come 30 years previously during basic training at Fort Carson, Colorado. It was there that I fired the .30 M3 Carbine, which was nothing more than the selective-fire .30 M2 Carbine equipped with the so-called "Sniperscope." It exhibited all the salient features and defects of infrared (IR) night-vision devices. Dating back to World War II and Korea, these systems relied on a source of infrared light to illuminate the target, which was then viewed through the scope and appeared as a bright green image on a fluorescent screen. Infrared rays occupy that portion of the electromagnetic spectrum with a frequency less than that of visible light and are thermal, or heat, radiation. Infrared means "below the red," i.e., beyond the red, or low frequency (long wavelength), end of the visible spectrum.

The IR projector was attached to the scope by a bracket and powered by a substantial battery. Weight of the complete system, including the weapon, scope and battery, was 28 pounds. The unwieldy top-mounted IR projector upset the weapon's center of gravity. The IR filter over the projector lamp absorbed most of the light output, and the maximum range was 300 yards — at most. Worst of all, the IR beam was as easily visible to another viewer equipped with an IR observation scope or weapon sight as it was to the user.

Still, the Sniperscope wasn't too shabby for its era. Before World War II, the only



alternative was to pop illumination flares, and this was all too often of equal benefit to the enemy. However, this type of "active" night-vision device is by now almost completely passe.

Research in this area plodded along with little progress until the United States became involved in Vietnam. The battlefield environment in Vietnam cried out for some innovative means to see in the dark. This period coincided with the development of minuscule electronic circuitry, reduced-envelope batteries and several other scientific breakthroughs — all of which led to undetectable "passive" night-vision equipment in the form of the image intensifying sight. It required no auxiliary light source, infrared or otherwise.

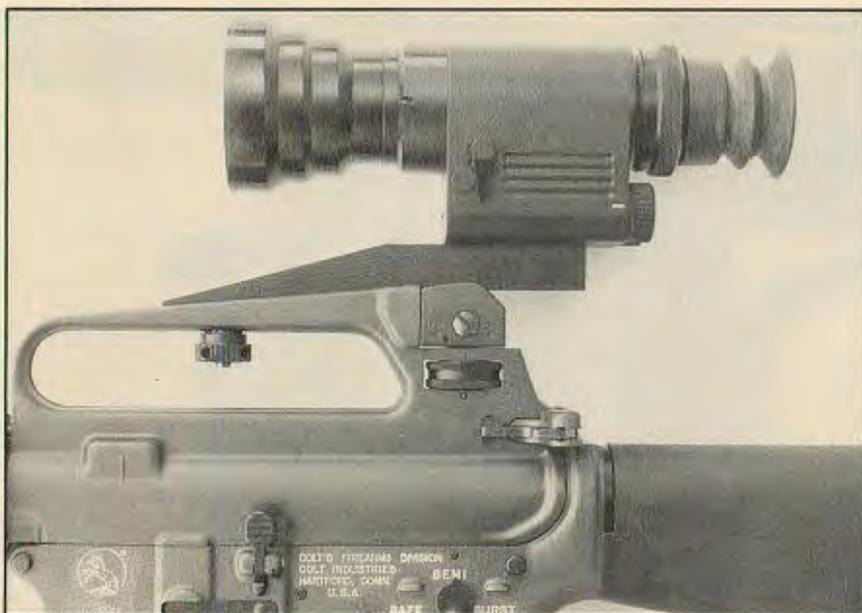
The technique eventually developed was to focus the visible image — however faint — onto a photo-sensitive screen. This screen would then emit electrons on its inner face in proportion to the amount of light from the objective lens falling on its outer face. These electrons were then amplified and projected onto the outer face of a second screen that, in turn, would emit photons (light) from its inner face in response to the electrons impacting upon it. To further increase the amplification, the photon stream emitted from this second screen was again amplified and projected onto a third screen. Finally, the electrons emitted from the inner face of the third screen were amplified and projected onto the optical eyepiece, whereupon the viewer saw an image resembling a small, contrasty, green television picture.

Because of its three stages of amplification, the system was referred to as a "cascade tube." The total amplification (often referred to as "gain") was approximately 64,000 times with larger units. Thus, a very murky star- or moon-illuminated scene became almost as clear and distinct as if viewed under the noon-day sun.

Also designed and manufactured in Israel, the AIM-1D laser designator weighs less than nine ounces and measures only 3.68 inches in length. Both it and the NL-100-3 night-vision scope are powered by easy-to-replace AA batteries.

The AN/PVS-2 Starlight Scope I employed on the hill in El Salvador was a device of just this type. Total length of the AN/PVS-2 is about 18.3 inches. It weighs just under 4 pounds, and it's powered by a 6.75 volt disposable battery with a continuous service life of 72 hours. The useful range in a moonlit environment is approximately 400 meters. With only starlight to illuminate the scene, the range drops to about 300 meters. Passive night-vision equipment of this general design is called "first-generation."

Not bad and quite an improvement over the Sniperscope, but still, an 18-inch, 4-pound scope on top of an M14, M16, or even M60 GPMG is somewhat clumsy. A more serious objection to military employment of first generation passive night-vision equipment is its inability to cope adequately with magnesium flares or tracer ammunition passing across the field of view. A single round of 5.56x45mm or 7.62x51mm tracer may no more than cause a momentary streak across the screen. However, a continuous stream of bright tracer from a .50 caliber Ma Deuce may result in "blooming" (a bright saturated spot) and literally erase the image on the screen. An experimental caliber 7.62x51mm NATO "dim-trace" was developed during the late 1960s for use with the Starlight scope. Some have stated it was for covert operations and could be seen only through the Starlight scope. Known as XM276, three types were manufactured. The third and final type, color-coded with a green and pink tip and most commonly headstamped either "FA 68" or "LC 69", both with the NATO cross in circle, proved



The second generation WILD CAT™ NL-100-3, with an overall length of 6¼ inches and weight of only 23.6 ounces, can be employed as a pocket-sized surveillance scope. It can be used for target acquisition when coupled with the AIM-1D laser designator and mounted on a weapon, such as the M16A2.

to be most satisfactory. However, it was never type-classified, as advances in the field of fiber optics permitted development of a second generation of image intensifying sights. Their several improvements included less sensitivity to tracer ammunition.

A so-called "micro-channel amplifier" was designed, which consisted of a bundle of extremely minute optical fibers — several million of them in a tube no more than ¾-inch (18mm) in diameter. A screen in front of the fibers receives the optical image and generates photons that are fed into the micro-channels. The amplifier unit is supplied by an electrical field. As the photons travel down the micro-channels they ricochet off the thin peripheral layer (known as "cladding," it is made of an optical material of lower index of refraction than the core material) and by means of their zigzag path through the core, generate additional photons, so that the signal coming out the end of the micro-channels is much greater than that which went in. These outward bound photons strike a second screen and provide a visual image. This image can be then either viewed by an ocular or given further amplification by another micro-channel amplifier.

Micro-channel amplifiers are much more compact than cascade tubes and a single unit provides a much greater degree of amplification. Unfortunately, there's no such thing as a free lunch. The size reduction almost doubles the cost of the unit. This by virtue of the micro-channel amplifier's complexity and the high rejection rate during manufacture.

Early second generation scopes had only a manual override to shut down the system if tracers or flares were anticipated. So-called "mid" second generation equipment incorporated an Automatic Brightness Control (ABC) feature to cope with this problem. A cut-off switch was added to some late second generation night-vision scopes; it can be flipped to turn the system on again after it has been shut down by the ABC system.

Second generation night-vision equipment is now in widespread use by the armed forces of the United States, Israel and several NATO countries. ComBloc armed forces are still principally equipped with the Soviet NSP-3, a first generation night sight.

Currently just reaching production status, third generation night-vision equipment uses a micro-channel amplifier together with receiving and viewing screens treated with improved phosphors. These create a brighter, higher quality image. The United States and Israel are in the forefront of this technology. Noga Lite Ltd. (Dept. SOF, 6 Hasadna St., Holon 58815, Israel) recently introduced the first fully operational day and night weapon sight available with either second + generation (Model NL-300) or third generation (Model NL-303) image tubes. The NOGASCOPE™, in either model, has a two-mode selector

switch that enables the user to choose between a night channel and a day channel. With a 113mm objective lens, the field of view is three degrees in the day mode with 6X magnification and nine degrees in the night mode with 4.3X magnification. The gain of the NL-300 and NL-303 is 15,000 and 25,000, respectively. The units weigh 3.3 pounds, complete with two AA batteries. Overall length is 12 inches. There is a built-in reticle pattern with internal zeroing adjustment controls.

SOF recently had the opportunity to test and evaluate second generation night-vision sights imported by International Logistics Network (Dept. SOF, 5831 Alcove Avenue, North Hollywood, CA 91607; phone: (818) 980-7488) and manufactured by Noga Lite Ltd.

We selected the WILD CAT™ Model NL-100-3, a waterproof, pocket-sized MilSpec scope that can be interfaced with weapon systems in conjunction with a laser designator. All night-vision scopes in the WILD CAT™ NL series have forged aluminum bodies. The NL-100-3 unit is equipped with a 75mm objective lens with an aperture of F1.3 and 3X magnification. The field of view is 14 degrees (50 meters wide at 100 meters). The focus range is 10 meters to infinity and the ocular can be adjusted through a range of plus or minus six diopters. The second generation 18mm image intensifier tube provides a luminance gain of 12,000 to 15,000, depending upon the illumination environment.

Two AA dry cells power the NL-100-3 — a convenient and useful feature as many MilSpec night-vision systems require special batteries not available on the open market. Battery life is 40 hours of continuous operation. With two batteries, the NL-100-3 weighs only 23.6 ounces. Overall length is just 6¼ inches, with a width of

*Continued on page 76*

Recently introduced, the NOGASCOPE™ Model NL-303 third generation night-vision scope, shown mounted to a Galil, has a two-mode selector that enables user selection between a night channel and a day channel. With a 113mm objective lens, the field of view is three degrees in the day mode with 6X magnification and nine degrees in the night mode with 4.3X magnification. Photo: courtesy of Noga Lite Ltd.



# RAPID RELOADER

## Dillon's RL450 Jr. Puts Bucks in Your Pocket

By Peter G. Kokalis

**I**N just a decade Dillon Precision Products, Inc. has risen from complete obscurity to total dominance of the ammunition reloading tool market. It is now the world's largest producer of progressive reloading equipment.

This doesn't surprise me. I've been using a Dillon RL1000 — a commercial-grade reloader with automatic indexing, an automatic military primer pocket swage, and an automatic case inserter — for 10 years. While its price tag limited its use to commercial users and hard-core aficionados, it was the best in the business until recently eclipsed by the more cost-effective RL1050.

Dillon's marketing and warranty philosophies are unique in the industry. It has no distributors, wholesalers or stocking dealers to add their profit margin to the final price. You order all Dillon products factory direct. Dillon customers may return any reloading product that does not live up to their expectations for a full refund plus shipping. Dillon customers also get free service, as well as technical advice available through a toll free 800 number. Free service includes full replacement of broken parts — free of charge.

(Equally important to SOF readers should be Dillon's position on gun control. While other manufacturers in the firearms industry waffle back and forth, scrambling to save their own products at the expense of their competitors and gun owners, Dillon's allegiance to the Second Amendment is unequivocal. No manufacturer has spent more time, effort and expense to preserve our right to keep and bear the arms of our choosing than Mike Dillon and his employees.)

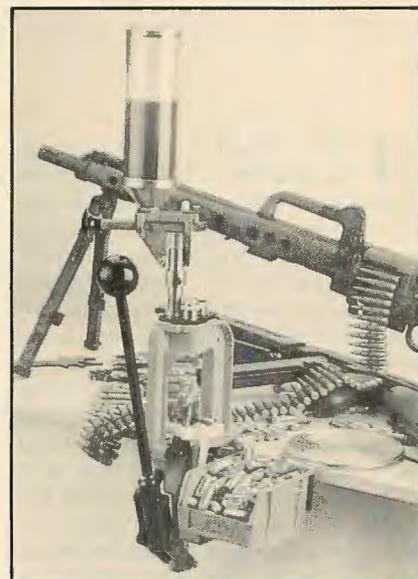
The RL1000 was quickly followed by the improved RL1000B, then the more economical RL300, which evolved into the RL450 and RL450B models. Approximately three years ago, Dillon introduced the popular RL550 (see "RL-550 Reloader," October '86), which was eventu-

ally modified into the RL550B and is still available. More recently, Dillon replaced the venerable RL1000 with the RL1050. During the same period, the fully progressive Square Deal "B" at only \$172.50, complete with carbide dies, targeted the low end of the reloading market. Not content to rest on his laurels, Mike Dillon has just introduced a manually indexed, entry level reloader, called the RL450 Jr., that sells for an amazing \$94.50, complete with carbide pistol dies. There is now a Dillon progressive to meet the needs of shooters at every level, from novillers to commercial manufacturers.

While intended for beginners, the lightweight and portable RL450 Jr. also will appeal to advanced hobbyists who want to experiment with different loads right on the firing line. For an additional \$25 you can have the RL450B conversion, which includes a powder measure, cartridge ejection mechanism and collection box. In my opinion, this option is a must if you want to reach the RL450 Jr.'s full potential.

Providing you follow some simple guidelines in propellant selection, powder measures are every bit as accurate as individually weighed charges. Don't use extruded IMR-type propellants, except in calibers that have fairly large-sized case mouth diameters. They will bridge on the case mouth in smaller chamberings and part of the charge may dump onto the shell plate. Extremely fine ball powders, such as H110 or WW296, also should be avoided, unless you're willing to clean the powder measure every 500-600 rounds.

When loading pistol calibers, although manually indexed, the RL450 Jr. is fully progressive. That is, once the cycle has been completed, you get a loaded round with every stroke of the operating handle. Except for those loading esoteric cartridges, such as the 10.4x38R Swiss Vetterli or 5.5mm Velo-Dog, in quantities less than one hundred, single-stage reloading presses are little more than quaintly



Designed to feed the voracious appetites of rapid-guns like the CETME Ameli SAW and Thompson submachine gun shown here, Dillon's new RL450 Jr. progressive reloader sells for an amazing \$94.50, complete with carbide pistol dies. Add just \$25 for a powder measure, cartridge ejection mechanism and collection box to reach the tool's full potential. Photo: G.W. Jensen

amusing antiques. And that goes for beginners as well. Anyone who cannot master the RL450 Jr. with its comprehensive manual and the instant backup of a toll free 800 number must be brain dead and shouldn't be in possession of loaded ammunition in the first place.

Dillon carbide die sets are available in the following pistol calibers: .38 Special/.357 Magnum, 9mm Parabellum, .45 ACP, .45 Colt, .41 Magnum, .44 Magnum, .380 ACP, .38 Super and 10mm. With some practice, you should be able to load 300-400 rounds per hour on the Junior.

*Continued on page 80*

# CHURCH MERC UNMASKED

## *Salvos Dig Up Truth on American Peacenik*

by Tom Bates

**"I** WAS framed by the Salvadoran government ... I think my arrest was part of a whole action to stop the work of the churches ... They had a lot to gain by discrediting me." So proclaimed Jennifer Jean Casolo at two news conferences after her return to the United States in mid-December 1989. The 28-year-old church worker from Thomaston, Connecticut, was arrested on 26 November 1989 by the Salvadoran National Police on terrorist charges after a raid on her home uncovered a large arms cache buried in the back yard.

The raid, which took place in the late evening of 25 November, was carried out during the height of the largest communist guerrilla offensive yet mounted against the Salvadoran government in 10 years of fighting. Though the arms cache was apparently destined for the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front—anti-government, Marxist guerrillas), Casolo flatly denies any knowledge of how the cache got in her back yard, saying that the Salvadoran government probably planted it there. The case has yet to be resolved, and all indications are that it never will be, as Ms. Casolo was released by Salvadoran authorities after 18 days in custody and deported to the United States after a military judge ruled there was insufficient evidence to try her case.

While Ms. Casolo's guilt or innocence has never been established in a court of law, that fact hasn't stopped much of the U.S. media from circling the wagons in her defense and portraying her as another innocent victim of Salvadoran government oppression. A long line of loving friends and admirers have been paraded across the pages of major newspapers attesting to "Jenn's" spotless background and her unswerving dedication to pacifism. Even

some who do not know her well were quick to seize the moment and publicly judge her as innocent. Robert E. White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador under President Carter, and currently head of the left-wing International Center for Policy Development, stated unequivocally, "I think it's a setup ... it is absolutely impossible she would do that." Lindsey Gruson of the *New York Times* gave added credibility to her version of events by writing in the 8 December edition of the *Times* that her case is simply further evidence of the Salvadoran government's "crackdown ... reducing the number of humanitarian programs that give food and housing to the tens and

thousands of Salvadoran poor."

Riding a wave of news media support, Ms. Casolo has become the darling of the American Left, which chooses to see her as a victim of U.S.-condoned right-wing repression. On a 10-city speaking tour as we go to press, she has vowed to use her new-found celebrity status to bring about a total cutoff of U.S. aid to the Salvadoran government. As with many such "peace" activists, she makes no such demands on private-sector support of the FMLN guerrilla terrorists.

It is unlikely that local news media sources covering her soap-box seminars in these respective cities will delve beyond—or significantly diverge from—the story line as has already been presented in the national media. As Joe Goulden of *Accuracy in Media* has commented, "Her strategy of choosing to stand trial in the court of American public opinion has worked. Because a few high-paid news commentators neglected to do their homework, Ms. Casolo has come off looking like a Central American Mother Teresa, and her detractors like Salem witch hunters."

As Mario Rosenthal, editor and publisher of the *El Salvador News-Gazette*, noted, such attempts to "blacken the image of El Salvador make great copy," but reports that portray Ms. Casolo as a hapless victim hardly square with available facts. Indeed, when all the details surrounding her arrest are pieced together and examined, it is clear that not only are there definitely two sides to this story, but the available evidence strongly suggest that the diminutive young church worker from Connecticut "doth protest too much."

*Soldier of Fortune* magazine was in a unique position to evaluate the circum-

### YOU BE THE JUDGE

SOFers in El Salvador were the first to obtain a copy of the Salvadoran National Police tape of their raid on the home of American churchwoman Jennifer Jean Casolo. The tape, which runs 56 minutes, shows the police digging up her personal documents and diary which were on top.

She admits the papers are hers but denies responsibility for the explosives. It's unlikely you will ever see the whole story on ABC, CBS, NBC or CNN.

You can order your own copy of the tape by writing to: Casolo Tape, c/o SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. Cost is \$29.95, VHS only. Since the tape was provided by the Salvadoran National Police, all profits from the sale of the tape will go to SOF's El Salvador Defense Fund. You can see for yourself what actually happened and help support the good guys at the same time.



stances surrounding Ms. Casolo's arrest—two of our correspondents were in El Salvador covering the Tet-style FMLN offensive at the time her home was searched. Acting on a tip from an intel source that an American woman had been arrested, our people arrived at the National Police headquarters just four hours after Ms. Casolo was brought there for questioning. Consequently, they were the first journalists to know of her arrest and to have direct access to much of the information surrounding the case.

Colonel Rivas of the National Police met personally with our correspondents, discussed the circumstances that lead to Ms. Casolo's arrest, and turned over many of her personal papers that were also found buried in the garden, as well as a video tape of the arrest made by the police. It is this information that reveals a web of half-truths, innuendos, and outright contradictions in Ms. Casolo's own versions of events. Though this information alone is admittedly insufficient to determine her guilt or innocence, it does demonstrate that allowing Ms. Casolo to escape prosecution and thereby giving her free rein to use *her* account of this incident to promote her own political agenda is unwise and does a great disservice to the struggling democratic government of El Salvador.

Ms. Casolo does admit to having buried

**Piles of explosive ordnance taken from raid on Jennifer Casolo's house, being inventoried at National Police headquarters. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel**

her personal papers in the garden. She describes these papers as material "I thought the security forces would be in disapproval of ... I went through my house and basically said, 'What could be misconstrued?' I had some project proposals for a medical clinic, a chicken coop, some musical cassette tapes, things like that." This relatively harmless list of material gives the impression that the Salvadoran security forces are overly paranoid, and can interpret anything as being threatening. What she neglects to mention is that also found were her diary, letters to friends, Marxist propaganda pamphlets belonging to a student front organization for the FMLN and detailed instructions, in Spanish, on the use of a sophisticated electronic timing device of a type used to detonate plastique explosives (a large number of these timing devices were found in the arms cache buried in her back yard). A host of other documents were also found, but our discussion will limit itself to those just named, as they are directly attributable to Ms. Casolo.

In page after page of her diary and letters to friends in the United States, one sees the

thoughts of a young woman caught on the horns of a dilemma—whether to uphold the conventional norms of behavior dictated by her religious upbringing or to take, in her words, a more "radical" approach in trying to combat what she sees as rampant social injustice in El Salvador. News media accounts of her character soften this image, saying "she chose helping the poor while classmates chased affluent careers ... to [those who knew her] she's still the warm, energetic A-student who was a high school cheerleader, a soccer captain ... who bakes chocolate cookies and banana bread for friends ... if she is a militant, she masks her militancy well." Perhaps this would be a reasonable conclusion, if one bases that conclusion only on her life in the United States, before leaving for El Salvador.

After living in El Salvador for several years her thinking, as expressed in her personal documents, became more polarized, her activism more militant. In her diary, she makes no secret of her *strong* opposition to the democratically elected government, to U.S. foreign policy in the region, and of her sympathies with the FMLN, who, she writes, "represent the poor ... the millions of silenced cries of oppression and screams of repression."

A Catholic herself, she writes of her hatred of what she sees as the criminal behavior of the traditional Catholic church



Set free when a military judge ruled there was "insufficient evidence" to hold her, on 14 December Ms. Casolo returned via LaGuardia airport, and spoke to reporters—now the innocent victim. Photo: AP/Wide World

in El Salvador: "For long centuries ... the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was in league with the entrenched Herods and the Caesars who controlled Latin American society, for the benefit of a selfish, powerful few." Having chosen to cast the conflict in El Salvador as a class warfare scenario between the "wealthy" and the "poor," she writes, "I have decided to identify with the poor" and to devote her efforts to "structurally change the injustice that you see."

Later writings reveal the exact means of how Ms. Casolo intends to bring about this "structural change" in Salvadoran society. In a letter to a friend, she writes of the need to be "radical in your thinking — not to spend your life recreating the status quo." She then defines a "radical" as "one who wants to see the revolution triumph." Since the FMLN is the armed force behind this "revolution," there should be no doubt about her political affiliations.

In another letter to friends in Connecticut, Ms. Casolo discusses a previous visit back home, and her unwillingness at that time to be forthright with her friends about her true thoughts regarding what she perceives as her role in El Salvador, fearing that "my thoughts are too radical ... my fundamental responses would touch our

lifestyles, our values." She apologizes to her friends for not being honest at that time, and writes of how she is no longer afraid of "taking a risk ... my last 1½ years has taught me the value of risk taking ... it is time to take a stand." She closes the letter by imploring her friends to "please be selective about repeating anything I write."

Though the exact nature of her "risk taking" and of the "stand" she feels she must take are never specifically spelled out, a 1987 entry made in her diary provides some clue: "A negotiated solution to the conflict cannot be obtained." In another passage she writes about a Salvadoran female friend, Maria, whose daughter was killed soon after joining the FMLN and who, like Ms. Casolo, no longer "believed that demonstrations and popular pressure could change oppressive structures." She writes about how "Maria sighs ... her daughter will not see the 'triumph' of the revolution." Obviously, as early as 1987, Ms. Casolo had ruled out any hope of a democratic solution to the Salvadoran conflict. Given that her sympathies had heretofore been with the FMLN, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that her remarks about "taking a risk," etc. refer to a decision to provide some sort of assistance to the FMLN, or one of its factions.

This interpretation would provide one explanation of why Marxist propaganda pamphlets were found among her papers. The pamphlets, which sport a picture of Lenin on the cover, are from an organization named FEUS (Union of Salvadoran University Students). According to our sources in El Salvador and to a source at the State Department, FEUS is a well-known front organization of the FMLN based at the National University in El Salvador. However, in a televised interview, Ms. Casolo stated with absolute certainty that none of the materials she admits to have buried is "communist at all ... it's things that they [Salvadoran officials] say is communist, but it's not." This manifestly false statement, as with many she has made to the press, went unchallenged, since the discovery of these pamphlets had yet to be publicized in the media. Consequently, her repeated statements that neither she, nor the organization she works for, has any political affiliations have become part of the conventional wisdom regarding Ms. Casolo, despite evidence to the contrary.

Still, it certainly is not a crime to possess such material and, taken alone, such propaganda cannot determine Ms. Casolo's guilt or innocence. One is entitled, however, to question her true intentions when one finds that buried along with this "educational literature" are instructions on how to operate an electronic timer for delayed detonation of plastique explosives, and many of these timers themselves are found buried in her garden. And one is also entitled to conclude that the pattern of thought and behavior revealed in her writings is wholly inconsistent with that portrayed by her and by much of the

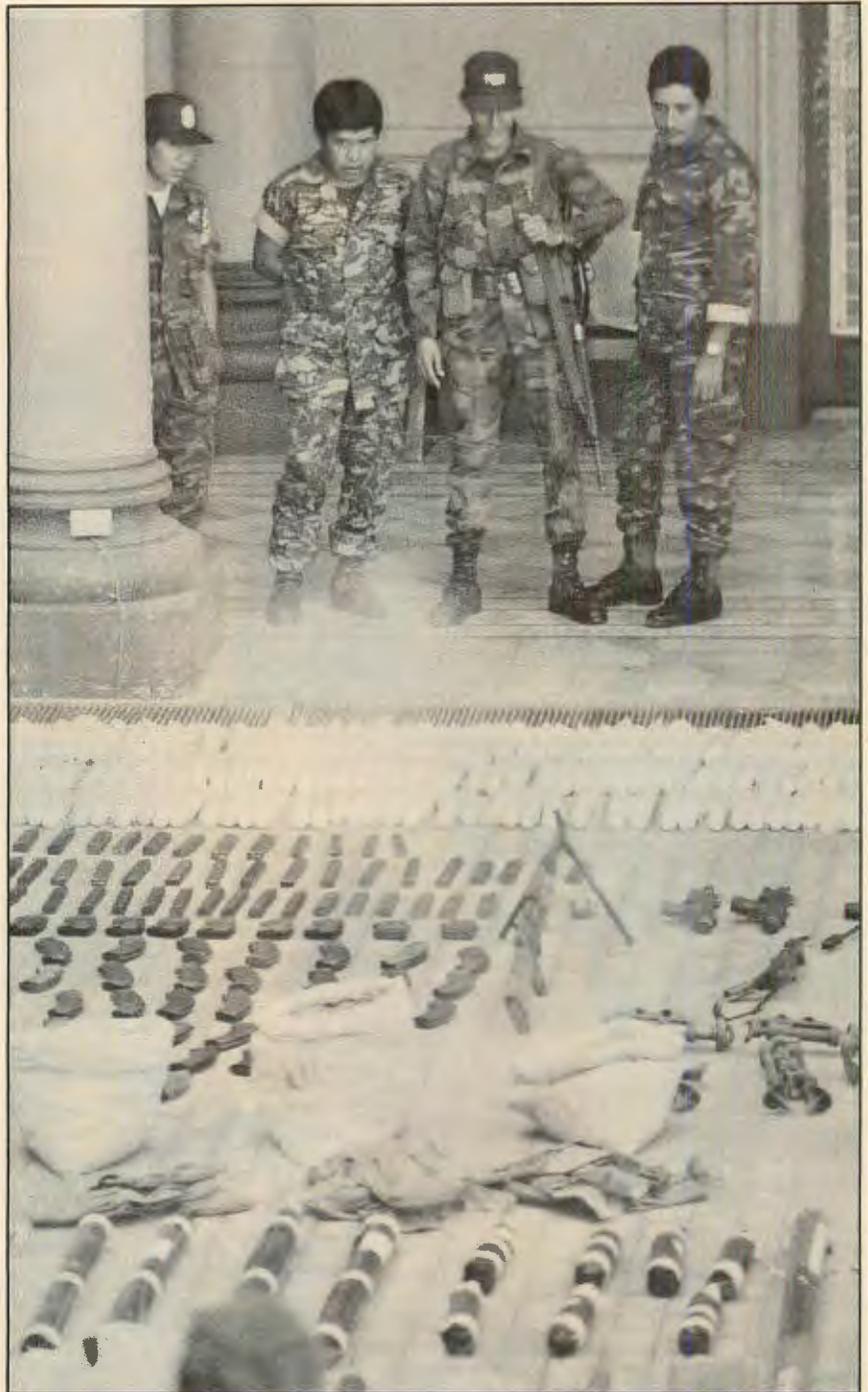
news media.

An examination of the video tape supplied to SOF a few hours after Ms. Casolo's arrest exposes further contradictions in her story. It must be said at the outset that there has been much controversy in the press regarding the authenticity of this tape, and whether it might have been merely pieced together by the National Police to frame Ms. Casolo. Though SOF was the first to have a copy of the tape, all attempts made to have it run on the national news networks failed. It was some weeks later when the *New York Times* obtained a copy that word of the tape's existence was made public. Being made public at that late date made it appear to be, as the *Times* reported, "an effort [by the Salvadorans] to receive more favorable publicity in the United States." In other words, the tape was portrayed as a spurious and lame PR trick to help the National Police save face.

As an aside, it is worth noting that Lindsey Gruson, the *Times* reporter who got hold of the tape after SOF, tried to sell it to the highest bidder among ABC, NBC and CBS, with CBS eventually agreeing to pay \$10,000 for exclusive rights and the money allegedly scheduled to go to a Salvadoran charity. When the *Times* management got wind of this deal, it not only ordered Gruson to make the tape available to all media on a pool basis for free, but severely reprimanded him for putting his idealism before his professionalism, reminding him that reporters don't go around auctioning off news material.

Again, the facts, as SOF knows them to be, give no indication that this video tape was a PR ploy by the Salvadoran police. Our correspondents were given the tape just hours after Ms. Casolo's arrest, and we agreed to try and distribute it (for no charge) to the U.S. news media. There was too little time for the police to have manufactured a phony tape. Unfortunately, the long delay in its distribution made it appear to possibly be something that might have been pieced together some time after her arrest. Ms. Casolo's statements on a televised talk show, that "I never actually saw any weapons ... I can't even say that they found that stuff in my back yard. I don't know if they brought it in that night or not. They could have brought it in that night," lent specious credibility to the notion that the tape was unreliable as evidence.

The strongest case in favor of the veracity of the tape comes from the circumstances surrounding the raid on Ms. Casolo's house the evening of 25 November. It has appeared in many press accounts that this raid was the only one conducted by the police that night, when in fact her home was one of four separate residences searched by the authorities on that date. These raids were the culmination of a several-month investigation that netted a known ERP (People's Revolutionary Army — the urban terrorist faction of the FMLN) gunrunner who, under interrogation,



named the exact locations of four FMLN arms caches that were put in place before the armed offensive was to commence on 11 November. Claiming that he had delivered arms to Ms. Casolo's address on 9 November, he provided an accurate physical description of "a foreigner" who lived at that address, saying that she gave him a glass of water when he first entered the house. However, he did not know her name, or that she was American — only that she was "well connected" with the ERP.

Acting on this intelligence, police video taped their raids at each of the addresses given by the informant. The tape we were given shows each of these raids. Searches conducted at the first two addresses yielded arms caches in the precise locations men-

**The raid upon Ms. Casolo's house was prompted by detailed information supplied by an ERP informant, who precisely identified four locations where weapons and ordnance had been buried. These four locations were all raided the night of 25 November, Ms. Casolo's house being third. At another of the locations, police found this cache of weapons, shown here being inventoried at National Police headquarters. Photo: AP/Wide World**

tioned by the informant. Authorities, then, had every reason to be confident they would find a cache at the third address, which was Ms. Casolo's house. What they did not expect to find was an American citizen.

According to police and to U.S. embassy



**TOP:** Jennifer Jean Casolo and two Salvadoran friends at her home the night of the police raid. The three are photographed in the back garden, where the ordnance was buried—and where Ms. Casolo has repeatedly claimed she was not allowed to enter during the search. Photo: from Salvadoran National Police video-tape (32 minutes, 29 seconds)

**ABOVE:** Jennifer Jean Casolo, seen here curled up in a lounge chair and hiding her face just minutes after Salvadoran National Police entered her home in search of an FMLN arms cache. Her only reply to police at this point was 'Yo no se nada' (I know nothing). Photo: from Salvadoran National Police video-tape (14 minutes, 15 seconds)

records, when her nationality was determined after they entered her home, authorities recognized the political sensitivity of the situation and the officer in charge of the investigation telephoned U.S. Embassy officials, informing them that they had uncovered something at the rented home of an American citizen, and asked that an American consular officer be sent to the address to avoid any future questions of impropriety. Despite Ms. Casolo's later accusations to the contrary, there is no indication that either the National Police or the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador had any advance knowledge that the residence of an American citizen was going to be searched, nor that they conspired in the arrest.

Embassy records also confirm Ms. Ca-

solo's contention that she telephoned an American friend before allowing the police into her house, informing her of the situation and asking her to please contact the U.S. Embassy, which she did several minutes before the embassy was contacted by the police. The embassy officer in charge of American Citizen Services was dispatched and escorted by police to Ms. Casolo's home just after midnight, Sunday 26 November, some 45 minutes after police had entered the home and had begun digging up the arms cache. The embassy officer supervised the remainder of the digging.

In a televised interview on the *Jane Wallace Show* that aired on 22 December, Ms. Casolo claims she was "shaking uncontrollably" during the entire raid at her home, and on several occasions began singing at the top of her lungs Carol King's "You've Got a Friend" to overcome her fear. "Then I went hysterical on them. I think I sang again." Curiously, there is no evidence of any such behavior on the police video. In fact, what is most striking about her reactions throughout the filming is the relative calm and composure with which she handles herself. There are no visual signs of her shaking, no hint of nervousness or indignation in her voice, either initially when she appears curled up in a lounge chair, or later when she and her two Salvadoran friends are photographed in the back garden. Her only act of defiance is to hide her face with the collar of her shirt and say repeatedly while in the lounge chair, "yo no se nada" (I know nothing), and later in the garden to the camera crew, "Would you want your mother to see you like this? She doesn't understand this stuff. She doesn't even know where El Salvador is."

Later in this same interview, Ms. Casolo claims that she never actually saw the police digging in her back yard. "I heard what sounded like digging ... I did not see them digging, so I cannot say they were digging ... They wouldn't let me see what they were doing ... they wouldn't let me out back." According to the video, this is simply not true. She and her two friends who were at the house that night were photographed on the back patio, with bags of what had been uncovered thus far from the arms cache, placed at their feet. To Ms. Casolo's immediate left, no more than 2 feet away, is one of the 6-foot-deep holes from which police had extracted one of the plastic barrels containing the ordnance. To her back and in front of her, there is a row of what look like bomb craters, with other barrels strewn around the garden, and one that held the weapons laying at her feet. I suppose it is possible that the police dug these many deep holes in her garden and filled them with hundreds of pounds of ordnance, then unearthed them in the 45 minutes before the embassy official arrived and without her seeing it, but to believe that does put a strain on even the most generous imagination.

## CASOLO & CISPES

The 5 January issue of *People's Daily World*, publication of the Communist Party, USA, contains a full-page article concerning Joe Sanlei, an American Episcopal layman, headlined, "A Church Worker in Central America." The article stated:

"Now back in Connecticut, Sanlei works through the religious community as well as with the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), and the Connecticut Central American Network ... Recently Sanlei helped organize two church services for Jennifer Casolo, the young church worker from Connecticut arrested by the Salvadoran government after weapons were allegedly buried in her back yard. She was released only after intense international pressure. The Rev. Jesse Jackson spoke at the service in Hartford Cathedral."

CISPES is the U.S. political arm of the communist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the terrorist group trying to overthrow the freely elected government of El Salvador. It was formed in 1980 by Farid Hamal, a Salvadoran communist emissary, in conjunction with leaders of the CPUSA, agents of the Cuban intelligence service, DGI, and various U.S. leftists. —courtesy of the *Washington Inquirer*.

The list of arms uncovered in her garden under the watchful eye of the embassy official is impressive: 103 mortar bombs, 213 blocks of plastique explosive, 405 detonators and timers, 150 feet of slow-burning fuse and 21,845 rounds of Soviet 7.62x39mm ammunition — just the sort of items an urban terrorist unit like the ERP would want during an all-out offensive. And for the national news media representatives who to this day refuse to accept the fact that an arms cache was ever actually found in her garden, those who refer constantly to an "alleged arms cache" as if to suggest the Salvadoran Police were lying about its very existence, may their doubts rest in peace. In the words of the American embassy's press officer, "One thing is certain ... there is nothing 'alleged' about the weapons found in her yard. They were found there. It's how they got there that remains a mystery."

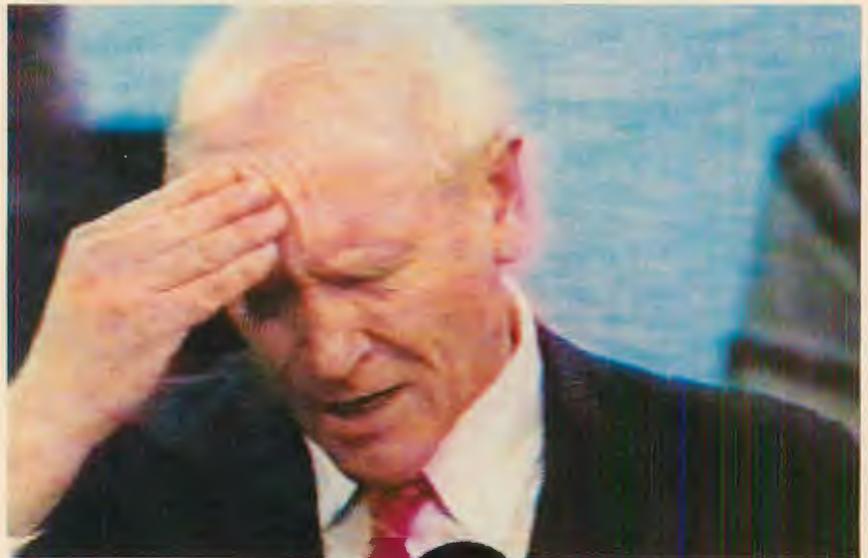
The claim that this arms cache was "planted" by the Salvadoran police is also difficult to maintain. They could have set up a sting operation with far fewer weapons. If these weapons were brought to Ms. Casolo's garden the night of the raid, or even some time before while she was at work, the authorities would have needed a crane to lift it over the rear wall of her garden if they were to plant it in such a short time. Also, if, as has also been alleged by some of Ms. Casolo's apologists, the

FMLN buried the weapons in the garden before she rented the house seven months earlier, it is highly unlikely that an organization as sophisticated as the FMLN would have permitted someone who was not an active sympathizer to live in the house. They need quick access to such caches and would not risk having an ordinary citizen uncovering the cache and reporting it to the authorities.

Another important fact revealed by the video is that the soil covering the arms cache was free of weeds and other undergrowth, and was very loosely packed. In some instances, the police simply used their bare hands or boots to move away the 12 inches or so of dirt covering the barrels which were filled with the ordnance. Had

the barrels been buried many months earlier, the ground would have been more settled and compacted, and some weeds would have sprung up in the meantime. However, if the cache were buried on or about the date of 9 November as reported by the informant, one would expect to find the soil in the garden just as it appears in the video.

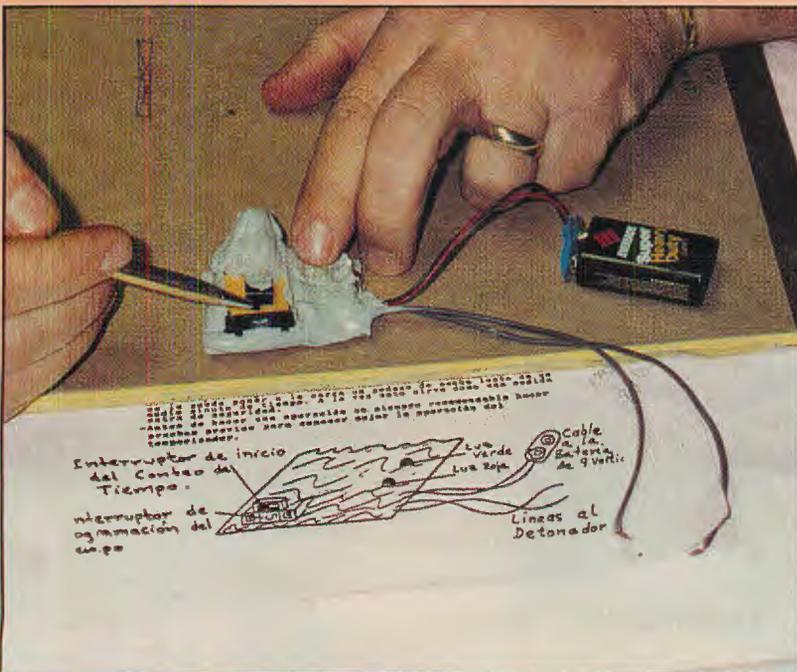
The final footage of the garden shows virtually every square inch of soil overturned in both the upper and lower tiers of the garden, with innumerable deep holes that once held the blue barrels containing the arms. Since Ms. Casolo admits to have buried her documents in the garden, it would have to have been astronomical luck that prevented her from hitting one of the



TOP: "Well ... I have seen the tape and I'm puzzled. I'm puzzled, how did your personal documents, your diary, photographs, other various and sundry type of propaganda, how was that buried over the ordnance?" SOF publisher Robert K. Brown asked Ms. Casolo on the *Jane Wallace Show*. Photo: SOF staff

ABOVE: And Ms. Casolo's "response" was: "I was going to describe how my back yard is... There is the bottom part. And, there's stairs going up. And then, there's a grassy part above. In this grassy part above, there's a wall over here and at a plant here I buried ... and I'll tell you what I buried. I buried some music and buried some training — training pamphlets: 'How to ....' I don't know ...." Photo: SOF staff

## DONOVAN DETAILS CASOLO'S DETONATORS



SOF Contributing Editor for Explosives/Demolitions John Donovan was supplied two types of timing devices found buried in Ms. Casolo's back yard with the explosives. Noted John of the device in the top photo: *This timing device is made from a pocket parking meter timer, red and green LEDs, and a small power board. Make no mistake, this is a sophisticated time delay system — someone with a fair amount of electronics background made it.*

Of the timer found shown in the lower photo he observed: *This timer is made*

*up of a switch power board, and red and green LEDs — good for 90 minutes. Obviously made by someone with an electronics background, and all materials from the U.S.A.*

Some 405 detonators and timers were dug up with the sundry explosives. That they were stored together, and shallowly buried, would suggest they were staged for immediate use. The sophisticated timing devices were accompanied by pages of illustrated, detailed instruction sheets in Spanish.

— Photos: SOF staff

barrels when digging the hole for her plastic bag full of personal papers. While it is unclear from the video exactly where the bag of papers was unearthed, whether it lay atop one of the barrels or actually inside one of them, the embassy official who monitored the digging reports that the documents were found “in very close proximity to the arms.” Given the small size of the garden, reportedly less than 20 feet by 20 feet, including an upper and lower tier, and the large number of holes containing ordnance-laden barrels, it could only be a matter of inches separating her documents from the barrels. Ms. Casolo would have us believe that it was a lucky coincidence that she never encountered one of these barrels when burying her documents.

As of this writing, none of the major news networks has presented segments from this tape which would give viewers a clear view of what actually transpired at Ms. Casolo's house. Fortunately, *Soldier of Fortune* Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown did take the time to review it soon after our correspondents sent it to our editorial offices, and he subsequently had an opportunity to briefly confront Ms. Casolo on national television, asking her some pointed questions about what it showed. Though the exchange only lasted a few minutes, Ms. Casolo appeared visibly shaken by the contradictory evidence that Brown had brought to her attention.

For some time, it was doubtful whether Brown was going to be given the chance to confront Ms. Casolo on this program. When he was contacted by producers from the *Jane Wallace Show* in New York, he was informed that no one would appear on stage with her — he would have to sit in the studio audience. They did agree to let him bring along our copy of the video, but was later told after arriving on set that for some mysterious reason the video “wouldn't work.” And when the show started, Ms. Casolo, contrary to what the producers had told Brown, appeared on stage with a guest “expert” — George Vickers of the left-wing Institute for Central American Studies.

Despite these setbacks, Brown remained undaunted. He'd had more than his share of experience losing a few minor battles but winning the war. This 22 December edition of the *Jane Wallace Show* proved no exception.

It wasn't until the closing minutes of the show that Brown was able to ask the million-dollar question. In his best detective Columbo impersonation, Brown, rubbing his furrowed brow asked, “Well ... I have seen the tape and I'm puzzled. I'm puzzled, how did your personal documents, your diary, photographs, other various and sundry type of propaganda, how was that buried over the ordnance?”

As if told she had just swallowed arsenic, Ms. Casolo, with a blank stare and a lengthy pause, became defensive, confused and spouted out a string of non sequiturs: “I was going to describe how my back yard is

... There is the bottom part. And, there's the stairs going up. And then, there's a grassy part up above. In this grassy part above, there's a wall over here. Along this wall over here and at a plant here I buried ... and I'll tell you what I buried. I buried some music and buried some training — training pamphlets: 'How to ...' I don't know ..."

Say what? If there's a straight answer in there, it will take a better man than I to find it. Based on some earlier allegations she made during this interview, she is apparently trying to say that her documents were buried on the upper tier of the garden, separate from the cache. But as discussed earlier, and according to the embassy official who monitored the digging, Salvadoran police found ordnance buried on *both* tiers of the garden, not just the lower portion, as Ms. Casolo would have us believe. And besides, if she was never allowed by the police to go into the back yard, as she contends, how would she know where they were digging? Brown probed a few more times, but she never answered the question, and clearly wished it had never been asked. To our knowledge, this is the first time she had been confronted with an informed question, and she lost her composure.

Some time later a similar probing question was asked on a National Public Radio interview, where the reporter claimed to have spoken with her friends and colleagues in El Salvador who told of her willingness to "take a stand" for the poor. He asked her whether it was so outrageous for someone to conclude that "taking a stand" could entail providing assistance to the FMLN. Again, she stumbled on her reply, saying on the one hand that she had no idea who put the weapons there, then claiming that it was impossible for the guerrillas to have done such a thing, but entirely possible that the government set her up.

Through the earlier exchanges, the studio audience on the *Jane Wallace Show*, which up to Brown's pointed question was receiving favorably Ms. Casolo's story, clearly became more skeptical of her account after her non-answer to Brown. At the close of the show, the commentator asked for a show of hands for those who believed Ms. Casolo's account, and for those who thought the story was, in her words, "still murky." Over three-fifths of the audience felt there was more to the incident than what Ms. Casolo had portrayed.

In the latest TV interview we observed before going to press, the version given by Ms. Casolo was that she buried her documents sometime after 31 October 1989 — days before the onset of the guerrilla offensive on 11 November. It was as if she knew when the offensive would begin, and was taking steps to protect herself should the government declare a state of emergency, which it did. Is it also mere coincidence that the gunrunner claims to have delivered the weapons to her home on



On 26 November Ms. Casolo was taken from detention at National Police headquarters in San Salvador and shown to the press. On 28 November an arraignment hearing was held and she was allowed to talk to the press. In foreground is Colonel Olejandro Sanchez Parades, sub-director of the National Police. Photo: AP/Wide World

9 November, just two days before the offensive? We may never know.

One thing is certain: If Ms. Casolo's story is true, and that is always a possibility, then a lot of people have to be lying — people on both sides of the political spectrum. The National Police would have had to manufacture a vast amount of incriminating evidence, and somehow have pulled off the Herculean task of "planting" a huge amount of ordnance in a very short time, without her knowledge or arousing her suspicion. The informer, whose instructions to police were accurate down to the most minute detail, would have had to effectively fabricate his story about receiving assistance from Ms. Casolo when he delivered the weapons, and by sheer coincidence have given a detailed and accurate physical description of her. Simply put, the facts available to date suggest that there is a

more plausible explanation of how the arms cache happened to appear in her back yard, than has been offered so pleadingly by Ms. Casolo. And all U.S. officials at the embassy in San Salvador would have had to conspire not only with the Salvadoran police, but with the ERP informer whose confessions prompted a whole series of police raids on the night of 25 November.

As this incident and what really transpired may well have a significant impact on whether U.S. aid to *El Salvador* is approved or voted down by Congress this year, the long list of major inconsistencies in Ms. Casolo's version of events demands that nothing less than a full investigation of her story is in order. We owe it to ourselves, our allies, and particularly the "oppressed poor" in El Salvador whom Ms. Casolo purports to serve. ✕

**SOF AFGHANISTAN**

# ESCAPE FR

***SOF Correspondent  
Outraces Shi'ite  
Fanatics to Border***

**Text & Photos by Peter Douglas**

# OM NASIR



In Part I the author and his French companion escaped from a group of Nasir mujahideen, Iranian-backed Shi'ite fundamentalists, who were threatening to execute them as spies. Their mujahid guide, Guldin, had not helped matters by claiming that he had never seen the foreigners before. Having eluded their captors, the two journalists again found themselves dependent on the treacherous Guldin.

STILL breathing hard from our escape from Siakhok, we finally rolled up to a small mujahideen base not affiliated to Nasir late in the afternoon. Guldin informed us we would stay overnight here. Philippe and I began to unsaddle our horses and Guldin announced that he was going off to buy vegetables for supper. As he and his men left the base one of the local mujahideen came up and asked which of us was sick? We discovered Guldin had arranged for us to stay here, saying we were sick, while he and his men pushed on through the night to ensure they were well clear of any possible Nasir pursuit. Quickly resaddling our horses, we set off in pursuit of our ever more disloyal escort.

Much as we would have loved to lose Guldin, we could not afford to do so now.

## AFGHAN LESSONS

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 difficulties foreigners have in trying to make sense out of Afghan behavior. On this trip in 1983 the ins and outs of various mujahideen groups almost proved to be the death of him. The first part of this story, "Prisoners of Nasir," appeared in the April '90 issue of SOF.

It is not practical to travel without a mujahideen escort as you are liable, at best, to be subjected to long delays as each new group of Afghans you encounter seeks proof of your identity. At worst you can be summarily shot if you have the misfortune to fall in with bandits or avaricious hosts. We had to stick close to Guldin or find another escort willing to accompany us to Pakistan.

Much to Guldin's disgust we caught up with him a mile down the road. Having done so we tramped along in sullen companionship until we reached a small cluster of shops. The villagers said the Kabul-Kandahar highway was close by but we should wait for half an hour to time our crossing for after dark. The shops had nothing to sell except some stale cake, but even this was welcome.

To cross the highway, it was necessary to slip quickly and quietly between two government posts. Just as we set off, the local mujahideen arrived dragging an 82mm recoilless rifle with the obvious intention of harassing the posts we planned to creep past. Although the action was evidently eagerly anticipated by the local mujahideen, it threatened to create problems for us. Guldin and his party hurried on

to try to reach the road before the threatened firefight. Several smaller groups latched on to us until our compact little group grew into almost 50 men.

We had acquired a young boy as a guide, which was just as well as we had to hurry along a warren of little lanes leading around the fields and villages. Our party advanced with a loud murmuring of gossip and a billowing cloud of fine powder-like dust that shimmered gold in the last rays of the setting sun. Night closed in around us as we reached a farm where our young guide stopped and pointed the way ahead before turning back and disappearing in the dark. Nobody was sure of the way and all had expected to reach the road long before now. A heated debate ensued about what to do until Guldin broke away and headed off in the direction our young guide had indicated.

We passed several large bomb craters. The pace was quick, almost panicky, as everyone worried about being left behind. We scrambled across fields and followed more narrow twisting tracks until we had no idea where we were anymore, but still we hurried on into the night. At every farm we stopped and hammered at heavy wooden gates set in high mud walls. At most the

occupants refused to open and shouted from inside that we were close to the road. At others a nervous farmer would poke his head around the heavy gate and stab a finger into the inky dark

night, indicating where he believed the road to be, before quickly slamming the gate shut.

Eventually, we found a farmer who was willing to guide us. Already tired from several hours fast marching we had to struggle to keep up. Unable to ride, because of the low branches of trees that lined the tracks, we had to lead our weary horses by the reins. We were all hopelessly lost, except the guide. Or so we hoped.

Stars began to appear upon the night canvas above and faintly lit our way. The column kept up the relentless pace. Occasionally it would concertina to a shuddering stop and then, just as suddenly, lurch to a start again. We had just about given up hope of finding, let alone crossing, the road when we unexpectedly burst out of some scrub and found ourselves standing in the middle of it.

The column stopped as our guide peered into the night, seeking out features that were familiar to him. The road was dangerous to approach, more dangerous to cross and, I felt, suicidal to stand in the middle of debating our whereabouts, as it was prone to motorized Soviet patrols and fairly regular ambush. Without warning our guide set off walking down the center of the

road with the column clattering after him and the heavy iron shoes of the horses tapping out a loud announcement of our progress and sending out showers of sparks as they hit the tarmac.

Five minutes further down the road we arbitrarily turned south, toward a clump of trees. As the guide stepped off the road his foot struck a tin can that bounced down the shale bank clanging and rattling loudly. At this, anxious to escape the vicinity, everyone broke into a run, thereby trebling the noise we made.

A faint path led into the trees. Once among the trees we were back into a starless darkness and could only discern the man in front. A few hundred yards further on was a small clearing, which the path skirted around. As we stumbled on somebody gave a small gasp of surprise and pointed at the tree line next to us. Lining it were at least 20 armed men. They were standing close under the trees or next to clumps of scattered scrub watching us. The situation seemed mutually disadvantageous given that only a few yards separated us, just enough to ensure that neither side could be sure who the other side was. Everyone froze, tense with the expectant dread of a sudden firefight at close quarters.

We stood opposite each other for only a few seconds, but they were long frightening seconds and seemed to take forever to pass. In the darkness the other group could not see that we were mostly unarmed and the situation seemed a total stand-off. To my relief both groups unexpectedly, and without word, moved off in opposite directions. We pressed on with renewed vigor to distance ourselves as much as possible from the other group. Who they were, or what they were doing remained as much a mystery to us as our identity did to them. The consensus was that they were an ambush party suddenly surprised before deployment and, feeling vulnerable, not in any mood to initiate a firefight with a party of undetermined strength. Whoever they were, perhaps just another mujahideen group, we were thankful for the chance to pass unmolested.

A few hours later we sheltered for the night in a village mosque and had no trouble falling into a deep sleep.

Early the next day we were off again heading toward Baraki, a town by Afghan standards but really no more than a large village. We were now in Wardak Province and passed villages and farms that were free of any sign of war damage. We all looked forward to reaching Baraki as it had a very good bazaar in which bottled Coca Cola, from Kabul, was available.

When we arrived later that morning Guldin and his men cheered up and were again on friendly terms with us. There seemed no end to the amount of shish kebabs they could eat as we sat in a small teashop, each kebab washed down with a bottle of fizzy drink. With our appetites finally appeased we relaxed and enjoyed the rest as our companions drank endless

rounds of tea.

Baraki was an important juncture for caravans heading deep into Afghanistan and others returning to Pakistan. The fields around the town were crowded with groups of men around small campfires and hundreds of horses and camels from all the caravans. This lent the impression you were looking at an army of the last century on campaign.

We made our way from the central bazaar to the shade of some trees a few hundred meters away and lay down to sleep off the soporific effects of our over-indulgence at lunch. It was not possible to continue straight away as we still had to recross the Lowgar plains, which could only be done at night. The air was hot, dry and full of flies as we lay on our bedrolls and prepared to sleep.

I awoke after a few hours to the noise of bellowing camels being loaded and made ready to move off. Men were shouting at the camels and each other, ensuring that no one in the vicinity could rest. Large white clouds were beginning to drift across a perfect, peaceful, late afternoon sky.

Two roaring MiG-25s shattered the calm as they materialized from thin air in a steep climb away from Baraki. People instantly began to run in all directions, shouting alarms. Thunderous explosions as the bombs released by the disappearing jets detonated drowned out this hysteria.

The explosions caused the confused, milling mass of people to panic even further and a general rout away from the town began. Streams of people were fleeing toward the open countryside. The more experienced men, realizing that it was movement that would attract further attention, dived for cover in ditches and shouted to those running past to stop and take cover. To encourage this they began to shoot over the heads of the fleeing masses. Shots immediately came back at them and a general firefight broke out on the ground as the jets began to swoop in on their second run.

Shouts and screams and staccato bursts from Kalashnikovs were all smothered by the roar of the jets as they skimmed over the trees, released their bombs and pulled away. These bombs fell into the center of Baraki and exploded with an earthshaking blast, casting chunks of masonry and timbers high into the sky. A thick plume of black smoke and dust mushroomed up and hung over the town; below this all was pandemonium and fear. Camels and horses had broken free and charged wildly about pursued by owners while the small arms fire continued unabated.

Emerging from the deep ditch we'd thrown ourselves into, Philippe and I cautiously surveyed the scene and tried to make sense out of the confusion. Tense knots of men crouched around trees or carefully poked their heads up from other

**Mujahideen on the march sometimes give impression of an army from the 19th century.**



ditches. Shots cracked overhead from several directions and clipped twigs from the trees, showering us in bark. All around people ran and crawled about, piles of abandoned goods lay scattered across the fields. There was no sign of Guldin and his men. Close by a group of mujahideen were trying to load their horses and keep a watchful eye on the sky. Unlike the hysteria all around them these men were working with a calm sense of purpose.

Philippe and I approached them and asked where they were going. They told us they were heading to Pakistan and thought it best to move on as Baraki had just become a very unhealthy place to be.

With no sign of our own escort we asked if we might join them if our companions didn't turn up before they left. Their commander, Ahmed Menier, listened to our story and recognized us from Shashpool. While he was from an opposing political faction from the one we had been traveling with he agreed to help us, mostly because he found the idea of our escort having abandoned us highly amusing — a degree of levity we could not treat the situation with ourselves.

An hour had passed by the time they were ready to move out. Frequent bursts of small arms fire ensured that Baraki remained unsettled. Guldin never returned to

find us and we left with Commander Menier and his men when they pulled out.

Commander Menier's party were all mounted so we rode along small dusty tracks like a troop of cavalry. Fields and farms fell behind us as we approached the edge of the plain. The last rays of the setting sun brushed the sweeping plain in purple and gold. It was hard to accept that anything so beautiful could be so dangerous. But we still had to cross a major road (linking Kabul to Gardez) that Soviet troops kept open by frequent patrolling. They also often mounted night ambushes along this road.

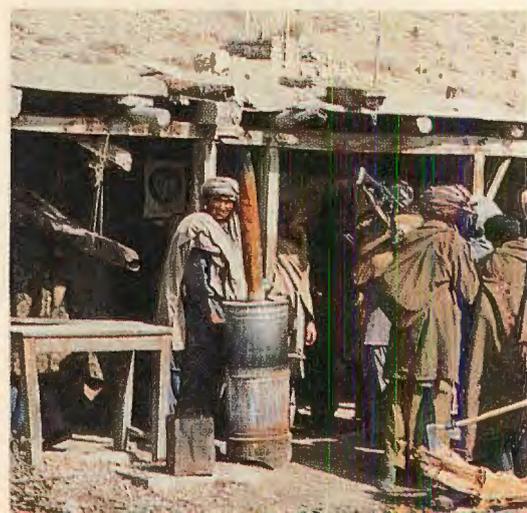
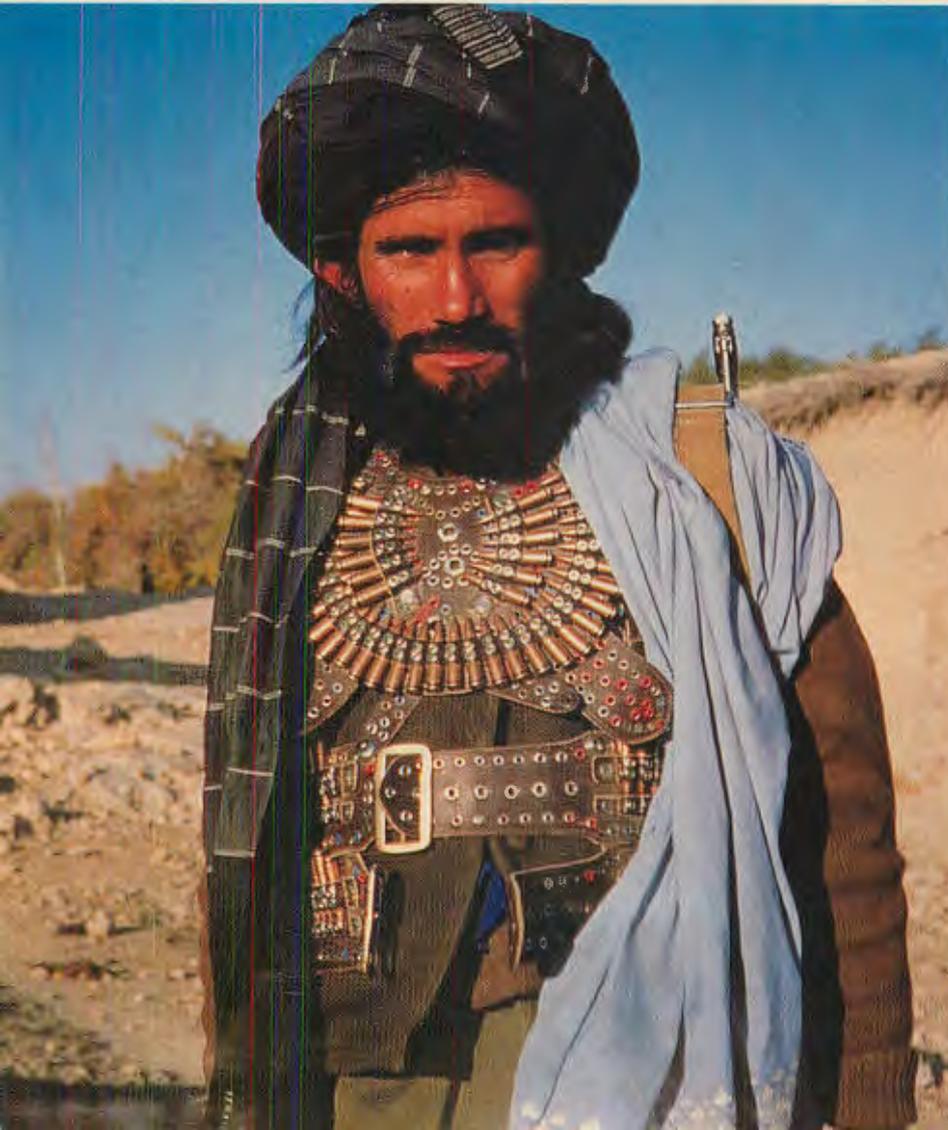
As the light faded we mounted up and began the first steps of the long night crossing of the Lowgar plains, keen to reach and cross the highway as soon as possible. Behind us dozens of other groups also began the night's march and all would converge at roughly the same point on the highway, approximately equidistant between two Russian posts. This potential traffic jam, where we least wanted to draw attention to ourselves, was the reason for our haste. Being mounted, we hoped to be one of the first groups to cross. Nonetheless, I noticed Commander Menier allowed at least one other group to get well ahead of us. I presumed he wished to allow them to trigger any potential ambush, which indi-

cated that he was an experienced survivor. This was a welcome relief after the dangerous amateurishness of the groups we had traveled with so far.

A few hours later we approached the vicinity of the road. Far off to the right and left occasional flares illuminated distant posts as silent streams of tracer cut across the night sky. We stopped, dismounted and waited for two men to go ahead and bring back a report. Twenty minutes later their shadowy forms emerged from the darkness and whispered to Commander Menier. He in turn walked along the line of his men and gave instructions.

Rags were produced from saddle bags and tied to our horses' hooves to muffle their foot-falls. Leading our mounts we moved forward. The ground rose up before us like a frozen earth wave, and the top deposited us suddenly on the road itself. The column crossed over quickly. Half the group was across when headlights emerged from a fold in the ground, still far off, heading our way. One of the mujahideen stood in the middle of the road and hissed commands to, "*Burro, burro*" (Hurry, hurry), a prompting we hardly needed. Once across, we mounted up and cantered off into the night, leaving in our wake a trail of rags cast from horse hooves.

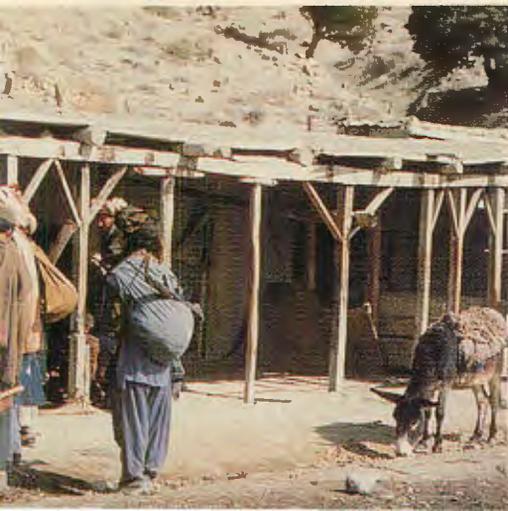
Once well clear of the road we settled



into a slow plodding pace to conserve the horses. Often other caravans of camels or horses loomed momentarily out of the murky night and vanished again in shadows and dust. A few hushed words would be exchanged, for information about the trail ahead, each party keen to hear that all was quiet on the way ahead of them. We wound past stark, silent villages, mostly destroyed, but occasionally a dog barked where some family was still eking out a living in the midst of all the destruction.

It was essential that we cross the plain before daylight, when the helicopter gunships would begin to prowl about, looking for easy kills. The night became one long, painful struggle to keep going and stay awake. There were few halts, and those were mostly to assess the danger of some faintly heard sound before moving on. The horses became tired and unfit to ride. Clouds came out and hid the rising moon, so we stumbled along in pitch darkness. Keeping track of the man in front preoccupied all thought. Sometimes a sudden fold in the ground would hide all signs of my companions and for a moment I would be alone and lost. Just as I began to think I'd never find anyone again, I would collide with the horse in front, invisible in the deep shadows of a gully.

When the first, faint light of dawn finely



## SHI'ISM

Islam, like Christianity, is divided into two main factions: Sunni, the majority, and Shi'ite. Shi'ites represent only 10 percent of the total devotees of Islam and most of them live in Iran, where they form 98 percent of the population. In Afghanistan Shi'ites represent a minority of only 15 percent, most of whom live in the central Hazarajat region.

Shi'ah, or to give it its proper full title, Shi'at Ali (Partisan or The Party of Ali) supports the claims of the Caliph of Ali ibn Abi Talib, a follower of Mohammed (the great Prophet of Islam), his cousin and his son-in-law (he married Mohammed's daughter, Fatimah).

When Mohammed died he left no clear instructions as to who his successor should be. When news of the Prophet Mohammed's death reached Medina a popular assembly met to name the First Caliph (Successor or Lieutenant). The elections were held with immodest haste because of concerns that worsening rivalries between the Ansar (native Medinians) and the majajitun (Meccan immigrants) would irrevocably split Islam.

Islam still split into rival factions; on one side supporters of Abu Bakr, on the other the supporters of Ali, absent in Mecca, at Mohammed's bedside when he died.

Ali was only 30 years old at this time and Arab respect for age favored the elder Abu Bakr as successor. Ali's supporters felt he had a divine right to the Caliphate, having received an alleged special mandate from the Prophet Mohammed on his death bed. They still maintain this and bear a deep resentment at the slight given to Ali by Abu Bakr and his supporters in depriving him of the First Caliphate.

They also assign a unique spiritual

authority for Ali which passes on to certain of his descendants. The modern Sayids still claim these privileges under Shi'ism.

It is from this early split in Islam that Sunni (supporters of Abu Bakr) and Shi'ism (supporters of Ali) derive.

Ali did eventually inherit the Caliphate, in 656 AD (Islamic year 35) as the Fourth Caliph, after the deaths of the first three, only to be assassinated in 661 AD (Islamic year 40). His son Hassan became the Fifth Caliph but gave it up, under threat from a strong opposition, in favor of Mu Awiyaah.

After Hassan's death his brother Husayn, Ali's other son, led a revolt against Mu Awiyaah. He was killed in battle by Mu Awiyaah's son, Yazid, at Kerbala in 680 AD (Islamic year 61) when help expected from the people of Kufah failed to materialize. Husayn, based in Kufah, was reliant on their timely support. This failure to send help, by the people of Kufah, is the central theme of Persian Shi'ism (known as Twelve — Iman Shi'ism. It is one of three principal internal divisions of Shi'ism). It evokes the depth of feeling Christians have for the crucifixion of Christ. From this single event springs the deep rooted sense of guilt exhibited in Shi'ism that is absent from Sunni Islam.

Each year this event is celebrated by 12 days of mourning. On the twelfth day ritual scourging takes place. Devotees try to atone for the betrayal of Husayn to Yazid's army by flagellating themselves across the bare back with steel studded whips and repeated blows to the head with knives.

Shi'ites believe that Imams are direct descendants of Ali; to Sunni Muslims they are simply prayer leaders.

etched the silhouettes of distant mountains against the lightening sky, we still seemed to be far out in the plain. Each time the ground rose up beneath our feet we thought we were beginning the climb to the mountains, only to be let down into a deep gully to struggle up the steep side opposite and discover ourselves back on the flat unending plain. The dark shapes of the men in front began less to be abstract floating shadows and more to take on individual features.

As, with our last reserves of energy, we

**FAR LEFT:** Mujahid with exotic webbing made from 7.62x39mm rounds — fierce-looking, but not fast-loading.

**ABOVE LEFT:** Mujahideen sit around fire in an abandoned house to stave off the night cold.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Mujahideen gather outside tea shop.

raced the lightening sky we could see that the lower spurs of the mountains reached far out into the plain on either side. This spurred us on and everyone made a last concerted effort to reach the protection of the ridges and gullies ahead. It also caused an air of mild panic and the column dissolved into a bunched group with everyone trying to get ahead of the man in front in their haste to get off the exposed plain.

The sun crept over the horizon as we closed the last kilometer with the mountain. At last we climbed a low ridge and *dropped* over the other side where the *Dobanday* Valley began, long, narrow and *twisting*. It would take us back to the perilous point close the Soviet base at Chanie.

We pressed on up the valley, *shattered* by the exertions of the night, until we reached a teashop. Here we stopped to feed the horses and ourselves on the limited fare available and catch up on sleep. It also



done. The horse never flinched from these administrations and steadily improved during the rest of the march. I also avoided riding and limped alongside trying to conserve the horse in case I needed to call upon its services in an emergency later on. It was a precaution for which I was well rewarded.

The next two days were taken at a more relaxed pace and did much to refresh our weary frames. But every step brought us closer to another dangerous night during which we would have to pass the Soviet base at Chanie. It was a night no one was looking forward to. In due course we found ourselves saddled up in a gully waiting to begin the last dangerous leg of the journey.

That night the sky was bright with the light of flares that filled the sky over the Chanie base. Hundreds of tracers raced up from mujahideen around the base shooting at the flares! Surprisingly, several exploded in a shower of sparks or plummeted, still brightly burning, to the earth from direct hits. Large brush fires started as a result. It seemed a particularly active night as artillery, tank and mortar fire boomed and echoed off the mountains to the accompaniment of HMGs and the rattle of small arms fire.

**LEFT:** Mujahid in fur hat with World War I vintage Lee Enfield. This old pattern was also manufactured during World War II in India and Australia, but old Lee Enfields and Afghans are both survivors.



**Traditional Afghan ornate leather webbing, now mostly replaced with Chinese canvas webbing or a cheap Pakistani copy, hangs with AK-47.**

meant our horses could be rested. Mine had been steadily becoming weaker. Afghans normally never remove a horse's blanket during a march as they feel this will cause the horse to catch a chill. When I took the blankets off I discovered my horse had



**ABOVE:** Mujahideen in the remains of bombed-out home.

several large open wounds about the size and depth of a large fist and packed rim to rim with maggots. No wonder it had been weakening day by day.

They were old sores and well-advanced in decay, giving off a putrid stench. With a penknife I spent an hour digging maggots out and pouring in the complete contents of my limited medical supplies — washing out with detol and sprinkling antibiotic powder liberally into the open sore. It was stomach churning work but needed to be

Most of this was interdictory fire that fell harmlessly among the mountain ridges, but enough landed on or close to the path to make everyone nervous. The gully was full of mujahideen, mounted and on foot, camels, horses, even cattle led by farmers hoping to sell them in Pakistan. One direct hit would have wreaked untold havoc. Groups trickled out of the gully to take their chances with fate.

One explosion detonated closer than the rest and a brief orange-red glow lit up the ridge along which many men were already making their way. As the explosion died away we heard a long piercing scream that

never seemed to stop. Everyone stopped talking and looked up to where the scream came from, where we all knew we would soon have to go. The scream died away but the previously chatty crowd remained silent.

Our turn to move came soon enough. We rode along the gully and dismounted to climb the steep gully sides. Nobody remounted, all feeling it was more dangerous to ride. The journey along the path past the Soviets was every bit as frightening as it had been on the way north. Tracer flew haphazardly over and among us, or far away with no rhyme or reason. There were explosions ahead and behind, left and right. Of our group only Philippe and I managed to remain together. We had vowed not to be separated in the helter-skelter rush to pass the Soviet base.

Once again we were without an escort in an area where everyone was hyped up and nervous, ready to shoot before talk. All we could do was to push forward along the path and hope to find someone from Commander Menier's group again. Caravans of horses and camels, loaded with munitions, passed us heading north. We overtook mujahideen and refugee groups, some hurrying quickly, others frozen in fright and hiding in gullies.

It seemed just as dangerous to keep still as move on, and the sooner we cleared the area the safer we would be. The worst of it all was the haphazard manner in which the events occurred. With no pattern to the incoming rounds it was impossible to gauge a good or bad time to move.

We moved forward as fast as we could, throwing ourselves flat, but still tightly gripping the horse reins, when something seemed to come our way, or just unexpectedly exploded nearby. When we hunkered down next to other people who had stopped moving forward it seemed harder to get up again and push on. So we tried to maintain maximum momentum and avoid unnecessary delays. Having Philippe to encourage me forward and vice versa seemed to work well and eventually we seemed to be leaving most of the nasty stuff further and further behind.

However, we now had to worry about encounters with local mujahideen who frequently stopped travelers for a brief interrogation on their ID. Explanations about who we were or why we had no mujahideen escort would cause us long delays if not worse problems. So we had to tag on to the tail end of other groups and bluff our way toward the Pakistan border, now only a few hours away.

Once past a mujahideen roadblock we would abandon the group we had discreetly attached ourselves to and rush ahead until we caught up with the group ahead. Here we would stay until we passed the next roadblock. A logjam of people had built up around a roadblock in the remains of a shell-shattered village. When it began to move we mingled with the tail end and were almost past when a mujahideen sentry

## CHAOTIC CARAVANS

Supplying the war in Afghanistan has depended almost exclusively on the ability to ferry in munitions by camel and horseback. This mode of logistic supply is unchanged from that utilized by Alexander the Great when his conquering army marched to the Indus.

The mujahideen have mostly been reliant not on their own organized corps of transport but on hiring Afghan contractors.

From mujahideen bases inside Pakistan the munitions are moved to the border itself to be loaded onto large caravans of horses and camels for the long, slow, journey into Afghanistan. The reliance on assembling these caravans from several different civilian Afghan contractors has often caused long delays, to the detriment of the men waiting inside for supplies.

Over what can be a period of many days, the fee is haggled over (based on the weight each animal has to carry) until the caravan is finally assembled. This delay, close to the border, has been a serious breach of security. Many caravans have been ambushed by ground troops as well as attacked from the air. It is probable that the size and destination of many would have been clearly known by the Khad (Afghan secret police trained by the KGB, and long thought to have been the best trained of all Afghan government security forces).

The failure of the mujahideen to set up their own logistical transport has been a contributing factor in the haphazard delivery of supplies. The fact that large amounts of cash have been involved inevitably leads one to wonder to what degree corruption has ensured that the mujahideen remain tied to this slow and costly system.

A U.S.-inspired attempt was made to break this reliance on contracted animals by flying in 5,000 American mules from Tennessee. This was a drop in the ocean compared to the numbers of animals required but a step in the right direction. Most of these animals have since sadly perished under the hardships of work and a poor understanding of animal care exhibited by mujahideen assigned to look after them. For example, while heavy duty metal and leather panniers

came with each mule, the Afghans frequently resorted to tying loads on with lengths of nylon rope which soon gravely injured the animals with deep festering rope burns.

Stockpiles of munitions being assembled for caravans, at best poorly guarded, presented very appealing targets. Teri Mangal, a frequently used jumping off point in Pakistan, has twice been leveled by explosions of stockpiled arms. This has been attributed to Khad agents but might well have been due to very low standards of safety among Afghans handling the large amounts of explosive ordnance.

The caravan I accompanied to northern Afghanistan was typical of the hundreds that were winding into Afghanistan. Besides those attacked from air or ground forces many more were subjected to problems caused by inter-party rivalry between the multitude of factions within the mujahideen themselves. Long, not infrequent, delays were caused by armed clashes between mujahideen parties or by time spent haggling over a suitable fee (often paid in arms) for rights of passage. Many bands of mujahideen, deep in the interior, were solely reliant on imposing a tax on passing caravans to supply themselves with arms. Some found this system of taxation so lucrative that it occupied them full time.

Only toward the end of 1986, after the introduction of U.S.-supplied Stinger missiles were roads beginning to open up again. But much of this progress has since been negated by the increase in armed conflict between mujahideen factions since the Russian pullout of Afghanistan in February 1989. Travel is often dangerous for the mujahideen due to these destructive squabbles. It can be even more hazardous for the munitions caravans forced to make slow progress, with heavily laden camels and horses, through areas occupied by hostile factions.

Such problems can only work to the advantage of the communist government which, many months after the Russian withdrawal, still occupies its Kabul stronghold.

called out for us to return. We shouted a greeting and explained we must hurry to catch up with our group. We quickened our pace and the road took a providential turn behind a ridge, and as soon as we were out of sight we mounted up and spurred our horses into a gallop.

Ignoring the loud shouts behind, which called us back, we galloped all the faster. Not knowing to which group each roadblock belonged was a disadvantage, as even

those of the same faction we had traveled with would wish to delay us, possibly for days or more while they checked out our story. If they were politically opposed to the factions we had traveled with, the problems could be even worse. Our best hope for a speedy exit lay in rapid movement and avoiding confrontation.

We slowed to a canter and then a trot,

*Continued on page 72*

SOF JUST CAUSE

*“You Can Run,  
But You Can’t Hide  
From Spectre”*

# DEVIL IN DISGUISE

by Ross Simpson

Spectre —  
the Devil  
in Disguise.





**“YOU** can hear us, but you can’t see us,” said Lieutenant Colonel Rusty Napier, commanding officer of the Air Force’s 16th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), 1st Special Operations Wing, at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Napier’s AC-130H “Spectre” gunships brought their firepower to bear on what the military euphemistically terms a “target rich environment” during the brief but bloody war in Panama.

These gunships, which earned their nickname in Southeast Asia in the late 1960s, helped break the back of the Panama Defense Force (PDF) with their murderous fire. Members of the PDF who survived the initial slaughter from the sky called the AC-130s, “The Devil in Disguise.”

These heavily armed Hercules four-engine turboprop aircraft have several side-firing weapon systems linked to highly sophisticated sensors. The sensors combined with the array of ordnance on board make for a highly effective airborne weapons platform.

Sensors, including forward-looking infrared target acquisition equipment, low-light-level TV cameras,

laser target designators, and a 2-kilowatt searchlight visible only to troops with night vision goggles, give Spectre a Stealth-like profile in the air.

The AC-130Hs are armed with two 20mm Vulcan cannons mounted just behind the flight deck, a 40mm Bofors cannon mounted amidships, and a 105mm howitzer mounted near the rear ramp. The 20mm Vulcans can fire 5,000 rounds per minute, while the 40mm Bofors cannon can deliver about 100 rounds per minute.

Colonel Napier, however, says his crews rarely shoot that many rounds. “We shoot in bursts of four to eight rounds and then assess the damage on our sensors.” The howitzer can hurl 12 rounds a minute toward a target, everything from white phosphorus (WP) to high explosive (HE). But rapid fire causes harmonics that can do damage to the wings so it’s not often done. Colonel Napier says Spectres never use all their guns at once. “We can shoot them in combinations — the 20s and 40s — to impress dignitaries at Eglin Air Force Base, but tactically we shoot one gun at a time.” The 105mm has a 49-inch recoil which absorbs most of the blast, but the twin 20s up front shove the aircraft up and to the right, causing the pilot to use a lot of bottom rudder when he depresses the gun button.

There are 20 Spectres in the USAF inventory, 10 on active duty and 10 in the Reserves. But the older A-model Spectres in the Reserves don’t pack quite the punch of their big brother H-models. The AC-130As do not have the 105mm howitzer and are armed with two 7.62mm miniguns, two 20mm Vulcan cannons and two 40mm Bofors cannons which together are capable of delivering more than 17,000 rounds per minute.

Two A-model Spectres from the 919th Special Operations Group at Duke Field, Florida, were in Panama on a training mission before hostilities broke out on 20 December, and joined six H-models in prepping landing zones for Army Rangers and airborne units and hosing down PDF installations, including the Comandancia, Noriega’s headquarters in Panama City.

As part of the broadcast coverage I provided the Mutual and NBC radio networks, I was the only correspondent in Panama permitted to fly an actual combat mission over Panama City aboard a Spectre gunship. Special Order T-0401 issued by

## SPECTRE SPECTATOR

Ross Simpson has worked in network radio for the past 12 years and is currently an NBC radio correspondent based in Washington D.C. He has more than 100 magazine articles to his credit and has just finished his second book. His third book will be about Operation Just Cause.



## FROM VIETNAM TO PANAMA

"Each time I heard the sounds of the Hueys in Panama it brought back memories of Vietnam. It doesn't seem like 20 years since I was there, watching the same type of operation; only this time the faces were so much younger," reflected Lieutenant Colonel Marty Stevens, skipper of the 702nd Military Airlift Squadron based at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey.

Lieutenant Colonel Stevens, a C-130 gunship pilot on his first tour in Southeast Asia and C-141 driver on his second, had just returned from Panama and his part in Operation Just Cause when he talked to SOF. He was still marveling at how quickly it had all happened. "On 19 December we were scheduled to fly an AirEvac mission to Frankfurt. This was cancelled and we were asked if we'd volunteer for a mission 'down south' to Pope AFB to pick up medical people and supplies and from there on down to Panama. We took off about 2200 and got to Pope before midnight. The place seemed fairly quiet, except for activity around the loading ramps, where four C-141Bs and a C-5 were taking on cargo.

"After an intelligence briefing to put us in the picture as to what was happening in Panama, we loaded medics and supplies and left for Kelly AFB. We refueled there and made another stop at Dill AFB for more people. When we finally got to Panama, very tired now as we were well into our crew day, we stayed for only a couple of hours and after loading took off."

Thirty minutes into the return flight they were ordered to return to Howard AFB (Panama), as apparently a large number of casualties were expected and Stevens' bird, outfitted in a modified MedEvac configuration to take 48 litters and about 40 walking wounded, was going to be needed.

"By this time we were so far into our crew day we were all really tired," Stevens said. "So they allowed us 12 hours rest. By 0700 the next morning we got up to find our aircraft had been towed

down to the north end of Howard and was parked with one wing out over the grass near the tents of a MASH unit, about 20 yards from a helipad. There were anywhere from 50 to 75 doctors, nurses and medics standing by, most wearing BDUs, helmets, web gear and 9mm pistols. Three men were in the center of the compound, with radio headsets monitoring requests for helicopter evacuations of wounded and dead. We waited around, mingling with the medical folks, watching what we could of the war and listening to the sounds of the explosions. There was a huge air strike going on to the northeast by A-37s. Smoke was really pouring out of there and it must have lasted six hours."

Then a chopper came in with two badly wounded men: one soldier had been hit in the stomach, and the other in the upper chest area. The medics rushed out and got them off the chopper right away, then another landed, bringing back a trooper with a serious face wound.

They couldn't save him, but this was only the beginning of the bad news. A big Chinook made its approach and the medics readied themselves for a quick dash to remove the casualties. The co-pilot waved them off as they started, and the reason soon became apparent—the chopper was carrying no WIAs, only 13 body bags.

"It was awful," Stevens said. "There's just no way to get used to that and you can't get used to it." One of Stevens' crew, Loadmaster Sergeant Deborah Hemmerlein, said that seeing this, "and the blood being hosed out of the helicopters" made it very real.

While the Starlifter was on the ground at the north end of Howard, Sgt. Hemmerlein saw a line of POWs who had been brought to the MASH sector for a quick medical checkup. "That was a real kicker; it just made the scene complete," she said. Dead Americans and throngs of Panamanian prisoners made a gruesome but telling contrast.

Hemmerlein was surprised at how young they all were, and the fact they were all in civilian clothes. These prisoners had been brought in by bus and chopper and were taken elsewhere after a medical examination. Their hands were tied and they were blindfolded. They weren't going anywhere on their own.

While they were waiting to load and take off, Stevens and his crew looked over an AC-130 Spectre gunship and talked to the crew. "I used to fly one of these in Vietnam, but have they changed. I couldn't even recognize the interior: TV cameras, heat sensors, all types of modern technology. It's an incredible piece of equipment—one you don't want to mess with.

"There was tremendous artillery capability represented on the field down there—A7s, Huey gunships, A-37s—and they were all landing and taking off in a great mix of transport, chopper and fighter planes, just like Danang or Tan Son Nhut. It was incredible and would have made Chicago's O'Hare look like a private airport.

"After we'd been on alert for more than 12 hours," Stevens continued, "things started jumping and I ordered the crew to get through our final pre-flight and we loaded up with litters and walking wounded, most of whom were sedated, for the trip home. One of the seriously wounded men required sea-level cabin pressure, so we flew back to Florida at low altitude, which took a bit longer than usual."

Stevens, who flies for United Airlines when he wears a different uniform, had some parting thoughts. "There is one thing I do want to say: This all started for us as an almost routine mission, but when we got down to Panama it stopped being routine, especially when we saw how professional and dedicated the medical people there were as they went about their duties taking care of the casualties. There wasn't a thing we wouldn't have done for them or to help out. It just felt good—I was happy and proud to be a part of it." —Ed Brown

the 24th Composite Wing (TAC) invited me to celebrate New Year's Eve with Lieutenant Colonel Mike Guidry's crew during a six-hour nighttime reconnaissance mission over the Vatican embassy where General Noriega was still hiding at the time.

Although orbiting the diplomatic compound 150 times was like riding a merry-go-round, it was still a thrill to observe first-hand an Air Force mission during Operation Just Cause.

After Col. Guidry briefed his crew of five officers and nine enlisted men on the mission, we donned our survival vests and

climbed into our parachute harnesses. What a heck of a way to spend New Year's Eve, lumbering down a runway at Howard Air Force Base, Panama, in a flying bomb.

In addition to carrying a full load of fuel, our Spectre also carried a full combat load of ammunition. If we had to abort because of fire on takeoff, lead gunner Roger Betterelli said we had less than 60 seconds to scramble off the aircraft and run as fast as our legs could carry us.

"After 60 seconds, the 20 mike-mike starts cooking off, and then the 40mms begin exploding and that sets off the 105s, so get your butt about 2,000 yards away

from this bird," Betterelli said.

As Col. Guidry ran up the engines, he rattled off his pre-flight checklist. "Warning lights and alarm bells?" "Check," replied the flight engineer. "Emergency brakes?" "Check."

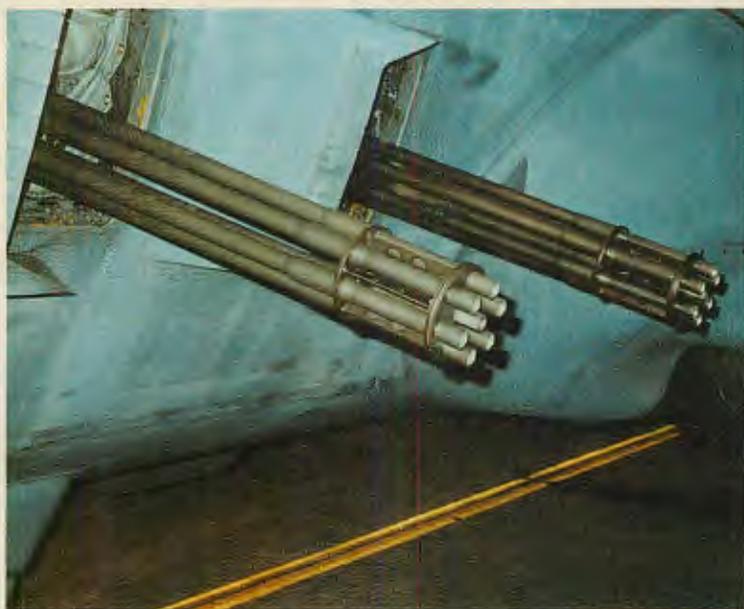
"Cleared to Taxi 1-5," radioed ground control at Howard as the AC-130 rolled across the tarmac.

When Guidry released the brakes, you could feel the aircraft lurch forward and begin to roll down the runway, but it seemed that we would never get airborne.

*Continued on page 83*



**BELOW:** Gun crew clears collection box of spent 20mm casings.



**TOP:** Lead gunner Roger Berterelli loads 105mm Howitzer aboard Spectre.

**ABOVE:** Twin 20mm Vulcan gatling guns.

**RIGHT:** 105mm Howitzer on left rear of AC130. Note orange shock/sound suppressor.



**SOF COMBAT REPORT**

# INSIDE SALV

## *SOFer Fires Up FMLN Guerrillas*

by Edward J. Bishop



# ADOR'S TET



Ed Bishop and Major Hurtado, Airborne Battalion CO, pose in door of Huey at Airborne Battalion's base. Author was impressed with effectiveness of minigun and rocket strikes from Hueys — and with competence and courage of Salvadoran pilots. Photo: courtesy Ed Bishop

I'D come to El Salvador to parachute, and ended up with communist FMLN bullets flying my way. I guess you have to expect that kind of thing when you travel to places like Salvador, but what I didn't expect was that I'd be fighting back, fighting in the company of El Salvador's elite *paracaidistas* — airborne.

I'd been in-country only a short time, and I wasn't really sure what was normal activity and what was not. But there seemed to be a lot more troops gathering on the morning of 13 November. I was used to seeing patrols form up, come and go, carrying their M16A1s, M79s, M60s, belts of 7.62mm, bandoleers of 5.56mm and 40mm HE, grenades and LAWs. As far as I was concerned, it was business as usual this morning, until the troops lined up for more bandoleers of 5.56 and 40mm, belts of 7.62 and more LAWs and grenades.

Basic load of Salvadoran airborne troops

is a pretty robust mix of ammo, explosives and pyrotechnics. I was used to seeing lots of 30-round M16 magazines, belts of 7.62 slung across chests, and M67 fragmentation grenades hanging liberally from LBE and chest pouches.

But these items usually showed wear. When ammo is carried day in and day out for awhile it changes. Cloth bandoleers fray and get a little dingy and the shiny 7.62 brass cases darken. OD paint chips and wears from grenades and LAW rockets and often the web carry straps fray and are replaced by 5-50 cord or boot laces.

It was a little startling to see new crates and boxes pried and torn, while packing materials were tossed aside in piles as the troops loaded up on fresh and extra ammunition. Something was definitely in the works.

I walked across the compound to the office of Major Hurtado, the officer commanding the *paracaidistas*, and began talk-

**Taking with them what they held important, civilian refugees evacuate guerrilla-held areas under a white flag. Red and Green-Cross workers also worked under fire and white flags to evacuate dead and wounded. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel**





**ABOVE:** ERP guerrillas of the FMLN form up for the triumphal march on San Salvador, during the early stages of their Tet. Thanks to the trained and motivated men of the Salvadoran armed forces, it didn't work out. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel

ing with two of his assistants. Just then the major emerged from his office and, although he seemed surprised to see me, he greeted me with a big smile. As he walked out the door, almost as an afterthought, he turned back to me and asked "Quieres ir conmigo?" [Do you want to go with me?] I had no idea where he was going, how long, for what, why or anything else. "Si, mi mayor," [Yes, my major] I quickly responded, trying to sound confident and appreciative of the invitation to where and what I didn't know. "Estas seguro?" [Are you sure?], he asked. I was unsure if this meant my response lacked confidence or if he knew something I did not. "Si, como no," [Yes, of course] I shot back, hoping this time to sound unmistakably confident and assured.

It must have been the right response because Maj. Hurtado wheeled around and headed back into his office. He grabbed a loaded, side-folding-stock East German MPiKMS-72 from the chair behind his desk and grabbed two more loaded magazines from a nearby bookshelf. Major Hurtado handed me the AK and mags as he passed me on his way to the battalion HQ. I had examined and even photographed this captured weapon my first day at the base when the major welcomed me and showed me other weapons in his collection. I had admired it then, and it gave me a warm feeling all over to suddenly and unexpectedly have this brand-new AK to use in some sort of yet-undefined operation. Even



**Apparently preparing for a long and final battle, the guerrillas linked blocks of houses into single fighting positions with trenches and tunnels. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel**

if it was just a routine visit somewhere with the major, and the loan of the AK just a friendly gesture for the visiting gringo to carry around, I was pleased and excited at the imagined prospect of some action.

I had come to El Salvador only intending to participate in a friendship jump with the Salvadoran Airborne Battalion. I had been in Acapulco, Mexico, for about two weeks immediately prior and decided to proceed by bus to El Salvador. I chose to go overland because I thought it would be an interesting and cheap trip. It took two full days, four buses, three taxicabs and one

pedicab to reach San Salvador. I arrived 2 November 1989, one day ahead of the jump group composed of former U.S. paratroopers. I was not permitted on base because the Airborne Battalion commander was not there and none of the base security people knew anything about the scheduled friendship jump.

So I rested well in a cheap hotel in the city center and returned to the base the next day. This time I was admitted and greeted by Major Rene Alcides Rodriguez Hurtado, CO of the El Salvador Airborne Battalion. I remembered him immediately from a two-day jump trip I made there in 1988. He greeted me warmly and invited me into his office, where we talked about a variety of subjects including firearms. The major is a keen weapons enthusiast and he was happy

to show me some of his collection, including some captured weapons.

I joined Captain Hector Joel Grijalva Cern and a sergeant to meet the arriving jump group at the civil airport at Comalada. Accompanying our bus was a 6x6 with an Airborne Battalion security force. When the group arrived we returned to base and began the jump activities. The group made the jump, was awarded their El Salvadoran jump wings, and departed on 6 November 1989.

My plans had been to knock around in El Salvador for a week or so, depending on finances, after the group left. Unexpectedly, Maj. Hurtado invited me to stay at the air base with his battalion. I was delighted at this fortunate opportunity to visit the battalion for an additional two weeks.

Everything about the paracaidistas was interesting, so I wandered around the airborne compound meeting and talking with many, many officers and men of the battalion. My interest in arms drew me to the armorer's room. I enjoyed helping with a number of things including organizing spare parts which had been lumped together. Neither the two armorers nor the sergeant in charge were school-trained. They learned everything "on the job." They were very capable but lacked some spare parts, some tools and equipment, and some knowledge.

It was enjoyable to be able to visit at a relatively "peaceful" or stable time. Since the communist guerrillas of the FMLN had increased their terrorist attacks in the city, the troops regularly patrolled their assigned sector and provided security for civilian industry. The air base security battalion maintained perimeter security of the entire base, plus security in depth with security points scattered throughout the surrounding communities. Terrorist activity was low in San Salvador then and except for the heavy security and troops deployed in the streets, it was hard to believe there was much of a war going on.

On 11 November 1989 at 1900 hours the communists initiated a coordinated attack on selected locations throughout the country. They mortared the *guardia nacional* and rocketed the *Estado Mayor* (headquarters), while additional FMLN terrorists infiltrated into the San Salvador suburbs of Soyapango, Zacamil, San Jacinto, and Mejicanos.

I was fortunate to be at the right place at the right time to observe the activities and operations of the Airborne Battalion. The battalion serves as a national immediate-reaction force. They are based at Ilopango in San Salvador and have responsibility for patrolling sectors of Soyapango. On 11 November 1989 at about 2100 hours subteniente Sanchez Castaneda was wounded in a drive-by shooting as he was eating with other soldiers at a chalet in front of the uncentro shopping complex in Soyapango. Later that night and the following day patrols began to have chance encounters with various-sized terrorist bands. These

are thought to have been FMLN recon elements.

At 0500 on 12 November 1989 four mortar bombs landed on the air base at Ilopango. Believed to have been 81mm, they came from the far north. They landed in four locations and caused zero damage. Security forces in place saw nothing. The airborne sent out patrols and the air force sent helicopters to search the area but they found nothing. The firing point was not located and no forensic examination was made to determine trajectory or type of munitions.

Sunday night, patrols ran into more terrorist groups. Terrorists also sniped at army patrols.

In my room in the airborne compound, and oblivious to the events and actions taking place in the city, I slept soundly Saturday and Sunday nights. Unaware of the previous nights' actions, I was not unusually curious as I left my room, and continued my morning routine of wandering around the compound greeting, chatting, talking, and observing people and activities. It was a privilege to be a guest of Maj. Hurtado, and I tried to be as unobtrusive and as small a problem as possible. For this reason I wore my uniform to blend in a little and spent more time talking with sergeants, corporals and soldiers and less time bothering the officers. But this morning was going to be different!

Six soldiers and I piled into the major's long-wheel-based jeep with the major behind the wheel. Following us was an armor-plated 6x6 loaded with more troops, plus two more 6x6s with troops. We rolled out of the base into traffic heading west about 0900 — I apparently the only one in the dark about what was going on. I felt very much at ease, basing my confidence in Maj. Hurtado and the thoroughly professional officers and men of the airborne battalion. In my short time at the base, I had come to respect them and to have a high regard for their character.

We proceeded west along the busy civilian road and then headed north into Soyapango. Suddenly the major pulled the jeep over and we all jumped out. The troops immediately dismounted and spread out on both sides of the street and began hustling around the corner and down the next street. I could hear shooting in the direction of march but wasn't sure how close. Major Hurtado, carrying his M16A2 shorty, led the assault while Capt. Sermeno, the battalion XO, maintained constant contact on the radio as the various squads became

separated in their sweep of through the labyrinth of houses and alleys.

Things were happening in rapid succession as we answered the staccato of RPK and AK fire with M60s and M16s. Firefights were erupting all around us, and we began taking a lot of fire from one particular house. The troops fired two LAWs into the house, followed by a couple M79 frag grenades. I was impressed by the aggressiveness and momentum of the Salvadoran airborne troops as we rushed the house and swept through into the back alley. The FMLN guerrillas had previously broken a large hole through the brick wall as an escape route and had fled at our assault.

Although the guerrillas in this house had fallen back and escaped into the maze of back alleys, we captured 14 brand-new East German side-folding-stock MPiKMS-

## PARACAIDISTA IN EL SALVADOR

Edward J. Bishop enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1979, serving in Germany as an armored cav recon scout. He later joined a Reserve infantry training unit, serving as drill sergeant and subsequently as training officer, XO and CO. A graduate of George Mason University with majors in International Studies and Latin American Studies, Bishop was commissioned as an infantry officer, and graduated airborne school and Infantry Officers Basic Course. In civilian life Bishop is involved in arms sales and ordnance development. Bishop has visited or jumped with Canadian Airborne (1988), Guatemalan Airborne (1988), El Salvador Airborne (1988 and 1989), South African Airborne (1989), and Mexico (1988 and 1989). A long-time SOF subscriber and conventioner, this is Bishop's first article for SOF.

72 rifles and a couple of sacks of Cuban ammunition.

We withdrew from the house as the rattle of machine-gun fire and the whine of ricochets continued to fill the air over Soyapango, and moved forward on our sweep.

Soyapango is home to 4,463 Salvadorans, mostly from the lower and lower-middle financial classes. Its houses are small and modest and almost all one story. They are brick-and-cement shells with corrugated tile panels for roofs. They are very close together, with brick walls surrounding many, and more alleys and walkways than you can count.

We began to realize how well the guerrillas were dug in. They'd constructed effective fortifications and forced civilians to erect barricades and dig trenches, apparently planning on a long siege. The guerrillas had many more weapons than they needed, because they had been told (by their Nicaraguan masters) that the people would rally and take up arms for the revolution.

Intelligence sources indicated the guerrillas planned to assassinate high government officials and take over in the chaos.

In these suburbs, the terrorists would initially secure an area and then occupy all strategic buildings. Each house in turn was

occupied and the people forced to break holes in walls, thereby connecting adjoining houses, so that in effect whole blocks became integrated units favoring the defender. The civilians held by the communists were not mistreated per se, but were forced to share what food they had, and their presence gave the army the additional problem of how to react without injuring civilians.

Needless to say the civilian population caught up in the shooting hid in their houses during the heaviest fighting. Because we knew that some houses contained civilian non-combatants, it was tough going.

Snipers were extensively used by the enemy and most of our casualties were due to sniper fire. As we continued to patrol through the streets and houses, we were halted at a terrorist strongpoint. Major Hurtado quickly got on the radio and in short order we had two UH-1M gunships making rocket runs with their 2.75-inch rockets. Fortunately El Salvador's air force has some appropriate, well-armed aircraft and most importantly, a group of outstanding pilots. End of problem.

As the rockets started to impact, I looked through the gate across the street to see Maj. Hurtado grin and give the thumbs up. Nothing seemed to worry him. He enjoys leading his troops in action, and he's good at it.

We rounded a corner just in time to see two civilian-clad terrorists running for a wooded area, carrying their AKs with them. They didn't make it. We continued our sweep, heading further west, finally setting up the battalion tactical operations center in the area known as Curruna. We set up on the sidewalk and steps in front of *Pupuseria Erika* (pupusa is a handmade pancake-like food with meat or cheese filling). Soldiers secured the area and all alleys.

The location selected by Maj. Hurtado for his headquarters element was an excellent choice. We had the building protecting our rear and concrete stairs to a height of

**BELOW:** Civilian offers Salvo trooper a drink. Unit that author accompanied during fighting was well cared-for by locals — food, drink even beds were volunteered. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel



**RIGHT:** In heavy house-to-house fighting, Salvadoran troops fire down an alley during a sweep. Photo: Sygma/Chauvel

five steps to the left. The building and road curved away on the right, minimizing the risk of bullets skipping down the main road. Next to the curb, two trees in front were supplemented by mounds of sand and stacks of bricks, making a defensive parapet that at times we were more than happy to have to lay behind.

Once the troops deployed to their assigned areas and secured them, civilians began to emerge from their houses, carrying their belongings and waving white flags. Salvadoran Green Cross workers dressed in bright yellow suits and yellow helmets began searching for wounded or dead civilians to be evacuated. They also went house-to-house collecting people for evacuation. I was amazed at the number of people who seemed to come out of the shadows. Some were laughing, some were crying, most looked worried. Automobiles and trucks were crammed full of people. I saw whole families evacuate on a single motorcycle. All of this was going on amid the shooting. The guerrillas continued to snipe or just fire their AKs, as if to mock the airborne troops.

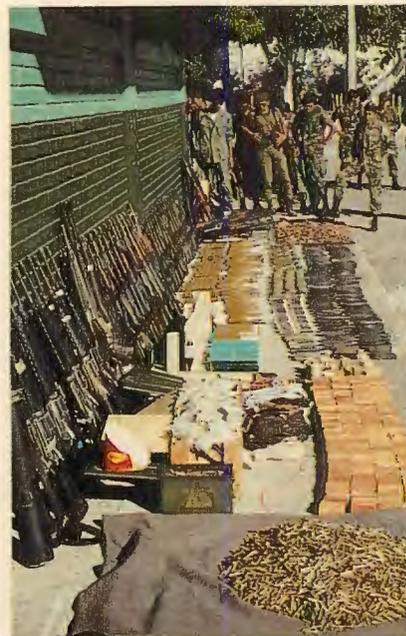
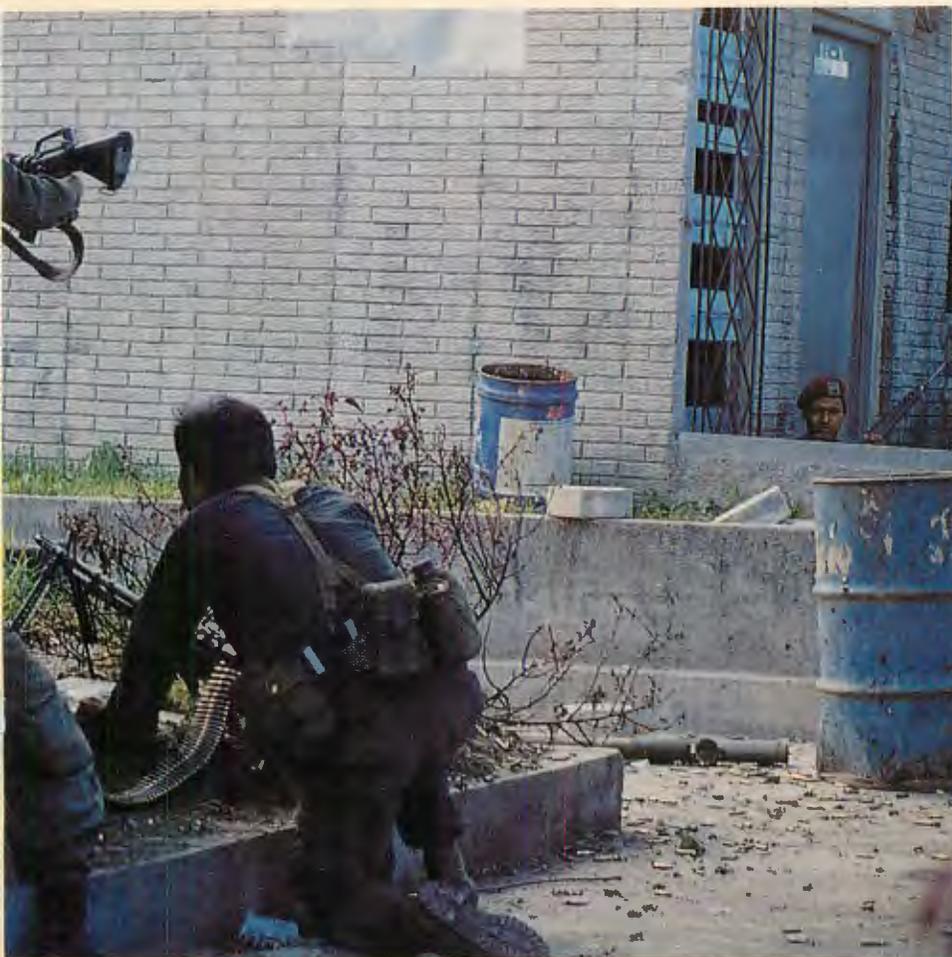
As the civilians filtered out they were collected in large groups and then addressed by an officer. The talk was meant



**ABOVE:** Airborne Battalion troopers load up a gun jeep before moving out from Ilopango. Photo: Ed Bishop

to calm their fears, explain the situation and bolster the people's confidence in the armed forces. It was an impressive sight, and I think accomplished its purpose.

Many civilians stopped by our position to give valuable information on terrorist locations and activities. One teary-eyed young woman I remember drew a detailed map identifying a school where the terrorists were setting up a heavy mortar. With this information the air force was able to pinpoint and neutralize the target.



ABOVE: Piles of weapons, ammunition and explosive ordnance captured by the Airborne Battalion during fighting in Soyapango. At rear is a row of brand-new East German MPIKMS-72 folding-stock Kalashnikovs. Photo:Ed Bishop

floods of people seeking to evacuate while others returned home to check their houses or get more belongings. As more people elected to evacuate they began to supply more and more information on which sectors were held by the communists. Also on Tuesday, the guerrillas began to desert. They forced civilians to strip, traded their uniforms for civilian clothing, hid their weapons, and mingled with refugees waving white flags. Because of the number of refugees, the airborne could not check out every person but they did a pretty good job of looking for terrorist indicators such as scuffed elbows and knees, and questioned anyone who seemed suspicious. One trooper captured a nice motorcycle and the two terrorists who tried to escape on it. It was later used by two of the crazier soldiers to recon guerrilla positions. A Toyota pickup was also captured complete with terrorists and their weapons. Although heavily shot up, it too became a useful addition to the Airborne Battalion's motor pool.

The single most important vehicle in the battalion, however, is known simply as *La Vacona* [water cow]. It is an old 6x6 military truck that has an armor-plated box mounted in the bed and some side protection over the doors of the cab. The vehicle was modified on-base in the two mechanic shops with permission of General Bustillo. There are three firing points on either side, an M60 mount over the cab and one at the rear. A hinged armor door at the rear gives the troops access to the center-mounted seats. Although the armor provides protection from only 5.56mm NATO and 7.62x39mm and not 7.62mm NATO or



The state-of-emergency decree included a curfew. As the sun began to set, the troops were carefully positioned for the night. The armored 6x6 truck brought us ammunition, canned foods and bread and evacuated our dead and wounded. It parked in the shadow of trees in front of our "TOC." Nobody minded the extra cover it provided. About 2100 two boys, one about 15 the other about 10, were caught violating the curfew. Their stories checked out

Civilians — the ultimate victims in any war — evacuate, to the rhythm of gunfire. Juxtaposition of Gs and civilians made it difficult for armed forces. Photo: Sygma/ Chauvel

but they were detained for the night with their hands tied behind their backs. In the morning they were released, probably having learned their lesson.

Tuesday morning began as usual with

RPG fire, it proved its worth many times over in the offensive. La Vacona was used to bring ammo and food, and evacuate casualties. It was also fitted with speakers so the psyops people could roam the streets telling the FMLN how hopeless their situation was and encouraging them to surrender. They were told they were surrounded, that they had no chance of getting out alive, but that if they would lay down their arms their lives would be spared.

One afternoon La Vacona returned from a close call. As the truck rounded a corner it was hit by a fusillade of small-arms fire. The front cab and windshield is not protected so the cab is the most dangerous place to be. Sergeant Jose Adalberto Padilla Flores knew this very well. He was hanging on the passenger door and standing on the running board when four 7.62 slugs ripped through the windshield, centered low on the passenger side. He dove and rolled for

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## He was hanging on the passenger door and standing on the running board when four 7.62 slugs ripped through the windshield ...

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cover and the troops returned enough heavy fire to back out with holes in the radiator and other places, but no casualties.

The air force was able to use information developed from civilians to destroy the enemy strong points with a variety of aircraft and weapons. They used UH-1M helicopters armed with 2.75 inch rockets and a 7.62 minigun. They used the fast Hughes 500, also armed with a 7.62 minigun. Dragonfly attack jets also served, firing 20mm. Maybe the most effective weapon system was the AC47 gunship. This venerable aircraft with three side-firing .50 caliber Browning machine guns is super-accurate, can fly high enough to foil the RPGs, and seemed like it could stay on station forever.

In the beginning of the offensive the terrorists included groups of young boys about 12-14 years old, with an older person commanding the group. The press-ganged youngsters were the first to desert, thereby reducing the overall active terrorist number — but effectively distilling the ranks to the older, better trained, hard-core men and women.

I was pleased to see how much the people appreciated having us around. One family prepared three meals a day for the major and captains. Other families brought soldiers bowls of hot rice and beans with tortillas. We were given bottled soda by *some*, and plastic bags of drink from others. I lost track of how many times I ate meals courtesy of various civilians. One homeowner, who decided to leave his house, turned the gate key over to us and told us to make use of the beds. That hospitality was truly welcome — at least

by me.

As we became a familiar sight, many people started to hang around or stop by the point on the sidewalk that we occupied and called our HQ. This was where the radios were set up and I tried to keep up with what was happening. Except for two chairs donated by some civilians it didn't look like an HQ. In fact, people kept trying to traipse through our spot until we began piling up ammo-crate scrap and other sorts of trash on either side of us to sort of barricade ourselves in. We had no trouble giving away metal ammo cans. The civvies loved them.

Our point also became a collection center for captured weapons and equipment. Before long we had lots of East German side-folding-stock Kalashnikovs and some RPKMs as well as M16s, G-3s, M14s and thousands of rounds of loose ammo in sacks. I began to take note of what was

captured and was amazed that most of the East German MPiKMS-72s were brand new. Many of the troops knew very little about the Kalashnikov so I gave some of the soldiers a class on the AK. I

was amazed to find out how many civilians — men, women and children — would gather around when I gave a class. They seemed genuinely interested in what weapons the terrorists had. One older man seemed very impressed with my class and thanked me repeatedly. Initially I was the only person in the battalion carrying an AK. Soon I noticed more and more troops carrying AKs, which made me wonder if this would create identification problems in the alleys and behind the walls. I had always gone out with at least one other person close by.

One afternoon a homeowner reported he could see terrorists firing out of a second story window about 75 meters from his back alley. Two of us grabbed our AKs and were led by the man to the vantage point. We could not see into the shadowed structure to be sure how many terrorists were in there, but they continued random shots in a direction away from us. We decided to simultaneously hose down the structure, aiming for the window and wooden door. This we did and waited for return fire. We didn't get any.

During the entire operation in Soyapango we never felt 100 percent secure, due to the incredibly difficult nature of routing hardcore terrorists who hid among the people. This was made clear countless times as the small-arms fire whizzing around made us dive for cover and then go looking for the source. One afternoon as I was adjusting the trigger on a 90mm recoilless rifle and thinking how things seemed to be calming down, we suddenly heard a tremendous whoosh-twang-and-boom. A PG rocket had arced dangerously

close and clipped the steel cable which supported the telephone poles. The cable lost tension and collapsed within a few feet of us and the rocket exploded against a concrete wall less than 20 meters away. An immediate radio call went up to two of the helicopter gunships flying overhead. We watched as the gunships circled and then saw a PG rocket explode in the air, obviously directed at the helicopters. The shot didn't deter the pilots, it only gave them the target they were looking for. I suspect the pilots didn't take kindly to being shot at with RPGs because they quickly came around, diving hard and rocketing fast and furious. It was an awesome spectacle, demonstrating the value of air-power.

Later the same day we had to hit the deck as 7.62 slugs skipped down our street in a furious fusillade, dropping phone lines and wires on the other side of the street. This time it was *friendly* fire — a Hughes 500 with 7.62 minigun was hosing down a fairly distant target, and we were catching the overspray.

Throughout the period, during lulls, civilian people left their homes in search of water and food. Water and electricity were off and the small food shops soon sold out to the shelves. We had a small shop near us that, as is common, was actually part of a house barred with steel grating and a window to sell from. Over several days we bought nearly all the warm sodas, crackers, candy, gum and whatnots in their stock. It was interesting to watch the selection dwindle almost hourly.

Quite a few civilians — carrying all manner of white flags made from plastic bags, underwear, shirts, pants, sheets, etc. — walked about seemingly unconcerned, apparently thinking the white flags they waved were magically bullet proof. We saw countless Salvadoran Red Cross Ambulances and trucks slowly enter areas, their lights flashing and loudspeakers requesting the terrorists to honor their symbol. Both the Red and Green Cross workers repeatedly rescued wounded and dead civilians. Many of the vehicles had bullet holes and shot-out windows.

Quite a few reporters roamed around, frequently interviewing Maj. Hurtado regarding the situation. Although many nearby civilian residents knew of "the gringo," I carefully avoided reporters. The last thing I wanted to be was some kind of problem for Maj. Hurtado. Whenever reporters showed up I wandered away in one direction or another. This became a big joke with a number of troops. I explained my situation to them and am glad I did. I was returning to the HQ position when two soldiers quickly approached. They were laughing because some "gringo" reporter was waiting to meet the "other gringo" — me. I wasn't nearly so amused as my two friends. I saw the reporter and he saw me. It seemed like a real good time to invite my friends for a soda. Afterward we wandered off to patrol the alleys for a while. When we



**ABOVE:** Salvo airborne troopers set up 106 recoilless and M2 .50 Browning in backyard of school to soften up a target. Photo: Ed Bishop

**RIGHT:** The "water cow," an old deuce-and-a-half modified at the Airborne Battalion's shops into an armored fighting vehicle, provided semi-secure transport for supplies and wounded during the counter-offensive. Photo: Ed Bishop

returned everyone had a good laugh. They told the reporter that his perception was incorrect and that I was a *chelli*, a person from Chalchuapa, an area of El Salvador with lots of tall, light-skinned people. The reporter left disappointed.

There were quite a few interesting characters in the Airborne Battalion. I respected them all and never questioned their sense of duty. Some, though, were a little crazier than others. Probably the craziest was "Jorge," one of Maj. Hurtado's drivers. Jorge shaved his head just before the battalion deployed. For the entire operation he wore a silly looking woman's wig under his maroon airborne beret. To top it off Jorge wore a set of eyeglass frames without lenses — which he would frequently remove, fog their non-existent lenses with his breath and then carefully clean them with his handkerchief!

"Caballo," a nickname, continually scouted around on the captured motorcycle, with a passenger or alone, armed with grenades and pistols. "Rambo" wore a headband and was the biggest M60 enthusiast I met.

Without a doubt the oldest and most dedicated anti-communist fighter was



*Continued on page 86*

**M**ANY gaps remain in our understanding of insurgency. Perhaps the most vexing is that we continue to comprehend only imperfectly the manner in which would-be revolutionaries are able to garner support. This is particularly true of movements which engage in practices that would seemingly alienate potential followers. Pol Pot's Cambodia comes to mind — Rohana Wijeweera's JVP (*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*) in Sri Lanka — or Abimael Guzman Reynoso's "Shining Path" (*Sendero Luminoso*) in Peru.

These three groups have in common their Marxist-Leninism and their trail of blood. All claim to be Maoist. All have enjoyed varying degrees of popular support. Pol Pot still fights to regain the power he once held in Phnom Penh, when his minions slaughtered millions, perhaps as many as a third of the hapless Cambodian population. Unlike Pol Pot, who remains alive, Wijeweera has not been so lucky. His second major campaign (an earlier uprising in 1971 by the JVP had left Sri Lanka convulsed in brutal fighting that resulted in 15,000 dead) ended in November 1989 when he was shot dead by security forces. Only Guzman is, for the moment, on the upswing.

It was this reality which brought me to Peru. I had been following the course of Guzman's Shining Path for years, filing away the clippings as they appeared. From the "thin" coverage, several conclusions seemed inescapable: *Sendero* was brutal, it was growing, and we didn't know a whole lot about it.

There lies the paradox. How could a movement be growing if brutality was its main tool? And was our befuddlement simply a product of our lack of data? Put another way, *who are those guys?*

This is the pivotal point in fighting an insurgency. *You must know your enemy and what motivates him.*

Sounds simple enough, but it took the agony of Vietnam for us to latch onto that simple truth. For our understanding of Peru, the Vietnamese particulars are important.

When we committed combat units to South Vietnam in 1965, the country was on the ropes. True, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Ho Chi Minh Trail and Chinese/Soviet aid were all important. But they weren't the key. What had happened during the decade after the

departure of the last French troop transport from the south in 1955? Why was Diem's regime already in complete collapse before our forces arrived? Even before the NVA arrived in strength, for that matter?

The obvious answer, as is well known, is that the Viet Cong put the south in the stew. Yet here we see the genesis of an argument.

# THE GUE

**Compania Lince troopers assault an OPFOR (SL) detachment during training exercise. Author found the men, and efforts, of units such as Compania Lince to be good, but hampered by lack of support and direction from Lima.**

Who were the Viet Cong? Southern Robin Hoods or creatures of the North?

Based on the best evidence, it now seems clear that while North Vietnam provided leadership, technical personnel, and some heavy weapons, the strength of the communist movement in the south prior to 1965 came from rebellion against Saigon. It was this internal reality that counterinsurgency experts such as Ed Lansdale tried to highlight, but it was the external links and elements that increasingly became the focus of the American war effort. Lost in the transition was a search for the reasons which led a sizable portion of the South Vietnamese population to support the communists — regardless of their ideology and their brutality.

Our more perceptive observers saw the reality of the Viet Cong's apparent blood lust, and its use of terror: it was in general highly selective and, therefore, effective. The Khmer Rouge, however, turned out to be precisely what all communists were in our nightmares. Killing more than were born, they perfected what one source was to term "autogenocide." Not so the Vietnamese communists. They kept their "blood debts" to a respectable level. Above all, they tied their assassinations and bomb blasts to furthering causes that people could back. By so doing, they maintained popular support.

Here we get caught up in the English language, for "support" in our lexicon implies "freely given," as in, "By winning the hearts and minds we can gain the support of the people." Correct semantically, this construction has led to an operations fallacy. There are those, ideologies for instance, who give their support because they are com-

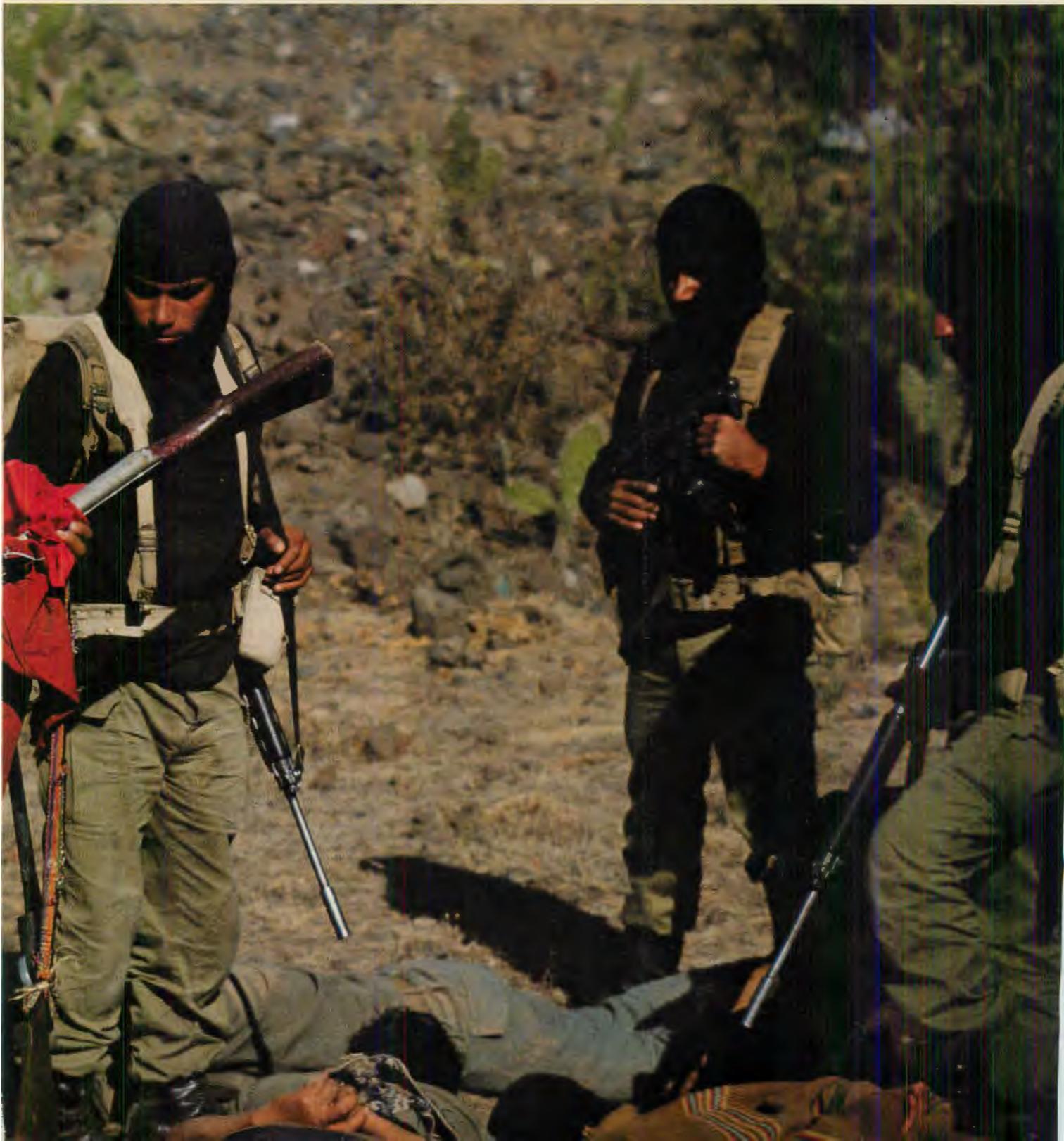


## SENDERO ANALYSIS

In our March issue, SOF correspondent Tom Marks described the phenomenon of *Sendero Luminoso* and Peruvian military attempts to stem this bizarre insurgency. In this issue he gives an insightful analysis of where *Sendero* came from and how it has managed to create a following in spite of its macabre methodology. A frequent contributor to SOF, Marks' recent stories have been filed from the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, India and Sri Lanka. A West Point graduate and former infantry officer, Marks is at home in Hawaii when not tracking a story for SOF.

*Turning “Campesinos” Into Killers*

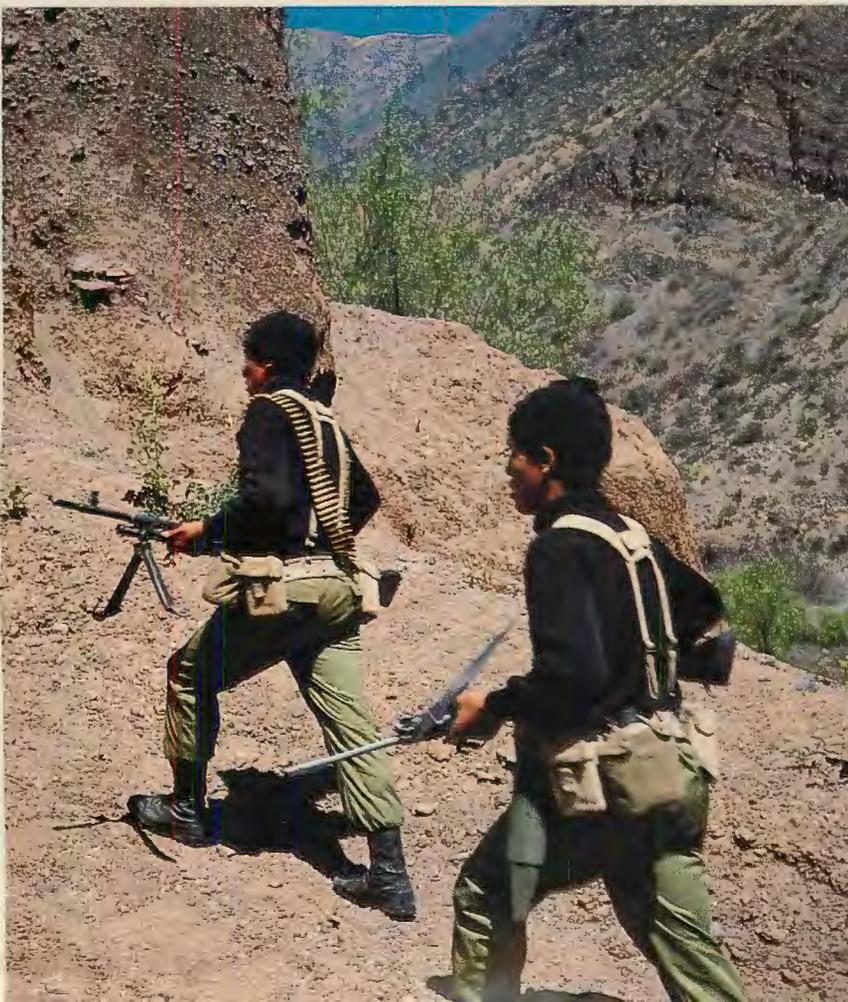
# RRILLA MYTH





**ABOVE:** A typical BCG (Base Contra Guerrilla) of Compania Lince (Lynx Company), manned by young troopers. Such bases provide security, but are spread too thin to protect all the people who would resist the guerrillas.

**LEFT:** The three patrols stationed at a BCG are disposed as follows: one on long-range patrol, one on local patrol, one on base security and training.



mitted to ideals. Most people, however, sit on the sidelines until compelled to do otherwise. They give their support when it becomes in their *interest* to do so.

Terror, as used by the VC, is but one tool for creating such an interest. It may show what happens to traitors. It may remove threats quietly from the area of operations. Simply because it is used does not mean the populace chafes under the yoke of the perpetrators. Quite the contrary can also be true. Terror can send a message that is accepted by the populace as painful but necessary. The argument for necessity is provided by propaganda. Further, in its most powerful form, terror can serve as the instrument of vengeance for pent-up popular frustrations, as it appears to have done in revolutionary China. "Collaborators, traitors, exploiters, criminals," and all manner of vermin can be dispatched with the approval of the masses.

Providing it is not abused, then, terror, while it may alienate some, also fortifies others. At the margins, it can push an undecided group into support it would otherwise not give. Once involved in the actual mechanisms of such support, the role that terror played in kick-starting the process is forgotten.

On the other side of the coin, terror has generally been ineffective or had disastrous consequences for the security forces, because they claim to represent a higher standard of conduct and morality. Democratic society, in particular, draws its strength from its ability to deliver justice to a society of voluntary participants. Thus, actions which put the lie to the reality denigrate combat power.

Insurgents, committed to total war and the need to eliminate certain elements of the foe — theoretically, in the case of the communists, whole classes — are subject to a different set of rules. They, too, must act in the interests of the people, but in the interests of the “revolutionary people.” To the revolutionary, the non-revolutionary remainder become as much the foe as the security forces and may be dealt with accordingly.

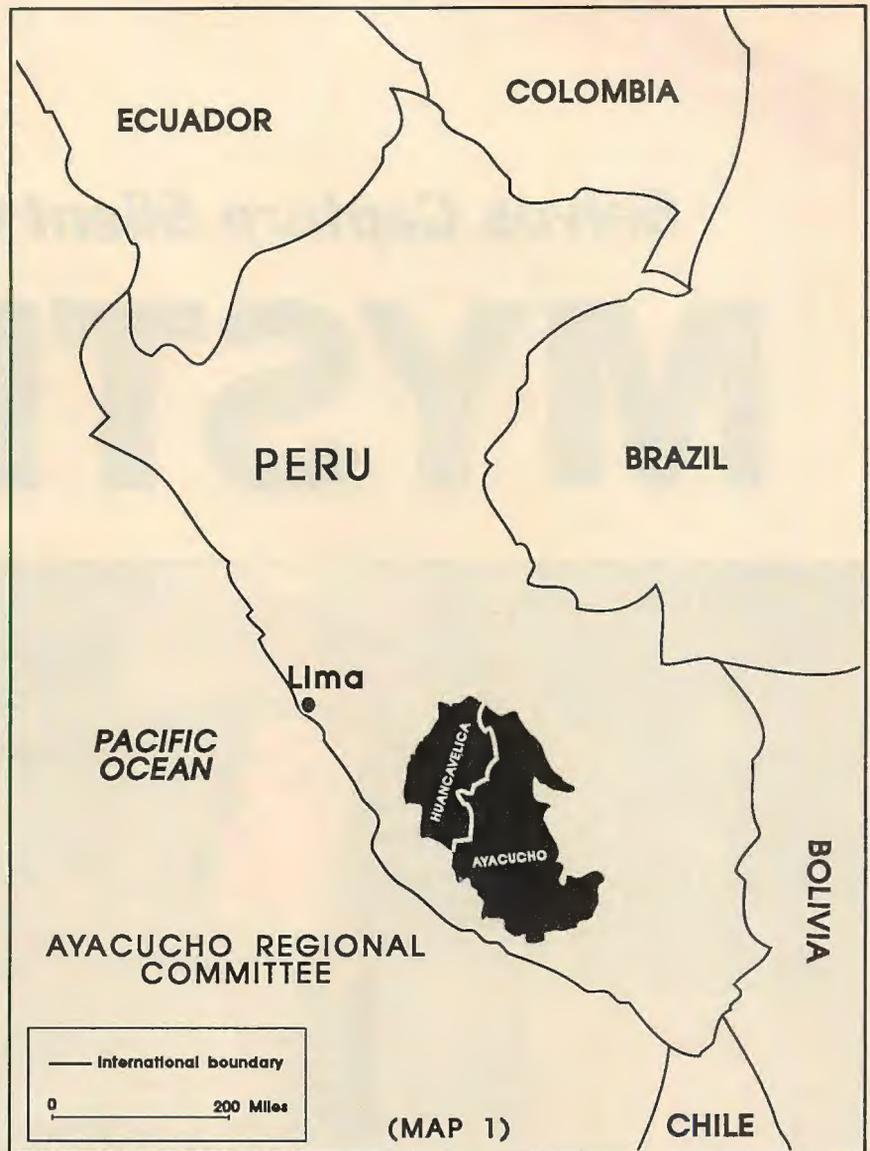
These realities of terror must be understood if Sendero Luminoso is to be dealt with in any fashion beyond semantics, for in Peru terror dominates every discussion of the Shining Path movement. And the prevailing explanation given for the growth of the guerrillas is their brutality.

Says the political officer at a foreign embassy in Lima, “It is a myth that Sendero Luminoso is a traditional insurgency. It does not enjoy widespread support. After its initial successes of 1980-83, it did not do well in the mountains of Peru, though it was able to retain thousands of sympathizers. The movement did not hold territory and began to emphasize terror in its fight against the government ... The primary methodology of the insurgents remains threats.”

#### Basis for Insurgency

Yet this explanation is only valid to a point. Sendero is certainly ruthless, even brutal, but this should not obscure the fact that it has been able to establish a popular base of support in some areas.

This should come as no surprise. On the surface, Peru would seem to be an insurgent's dream. An enormous expanse the size of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona put together (about half a million square miles) with 20 million people, the country is divided into three main ecological zones: a desert coastal strip, a mountainous interior, and a jungle-covered eastern portion. Topography alone would make national integration difficult. Colonial Spain added to the problem by tying its communications and transport network to the extraction of the country's vast mineral resources. The two major rail systems, for instance, stretching inland from the coast to mining centers, were never linked. The result of this pattern was



the development of a few areas and the marginalization of most others.

Towering over all regional competitors in the development race is the capital, Lima, now swollen to some six million inhabitants (30 percent of the national population). Here, wealth and power have historically been concentrated. While independence from Madrid came in 1824, little changed for the Indian majority. Reduced to the status of second-class citizens when Pizarro and 180 conquistadors deposed (and murdered) the last Inca king in 1533, they continued to labor after “liberation” under the auspices of Spanish-blood and mestizo (mixed blood) overseers. Land ownership and political power were concentrated in the hands of the few.

Predictably, Peru, as with so many other Latin American nations, was hit by a Marxist-led insurgency in the early 1960s. This was defeated, but in the process the military became radicalized. It recognized that there was considerable merit to the critique of Peruvian society's inequities. A coup in 1968 brought the men in uniform into power. From the center they set out to

Map 1 — Ayacucho regional committee, stepping stone for the Sendero insurgency.

reshape the country, nationalizing foreign concerns and carrying out a radical, sweeping land reform. Ultimately, economic reality caught up with them, and in 1980 the military returned to the barracks, leaving behind a mixed legacy.

It was that same year, 1980, that a splinter of the original Peruvian Communist Party, the so-called “Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariategui” (Mariategui is the father of Peruvian Marxism), launched a new insurgency in the remote, mountainous wasteland that is Ayacucho.

The “Corner of the Dead,” (SOF, March '90) as the name translates in the Quechua Indian language spoken by a majority of the population, Ayacucho was the fringe of the fringe, an impoverished area, twice the size of El Salvador, which had missed out. It had been only marginally affected by the reforms implemented under military rule. Life for the Indian majority

*Continued on page 65*

## Salvos Capture Silent ComBloc Killer

# MYSTERY



**S**AN Salvador, El Salvador. Death takes many forms in this tortured nation. One of its most sinister and terrifying variations is the almost imperceptible smack of an assassin's bullet. Most commonly, those involved in what the Soviets refer to as "mokrie dela" (wet affairs) are equipped with sound-suppressed firearms. There is, however, another alternative, albeit little used — until now.

For the last two months SOF has been tracking rumors of a strange small arms cartridge found among captured guerrilla caches in El Salvador. In what must surely be one of the most significant technical intelligence coups of the last decade, SOF writer Edward J. Bishop who was in El Salvador (see "Inside Salvador's Tet," Page 48) obtained specimens of this mysterious round for analysis. They are "low-signature" cartridges with some unique and

The 7.62x62.8mm low-signature ammunition captured in El Salvador is packed six rounds to a brown cardboard box. A plastic sleeve with six compartments holds the individual rounds. The bullet tips rest in the top channel of an H-shaped block of wood on the underside of which are stored three stamped-steel clips. Photo: Ed Bishop

startling characteristics. Their sound-suppression system is self-contained and the weapons designed to fire this round have no sound suppressor. The round is intended for one purpose only — termination with extreme prejudice.

The concept of special ammunition designed to eliminate muzzle blast, flash, smoke and downrange "crack" without use of a sound suppressor attached to its delivery system is not new. In the United States, development work on the still

classified XM76 project commenced at Frankford Arsenal in 1954. The project focused on development of a cartridge with the above characteristics that could be fired from an unmodified caliber .30-06 M1 Garand rifle. The payload was an 82-grain, .30 caliber bullet machined from cold-rolled, gilding-metal-clad steel with a Geon (a polyvinyl chloride plastic) rotating band, and driven by a captive piston within the cartridge case. Since all of the high pressures generated by the expanding propellant gases had to be contained within the system to achieve the desired reduction in signature, the cases were made from SAE 4140 steel rods.

Field tests of XM76 ammunition in Vietnam produced only mediocre results. The project was flawed from the onset by the requirement for operation in the M1 Garand. To prevent yawing in flight and to

# BULLET

by Peter G. Kokalis



ABOVE: 7.62x62.8mm low-signature cartridge (left) shown in comparison with standard Soviet-manufactured 7.62x39 ball round used in Kalashnikov. Note similarity of case mouth sealants and case lacquers. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

ABOVE LEFT: Two 7.62x62.8mm low-signature cartridges inserted into one of the steel clips provided. Note small firing pin in the center of the steel disc at the head of the case. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis



SOF's Technical Editor, Peter G. Kokalis, examines 7.62x62.8 low-signature cartridge captured from communist terrorists in El Salvador and designed for one purpose only — termination with extreme prejudice. Photo: Robert H. Hall



7.62x62.8mm cartridge case is beveled at the mouth and 2.46mm thick in this area to withstand the radial stresses which occur at the internal stop shoulder when it is impacted by the piston within the case. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

provide acceptable accuracy, the lightweight, low-velocity bullet needed a barrel of considerably faster twist than that of the M1 Garand (1:10 inches).

In 1967, the U.S. Navy issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a low-signature munition that could be employed in 12 gauge shotguns. The intended users were Navy SEAL and USMC reconnaissance teams in Vietnam. By 1968, a system was developed by AAI that used the powder-actuated "Telecartridge" device. This was a telescoped cup that extended to its full

*Continued on page 69*

# TOO CLOSE TO COMBAT

## Topnotch Photographer Becomes U.S. Army Target

by Patrick Chauvel

**O**600 hours: Just after breakfast. I'm driving around Panama City with two photographers from Reuters News Agency — Roberto, an Italian, and Malcolm, a Brit. We are taking advantage of the quiet day of only sporadic gunfire to take pictures of the city. After the fighting of the previous days the place is a mess.

Paramilitary groups still roam the streets and we have to hide our cameras under the seat in our taxi. Most of the groups give us dirty looks, but none stop us. We try to speak with U.S. troops at various checkpoints, but are told to go away or be shot.

The streets are very strange. Armed looters surround U.S. checkpoints, and the troops manning them have their hands full protecting themselves and are unable to take offensive action. Sniper bait, I think to myself. The longer I looked at them, sitting there like ducks, the less I understood why they did not storm the entire town during the first hours of the operation. Now the town is going crazy before their eyes.

0800: We are told that the Marriott Hotel has been secured. The three of us are happy to hear this as we can now return to our rooms, take a shower and grab more film. We head for the hotel in our taxi and soon find ourselves at the entrance.

Six U.S. soldiers are on guard, some lying ready for combat, others standing casually around. We exit the taxi and attempt to enter the hotel, but one of the soldiers forbids us to enter. I explain that I am a guest here, room 910, a photographer on assignment for *Newsweek Magazine*. I need to go to my room where my equipment is. An officer tells us that we must wait and so we do. I don't talk much with the soldiers but snap a few pictures.

The officer then tells us we have to leave. He shows us to the other side of the street. I remind him that his mission is our security as we are guests at the hotel. He

becomes nervous and pushes us away. We decide not to argue and take a few more pictures as we are walking away.

From across the street I see what looks like a good photo of soldiers standing by the hotel. I position myself to take the picture and so walk along the street to the corner of the Marriott. When I am close to these soldiers, taking pictures, we hear the engines of a convoy rumbling up the street. Two Sheridans are leading three Marriott trucks and one Humvee. Soldiers are sitting on top of each vehicle.

I'm laughing with the paratrooper next to me, and hoping these are U.S. military. They are. As they approach I take pictures, eventually getting close enough to the lead tank that I can talk with one of the troops riding on top. He expresses his happiness about possibly appearing in *Newsweek*. I then begin taking pictures of the second tank while walking across the street toward the area where the officer earlier told us to go.

Suddenly a fusillade of bullets whizzes through the air. Fire behind me, above me, and even from the Marriott itself. I spot bullet impacts on the road directly in front of where I'm standing. Looking back, I see a window on the second floor of the hotel explode. The convoy and hotel are exchanging automatic fire! Bullets fly everywhere.

It is like standing in the middle of hell. I don't understand what exactly is going on. The convoy is American and the Marriott had been secured by the 82nd since 1100 the previous day. None of this makes any sense.

I decide to head for cover and run from the middle of the road. Just as I'm about to dive behind cover, I'm knocked down and my gut burns with incredible pain.

Shit! I'm hit. Bullet impacts continue to sparkle off the walls around me. The

shooting between the convoy and the hotel keeps going for another three minutes. Eventually the convoy withdraws. I call for help. "Photographer down. Help!" No answer.

I perform a quick body inventory, but the pain doesn't allow much movement. I feel two small holes in my stomach from which blood runs out. But the pain is in my back. I feel my back and my hand becomes drenched. I can push my hand in up to my wrist. Shocked and amazed I look at my hand covered in red. Jesus, I have an enormous hole in my back. I am dead, cut in two pieces.

Fighting the pain, I move my legs to check my spine, and they work fine. The pain extends around to my stomach and stops me from standing up. On the wall in front of me I can see a large red splash and part of my jacket. It's like a nightmare. I close my eyes and open them but do not wake up; the blood and pain are for real. My watch tells me that I've been lying in the street for 10 minutes now. I again scream for help. No answer.

The shooting has resumed. The pain is awful and I hope to be killed by a bullet to the head. I've now been lying here for 20 minutes and the blood continues to pour out of me. If a major artery had been cut I would be dead by now. Even so, I can't last much longer. I have to get attention. I think of Vietnam and realize my only chance is a helicopter.

I cannot look around and do not know what is happening on the other side of the road. Soon I lose all bodily movement and begin to shiver. Afraid of losing consciousness, I write my blood type on my wrist and forehead.

Now I've been lying here for 30 minutes. Firing and screaming is still going on all around me. Then I hear a Spanish voice; the owner of the soda shop I'm lying in front of



Author is stopped from entering Panama City Marriott even though he is a guest there and hotel has been secured since the previous day. This is among the last photos he took before being seriously wounded. Photo: Sygma/ Chauvel

crawls up next to me. I tell him to call the soldiers for help. He answers —momento. I explain that there is no momento left for me. He cries and asks me not to die. This seems funny; how can you ask someone dying not to die?

After lying here for a total of 45 minutes a medic from the 82nd Airborne arrives, crawling. He looks at my wound and fills it with gauze. Another soldier is with him for protection. The medic pats me on the shoulder and tells me I am going to make it. My answer is no, I am not. I ask for a pain killer. His answer is no, definitely not. He explains to me that pain is what's keeping me alive ... It's true, no pain, no gain.

He takes off one of my shoes and pinches a nail to check for blood flow. I still cannot figure out who is firing around us.

## TARGET: SHOOTER

For over 20 years Patrick Chauvel has been shooting photographs and reporting on combat around the globe. Cambodia, Afghanistan, Beirut, Suriname, and Iran are just a few of the hotspots he's covered. He's known for getting *too close* to the action, a reputation that assures a steady demand for his photographs. He was on assignment for *Newsweek* to cover Operation Just Cause during this incident. See Chauvel's photos in "Salvador's Tet," beginning on page 78 of this issue.

I tell them to go away, that they are wasting their time and that I am going to die. His says no, no one he has cared for has ever died. He tells me to withstand the pain. Thirty minutes later, two more soldiers run to us under sporadic fire. Within moments, I'm lying in a poncho and am rushed to the Marriott and dropped in the lobby.

At last I'm back in my hotel, from which I was barred just two hours ago. By now the lobby is strewn with broken glass, tables are overturned and soldiers wander around lost. I cannot figure out what happened here. Somebody calls my name. I turn my head to him. It is Malcolm, the Reuter's photographer. Soldiers are carrying him in a chair and he looks like a king on his throne. He stares down at me and asks how I feel. "I am fucked," comes my reply.

Twenty minutes later shots are again fired outside. We are brought on the roof of the first floor, where we wait again. A soldier orders me to leave my cameras, which are still hanging around my neck. I am strong enough to rewind one roll of film, but cannot find the strength to do more.

The officer who forbade me to enter the hotel approaches and recognizes me. I tell him I would not be wounded if only he would have let me into the hotel and up to my room. He



Author/Photographer Patrick Chauvel alive but not yet well in Florida hospital shortly after being hit during firefight in front of Panama City Marriott Hotel. Photo: Sygma/ A. Tannenbaum

answers, "A feisty guy, huh," and leaves.

The airlift, my dream and hope, is coming true. A Blackhawk helicopter picks us up and flies us to a field hospital at Howard Air Force Base. A soldier takes my

*Continued on page 75*

# PANAMA KILL

## *Vietnam Sniper Runs Count to 39*

Text & Photo by Bobby Feibel



**E**RRATIC winds whip between the high-rise apartment buildings on the jutting peninsula that is Panama City. From a top floor of the high-rises, the view is impressive, if daunting. It is the stage for a brand of warfare new to the Army: a sniper-intensive battle on urban terrain filled with non-combatant civilians.

Sergeant First Class William "Luke" Lucas is on a knee beside the window in a tastefully decorated hotel room on the 15th floor of the Marriott. For several days, troops from the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, have been harassed by snipers.

Lucas was dispatched to take out the snipers.

"Four rows down from the top row of

An 82nd Airborne Division sniper in Panama carries M21 sniper system similar to that used by SFC Lucas.

windows. Thirteenth window, counting left to right," says Lucas' spotter.

"I see him," Lucas whispers hoarsely, eye tight against the scope.

Seven hundred and fifty meters downrange, a member of Manuel Noriega's Panama Defense Force, dressed in black, makes the mistake of presenting a silhouette.

Lucas sights in, takes the slack up in the trigger. His breathing slows, slows then stops.

The silhouette disappears.

Lucas waits,

"They're well-equipped," Lucas says,

discussing his PDF opponents later. "In a weapons cache not far away, we found six M24s (the U.S. Army's latest sniper system) and a Weatherby .300 magnum (a civilian sniper outfit)."

The system Lucas uses, the M21, is a modified M14. The newer system, the M24, is organic to the battalion and carried by soldiers in sniper slots. Lucas wasn't in a sniper slot when the unit deployed to Panama so he requested the battalion commander's permission to carry the M21, the battalion's back-up system.

Lucas had prior experience as a sniper. He came home from Southeast Asia with 38 confirmed kills. The request was granted, but his prior experience was in

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# GUERRILLA MYTH

Continued from page 59

was horrific, so it made sense that insurgency would blossom in Ayacucho.

Nonetheless, as myriad sources have pointed out, there were areas far worse off than Ayacucho — and they had no insurgency. Clearly, other forces were at work.

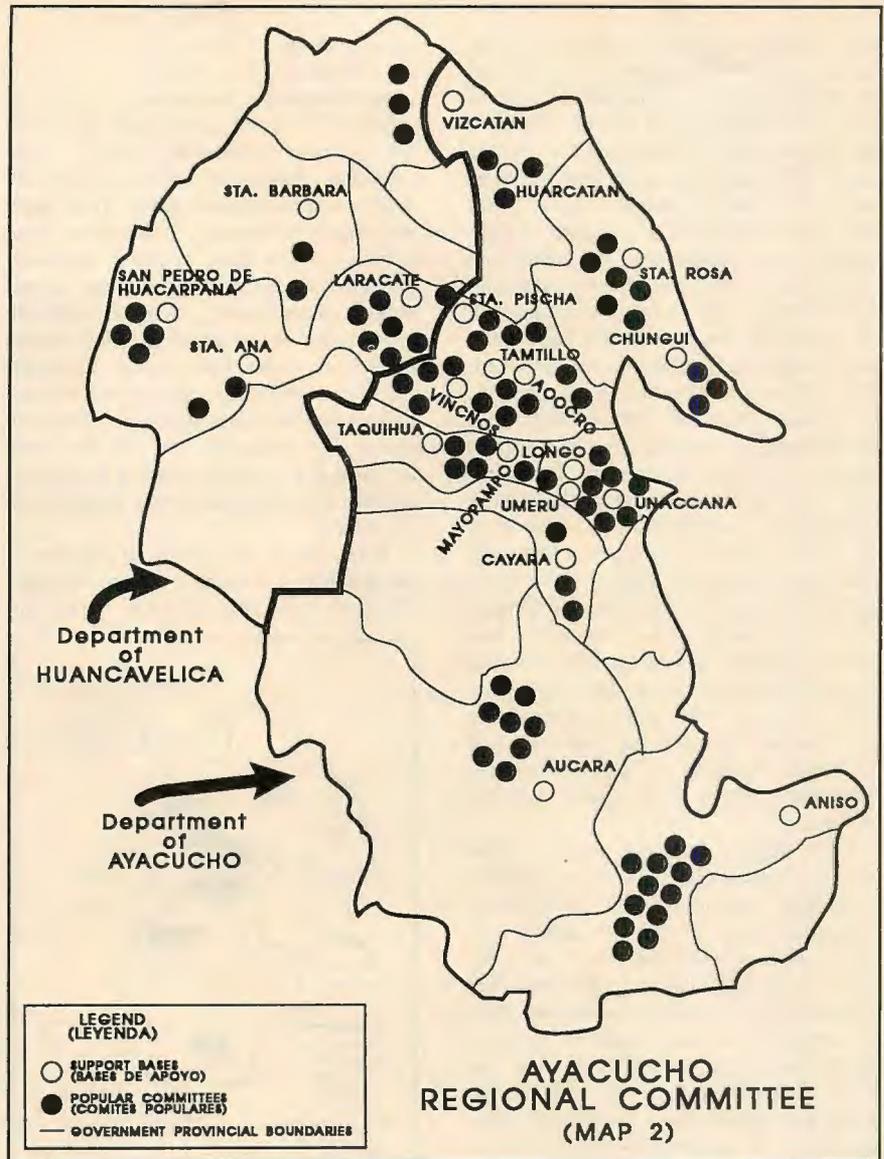
Opines a well-versed foreign observer, "There is no peasant revolt in this country in the traditional agrarian revolt pattern. Land reform has long since been carried out. Since bodies like cooperatives already exist, there is no one to rebel against. There is only an extraordinarily ineffective system. The focus of resentment is corruption and arbitrary authority, not land or the causes you see in a traditional peasant uprising. Peasant organizations built up by the traditional left are very anti-Sendero. Indeed, extreme elements of the legal left wage pitched battles against Sendero.

"The societal problems here are necessary but not sufficient to explain Sendero. Looking at the movement reveals a host of puzzles. Some will argue the Sendero has been able to exploit changes; others see it as a product of them. We know the leadership is not peasant. Yet no one seems to have been very systematic about analyzing it. Sendero has been successful primarily due to the isolation of the areas in which it has operated—but it also has been able to operate well in areas where a greater degree of organization is required. Hence, we're left with a riddle: Have societal causes produced activism, or has activism taken advantage of societal causes?"

Clearly, we're back at the puzzle which stymied us in Vietnam. In that case, we opted for the latter answer — and we were wrong, because societal causes were the key to first Viet Minh, then Viet Cong, strength. The error caused us to emphasize "search and destroy" when we should have been following the Marine Corps lead and carried out counterinsurgency. By the time the trauma of the Tet offensive of 1968 forced us out of the big unit war and into "Vietnamization," it was too late. Defeat followed naturally from our earlier failures. Conversely, had our analysis of the situation been correct, we likely would have pulled off a victory, because externally supported activism would have cracked under the sheer force of our onslaught.

It's a tough call. How does an analyst know which mode is the driving force behind the movement? Accurate intelligence provides the answer. Regardless of the difficulties, it is imperative that the identity and nature of the insurgents be determined. This reveals the substance, if any, behind the movement.

After numerous interviews and my time spent in the field, time which included examination of Peruvian intelligence documents, one thing is clear: Sendero



Luminoso is not a peasant rebellion.

"Is Sendero an Indian movement?" A Peruvian analyst with a leading Lima security firm echoes my question, then shoots back, "That's bullshit. Sendero is supposed to be fighting for the peasants. But what they do is shoot peasants."

That they do. They shoot them in increasing numbers, as more peasants, or campesinos as they're called in Peru, rally to the government and join military-sponsored militias. It's a bizarre turn of events.

Initially, Sendero seemed to be following in the footsteps of Mao. A radical hardcore at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga, located in Ayacucho City itself, was able to gain control of the university administration in the late 1960s. Breaking away from the Marxist mainstream, it formed — under the leadership of a philosophy professor in the Education Program, Abimael Guzman Reynoso — Sendero Luminoso. Using the university as its base area, it systematically established links with the countryside, reaching out to the peasants and purportedly seeking to learn from them.

Map 2 — Support Bases and Popular Committees within the Ayacucho regional committee.

Sendero's leaders even learned Quechua and married into the community. They used their classroom converts to provide entree and to further spread their message, which was that life would be better under a communist state modelled after the China of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

When the time was deemed right, in 1980, after more than a decade of patient organizational work, Sendero moved from the organizational phase to a campaign of violence. The principal target was Ayacucho's infrastructure, both physical and human: power lines, clinics, village (pueblo) headmen, teachers ... the glue which held the society together.

"Sendero has an ideology," observes my analyst source cited above, "to destroy society in order to build a new society. They don't want to modify. It's easier to build new than to change the existing thing."

Apparently, though, the armed columns

which sought to implement this vision were not composed of the peasantry they claimed to represent but were instead an elite of sorts. Notes the political officer, "Sendero has sympathizers in most areas, as well as armed individuals in towns. But the heart and soul of the movement remains youth from the disenfranchised, landless, former middle class. Frequently, the youth who joins Sendero will have university training, be 20-25 years old; his father held land. All the modalities are present in Peru for a popular uprising, but one has not happened. This [Sendero] is not a campesino movement. True, it can recruit from disenfranchised peasants, but at least 50 percent of those in Sendero Luminoso columns come from the middle class whose parents were small landowners. Almost all are Spanish speakers. It is not a European movement, however; neither is it pure Indian. It is mestizo [mixed blood]. Indeed, it is not certain there was ever a real link between Sendero and the landless, illiterate peasants of the mountains. The cadre came from the universities, and most recruiting was carried out among political and intellectual leaders in the countryside. These political and social leaders were the movement."

Adds another Peruvian analyst, "The full-time Sendero elite is very small and has a college education. But the typical *Senderista* is an 18-year-old Indian with only a grade-school education, if any. He will have an agricultural background. Yet Sendero is not an Indian movement. How can Sendero be an Indian uprising? Its main targets have been Indians more than the white population. If it was an Indian uprising, it would strike against the white population. Its support group is among the Indians. But the basic question is what the hell are they after? Many support Sendero because they are young kids who have been trained. Sendero takes them and puts the fear of God into them."

The pattern revealed by these two observations is consistent with that seen in other insurgent movements: leadership ranks composed of members drawn from society's elite, followers taken from the masses. There is a subtle difference here, however. All sources I questioned agree that Sendero's columns field a large proportion of elite membership. This implies a movement which is more "activism taking advantage of social causes" than "societal causes producing activism." In short, the wrong folks are doing the rebelling. It is not the poor and the dispossessed who are fighting for a better life — it is their social betters claiming to be fighting for a better life for the poor and the dispossessed.

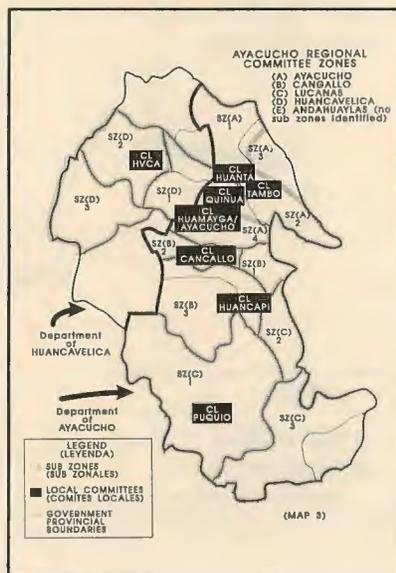
#### Insurgent Infrastructure

It is not difficult, therefore, to see the role terror must play in the movement. The lower classes worldwide are notoriously suspicious of elite causes. Some catalyst must push them into membership. In Peru, terror has served that role. But it is not

aimless killing.

"Sendero is brutal but not indiscriminate," cautions the political officer. "It is not committing genocide. We are not witnessing pent-up rage exploding. Rather, we are seeing carefully designed and calculated terror. They target individuals in advance, then execute them in ways which have symbolic meaning. Sendero's most recent tactic is the 'armed strike'. Subsequently, Sendero will kill several who violate the strike, bomb several businesses, and burn some transport. Horrible methods of execution will be used, ways which are symbolic in a mythological sense. For example, one of the most common is to slice the throat of the victim, because then the soul cannot escape from the mouth."

What makes such terror so effective is the absence of anywhere to turn for help. "There has traditionally been no



Map 3 — Sub-zones and Local Committees within the Ayacucho regional committee.

government presence in many areas," says the editor of a leading Peruvian news magazine. "Hence," as one source puts it, "there are no liberated areas, only abandoned areas."

In such a vacuum it only takes a few armed men to establish Sendero's writ. Their methodology and organization would be familiar to anyone who witnessed the Viet Cong at work in South Vietnam.

Contacts are made with a pueblo through acquaintances or relatives. Using their contact personnel, Sendero makes a number of converts. They form the nucleus of a "Popular Committee." The committee's leadership normally consists of five individuals. At the head is a political commissariat (Comisario Secretario). He is assisted by individuals charged with: 1) security — organizes mechanisms of control and defense (all movement, in particular, is controlled); 2) production — determines matters of provision and logistics (in particular, which crops will be

grown); 3) communal matters — administers normal societal functions such as justice, marriage, and burials; and 4) organization — classifies the population by sectoral group (children, juveniles, women, peasants, or intellectuals) these divisions then being used for study sessions and other activities.

This political organization gains its clout through its ability to call upon a Sendero column for muscle. It is the columns which normally carry out terror actions. Such actions are all the more intimidating because, while the Popular Committee officials exist in the open, the communist party organization itself remains underground in clandestine three-man cells (each has a secretary, sub-secretary, and an information specialist). The result is that no one knows for sure who is informing on them. This paralyzes attempts to fight back. Given the virtual absence of government presence, there simply is no one to whom villagers can turn for help.

When a region is riddled with a sufficient number of Popular Committees, a "Support Base" can be declared. According to several sources in Peruvian intelligence, the annual production in such areas is divided in half, with 50 percent going to the people, the other 50 percent going to the Sendero apparatus for stockpiling and use during operations.

Hence there exists a dual web enmeshing the people: the visible system of sectoral organizations, coordinated by the "Revolutionary Front for the Defense of the Village" (*Frente Revolucionario de Defensa del Pueblo*), and the invisible system of the party, with its cells. These party cells, in turn, are coordinated by "Local Committees" (*Comites Locales* or CL), which themselves fall under "Sub-Zones" (*Sub Zonales* or SZ). The Sub-Zones belong to "Zones" (normally referred to as CZ after the Spanish *Comite Zonal*, the Zones to "Regional Commands."

It should be borne in mind that in each case what is being described is a level of organization working in an area of operation. What I am rendering as "Zone," for example, is actually a "Zone Committee" (CZ) in Spanish. There is no rigid system for the assignment of territory. Sub-zones (SZ) generally correspond to government provinces, the components of the larger departments, but this is not always the case and may be modified at will.

Apparently, boundary changes are the responsibility of the Regional Commands, each headed by a Secretary and Sub-Secretary, working with five other staff members responsible for military operations, logistics, security, agitation and propaganda and administrative organization. Yet they do not appear to have the degree of autonomy enjoyed by, say, a Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) regional body.

To illustrate how this system works in

practice, we need only consider Ayacucho. The central organs of Sendero Luminoso are of standard Leninist form. A Politburo and Central Committee, together with a "Permanent Committee," or Secretariat, oversee party operations. These party operations are conducted in six regions nationwide, each headed by a party regional committee: south, central, north, northeast, the metropolitan area (Lima), and "the principal area" (Ayacucho).

That Ayacucho rates its own regional committee stems from its being the birthplace of Sendero. Actually, as the communists expanded, the Ayacucho Regional Committee came to embrace more territory than the Department of Ayacucho alone. Ayacucho Department thus comprises four of the regional committee's five zones. The other zone, however, is to the west in the neighboring department of Huancavalica. Regardless, all five zones are further divided into a varying number of sub-zones, normally three or four.

There is one anomaly that I have as yet been unable to work out. Each of the Ayacucho zones appears to have under it, on an equal status, not only its sub-zones (SZ) but also a certain number of local committees (CL). The operational reason for this remains to be determined, but it seems the few CL in question have progressed to the point that they may eventually be given SZ status.

Just as the role of these particular CL is unclear, so, too, are the lines of command vague between the political infrastructure just outlined and Sendero's military component. In a normal communist guerrilla movement, the primacy of politics dictates a chain of command that is quite standard — all military formations are controlled by party organizations. A district guerrilla unit, to cite a hypothetical illustration, would report to and take orders from the district party apparatus.

Not so, it would seem, for Sendero, where "guerrilla zones" (ZG is the Spanish acronym) are defined by operational necessity and may straddle any number of SZ (see map 4 for ZG in Ayacucho). Principal authority is supposed to lie with the Political Commissar of the ZG, but there have been increasing reports of military commanders taking charge. Since the latter, like the commissar and the three other ZG staff members (logistics, information, and organization), is a party member, the division may not be serious. Nonetheless, it is unorthodox.

More predictably, within each ZG is found the classic guerrilla tripartition of main, regional, and local forces, called in the Sendero set-up, respectively, the principal force, the local force, and the base force. Together, these comprise the "Popular Guerrilla Army" (EGP is the Spanish acronym). Recruitment is standard, with local forces gaining manpower from the most promising base force personnel, the principal force

drawing from the best local force men.

"Men," it may be added, is certainly a misnomer, since as much as half of any Sendero unit is composed of women. This high percentage of female combatants has prompted any number of explanatory theories, most of them unconvincing and more than a few contradictory. One source told me that women joined as a route to freedom from the horrible conditions of marriage most must endure in the mountains. More probable is the explanation offered by a longtime aid worker, "Women are not mistreated per se in the sierra [mountains]. There is a great deal of beating both ways. In truth, it is women in the sierra who control the purse strings. They function as equals, so it's perfectly logical that they should simply join Sendero like anyone else, not because they're particularly downtrodden."

#### Conduct of Operations

Men or women, the numbers involved are not particularly great. Peruvian intelligence estimates that in Ayacucho the principal and local forces field about 250 personnel each, the base force, 750. Only the principal force appears to have high-powered firearms (HPF), normally AK-47s captured from the police, mixed with some RPG-7s gained from the same source. The essential formation is the "column" which operates with no fixed TOE (table of organization and equipment). Groups of 10-15 personnel are the norm, with larger bodies formed by consolidation. All of these combatants must be party members, though the courses required for such status are not known.

Constantly moving, the columns nomad from village to village. That such relatively small numbers are able to have the impact they do amid a population, in Ayacucho alone, of 566,400, stems from their ability to project their presence and to deal with those who defy the Sendero political apparatus. With their combat power serving as a shield, the political organization works relentlessly to organize the villages.

"There is at least one instance," relates a journalist of long experience in Latin America and Peru, "where 2,000 villagers were brought together by three columns of 40 armed men, then given various courses of instruction. It's unclear as to what precisely the course content was, but plays and so forth were held. Several Sendero cadre reportedly got drunk and were strongly disciplined."

If they were only "strongly disciplined," they were lucky. Sendero's puritanical regulations are more often enforced with savage discipline. It is this same mode of behavior which has ultimately proved the movement's undoing in many areas of Ayacucho. In at least several recorded instances, whole villages

have risen up and, using homemade weapons, often no more than sharpened stakes, wiped out or chased away the Sendero cadre. They have then appealed to the security forces for assistance in meeting the inevitable attempt by the columns to exact retribution. Such help has often been slow in coming, but coordination and use of militias is improving.

Faced with this new situation, Sendero has had to push its expansion efforts into other areas. "The Upper Huallaga is the key area right now," analyzes one of the country's top military leaders, "although Ayacucho is the heart and soul of the movement. The Upper Huallaga is being used as Sendero's training camp and source of major financing. They are putting

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## ... whole villages have risen up and ... chased away the Sendero cadre.

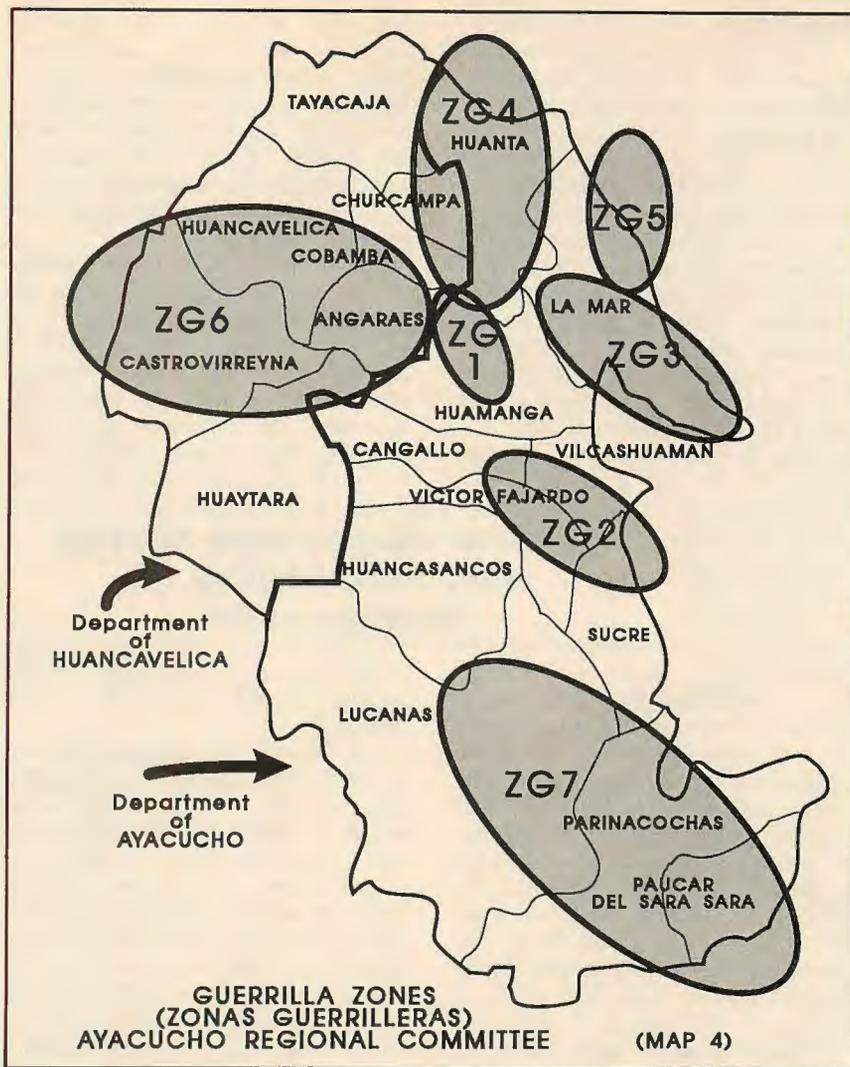
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together their armed forces there. Providing security for the drug lords is good training."

The dilemma the government faces is substantial. Peru is the source of perhaps 65 percent of the world's coca, from which cocaine is extracted, and the 3,000 square mile Upper Huallaga is the major production area. In an economy which is effectively bankrupt, coca planting remains virtually the only growth industry, and, certainly, the only livelihood for tens of thousands of peasants. Capitalizing on the ill-will aroused by government eradication efforts, Sendero has been able to establish a mass base. Unlike the 10-15 man columns of Ayacucho, actual companies have been formed in the Upper Huallaga, and deals with drug lords have produced M60 machine guns, 81mm mortars, and grenade launchers.

America's complete preoccupation with the drug war has not made the situation any easier for the Peruvians. Wedded to a strategy of plant eradication, Washington has financed an anti-drug fire base at Santa Lucia, north of Tingo Maria in Huanuco Department (population 609,200), from which DEA agents operate with Peruvian forces. Lima is constantly pressed to go after growers and refineries more aggressively.

Yet, says the high ranking military officer cited above, "The U.S. has its priorities and strategy. We fit in only because of the drugs. Our attitude is simple. Coca is just raw material. It is the refining which gives it astronomical value. It is the people on the distribution end who have the power and influence. The growers are small fish. Still, in the States there is no serious campaign to fight drugs. Down here we have 150,000 campesinos (peasants) who earn their living off the stuff. To go after them is a mistake. It is the drug lords who are the real threat. We help the U.S. right now, because as far as our security is concerned, there is no distinction between



Map 4 — Guerrilla Zones within the Ayacucho regional committee.

the drug lords and Sendero. [But] our policy is to solve the security problems first, to get rid of Sendero and then the drugs. Our first priority must be attacks on the system."

It is a serious situation. Buoyed by its successes in the Upper Huallaga, Sendero has pressed its organizational efforts in other parts of Peru, especially in the critical bread basket of the Mantaro Valley, located to the east of Lima in Junin Department (population 542,900). Additionally, it has tried hard to work in the teeming slums of Lima. There, paradoxically, where conditions seem most ripe for revolt, Sendero has had little success.

Failure in Lima's slums is but one of the many problems which have lately afflicted the movement. Though expansion in the Upper Huallaga was easy early on, under the current commander, Brigadier General Alberto Arciniega, progress has been more difficult. For Arciniega has flatly stated that security concerns must take precedence over the drug war. He allows the peasants to cultivate their coca, as long as they do not throw in their lot with Sendero. In pursuing such a risky strategy, Arciniega faces a host of obstacles, not the least of which is the staggering amount of money

available to drug traders. To keep his units clean is a virtually impossible task, but one he has thus far handled in such a manner as to earn praise from many sources.

In response, Sendero has turned to a more military-oriented approach. Observes a source, "There are strong indications that in the Huallaga Valley the military component of Sendero has been overshadowing the political, and that the columns themselves are not very well-coordinated."

Likewise, in other areas of operation, Peruvian security forces have begun to adapt to the requirements of conducting stability operations. Needing more resources, Sendero has abandoned its strategy of total self-reliance and now actively works for outside support, especially in Europe. Actually, the movement has always engaged in a higher level of contact with the outside world than has been publicized, but the greater activity now in evidence is significant. European "solidarity groups" have long been a source of major funding for Latin American and Asian communist insurgences so the threat must be taken seriously.

"There is no groundswell of support [for Sendero]," a Peruvian analyst states flatly,

"The Inca's Last Rebellion explanation is bullshit. Many people attempt to vote with their feet, to flee areas under Sendero control. But the Senderistas do have a sizable level of support, though all of this base is not necessarily active. If you put them as a political party, they would be for sure, a minority party, a tiny party even, but in some areas of the country they might be as much as 20-30 percent of the people there. These, to be sure, are not the most populated areas (e.g. Ayacucho, the Upper Huallaga Valley). In other words, Shining Path is an armed party. They are not a tiny band of conspirators. They do have a social base."

This social base allows Sendero to survive. As it presses to incorporate others into its mass base, violence assumes greater proportions.

Continues the analyst, "Sendero is very consistent in its approach to popular war, though it may be noted it is using much more the Viet Cong methodology than the methods of early Mao. Terror and coercion are for it very important ways to gain support, going hand in hand with propaganda and agitprop. Persuasion versus terror is an incorrect dichotomy in analyzing their methods. Indoctrination holds the key. The propaganda of the deed is very important. True, there are cases of sheer coercion. Yet, generally, there is a good balance between indoctrination and coercion."

For the moment, the killing continues. Peruvian figures cite 3,198 dead in the war during 1989, a sharp rise from the 1,986 killed in 1988. Yet it cannot be said that this rise necessarily reflects much beyond Sendero's effort to push its position. The movement continues to thrive not because it is riding a groundswell of support, rather because there is no government effort to deal with it — as opposed to a military effort that limps along with minimal support from Lima.

Reflecting the intense frustration felt by many at the inability and unwillingness of the government to deal with Peru's devastating economic problems, one Peruvian analyst states bitterly, "The biggest Senderista in Peru is [President] Alan Garcia, because he has done more damage than even Sendero ... This is the most degenerate government this country has ever had in its history. If the ones before were altogether a hundred, this government would be a thousand ... This is a country with a very unique way of doing things. I cannot understand the capacity of this country for suffering ... How much more are we going to stand? How much more of this punishment are we going to take?"

Perhaps not too much more. With elections scheduled for April, and the conservative opposition the odds-on favorite to sweep into power, expectations are high that national renewal is possible. And with it, people hope, will come the end of the bloody deprivations of Shining Path. ✕

## PANAMA KILL

*Continued from page 64*

jungle and mountainous terrain. Urban operations were a new twist, even to him.

The shade on the targeted window moves and the spotter catches the gleam of sunlight on a barrel.

"He's setting up for a shot," the spotter says quickly.

Lucas peers through the 6X Adjusting Range Telescope. He exhales, takes up the slack in the trigger and squeezes.

The rifle booms, echoing in the room.

"He's down. I saw him fall," says the spotter, eyes still glued to his binos.

For the rest of the afternoon Lucas watches his sector, glancing occasionally back at the window that outlined his first target. There have been reports of another enemy sniper team working out of the same building.

Later, Lucas sees a woman open the door to the room he fired into. She walks around the apartment and finally out onto the balcony. Her hands fly to cover her mouth and she leaves quickly.

"Judging by her reaction, I'm pretty sure we either killed him or hit him hard," Lucas says.

The sniper was on the upper floor of a high-rise apartment complex. Confirming the kill would entail clearing and securing the entire building, and the operation would be a manpower intensive, hours-long process. There simply wasn't time.

Again speaking of his PDF opposites, Lucas says that they were well trained but didn't apply their training in a well-disciplined manner.

"The positions they used were very amateurish. They were shooting from behind parked cars and from open balconies. The guy I shot was wearing black on a white balcony — a perfect target," Lucas explains.

The shot was approximately 750 yards, with erratic cross winds blowing off the coast less than a block away. Shrugging, he calls it a "good" shot.

"It's not state-of-the-art. It's a dinosaur, really, but still effective." Lucas half-smiles, running a hand slowly across his M21.

The same might apply to the old soldier himself. Not new — but effective even on unfamiliar terrain. ✕

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## MYSTERY BULLET

*Continued from page 61*

length when subjected to internal pressure. There was a plastic piston inside the telescoped cup. The shell consisted of a cadmium-plated steel case and base, 2.5 inches long with a slight taper over the last one-third of its length. The payload was 12 pellets of No. 4 buckshot (.240 inch in diameter), weighing 20 grains each. Muz-

zle velocity was 450 fps. It was percussion-primed and used a fast-burning propellant. Commonly called the "Silent Shotgun Shell," it was not completely silent, but did provide a lower sound signature than most of the sound suppressors of this era. Designed for covert operations, its lethal range was quite limited. Because of its low priority, this project never advanced beyond the prototype stage.

During 1969, the U.S. Army Concept Team in Vietnam (ACTIV) field-tested 10 Smith & Wesson Model 29 .44 Magnum revolvers modified with 2-inch smooth-bore barrels and rebored cylinders. Another attempt to eliminate smoke, flash and sound, they were designed for use by "tunnel rats." Initially called the Tunnel Weapon System, the name was eventually changed to Quiet, Special Purpose Revolver (QSPR).

The unique feature of this system was its special cartridge. The cartridge consisted of a nickel-steel case (0.523 inches in diameter and 1.87 inches in length) with a primer, propellant, piston, sabot and 15 Mallory ball pellets, each weighing seven grains. The muzzle velocity was 750 fps and the effective range was no more than 50 feet. Upon firing, the piston drove the sabot and pellets forward and then stopped as it expended its energy by shearing a series of threads at the case mouth. The piston acted as a forward seal to contain all the propellant gases and the resulting pressure. This greatly reduced the muzzle blast, flash and smoke. The sound was reported to be only slightly louder than that of the hammer striking the frame. However, misfires were all too common and the wound ballistics potential was unsatisfactory. The Limited War Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground eventually developed a four-segment multiple-projectile for the QSPR, but by then the tunnel rats had lost faith in the system. Moreover, the new payload probably contravened the Hague Convention.

No matter how close a hold is placed upon new technology, once it is fielded it will eventually be captured, compromised and copied. As we have seen, the basic concept and technology for low-signature, captive-piston ammunition has been in place for 20 years. It only remained for Ivan to copy and (in this instance apparently) perfect it.

The caliber of this clandestine cartridge is 7.62mm, as the bullet is nothing more than the standard projectile used in the ComBloc 7.62x39mm cartridge. Of boat-tail shape, its diameter is 0.310 inches. It has a gilding-metal-clad steel jacket with a steel core and a pronounced crimping groove. Bullet weight is 122.5 grains, nominal. The rimless (the rim diameter is only 0.06mm larger than the case body) case has an overall length of 62.8mm. It is conventional practice to round off the case length dimension to the nearest whole millimeter. However, in this instance that would dictate a nomenclature of

"7.62x63mm," which would duplicate the metric classification for the U.S. .30-06 cartridge. To avoid confusion, we have chosen to classify this new round as the "7.62x62.8mm low-signature" cartridge. Judging by its size, this would appear to be a rifle cartridge, but it is not.

At this time, very little is known about the pistol for which this cartridge is chambered. Based upon information from our sources about all that we can say with any degree of certainty is that the frame portion of the weapon is reminiscent of a Makarov or Walther PP/PPK series pistols. Although from the side it appears to have a reciprocating semiauto slide with a safety lever on the left side, it is, in fact, a double-barrel weapon of break-open design. It has a blued finish with black, checkered plastic grip panels. When we have obtained a specimen of this weapon, SOF readers will be the first to get more complete information.

As a result of our detailed analysis, we do know quite a bit about the cartridge itself. The cartridge case has been fabricated from either steel rod or formed by rotary swaging of steel tubing. The case is slightly tapered and beveled at the mouth. The rim diameter is approximately 13.93mm. Head diameter is approximately 13.2mm at the shoulder and then to 12.66mm at the neck, which is probably of reduced diameter only to insure positive extraction. This cartridge probably headspaces on the mouth rather than its slight shoulder (the distance from the base to the shoulder is 47mm). Case wall thickness is approximately 1.58mm in the body area and 2.46mm at the mouth (to withstand the radial stresses that occur at the internal stop shoulder when it is impacted by the piston).

There is a greenish-brown lacquer finish on both the exterior and interior of the case. Both the case mouth sealant and primer annulus are bright red in color. There is no headstamp — obviously an attempt to disguise the origin. Comparison of the case lacquer and mouth sealant with specimens of known origin, suggests the probable country of origin to be either the USSR or Bulgaria.

The percussion primer system is interesting and innovative. It appears to have been borrowed from artillery shell technology. Set into the base of the case is a turned steel disc held securely in place by a roll crimp formed after the internal components have been inserted. The unexposed portion of this disc is, for some unknown reason, brass plated. There is a small hole in the center of the disc through which the end of a small steel firing (or "transfer") pin protrudes. When the pistol's hammer mechanism strikes this pin it is driven forward to impact upon the primer, which is seated in a black, anodized aluminum ring housing. In size and shape similar to a 12 gauge shotshell primer, it has a conventional anvil against which the primer compound is crushed for ignition. The



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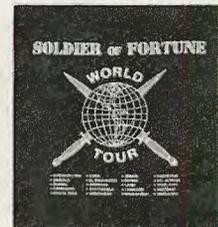
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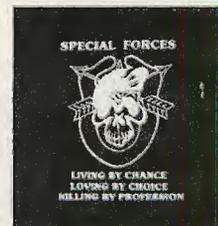
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primer is, in fact, a Soviet-type mortar ignition shell primer.

All this is somewhat complex, but with good reason. After the piston has sealed off the forward escape path of the propellant gases and their resulting pressure, and presuming the case walls do not rupture, the expanded gases will thrust rearward with considerable force. Gas leakage around the primer could result in damage to the weapon and possibly even to the operator. This problem plagued some of the early U.S. efforts in low-signature, captive-piston technology. The designers of the 7.62x62.8mm low-signature round would appear to have sealed this area of the cartridge in an effective manner.

Immediately in front of the primer is the aluminum piston that propels the bullet. It is cup-shaped at the bottom to hold the propellant charge, and during assembly of the cartridge it is probably inserted from the rear of the case prior to installation of the primer system and powder charge. The propellant is a light green, extruded tubular kernel powder cut into short segments. The charge weight is unknown, but very small. The propellant must be extremely fast-burning to achieve the high peak pressure required to drive the piston. The case wall bears tightly against the bullet to maximize peak pressure and a significant force is required to propel the bullet from the case.

Main shaft diameter of the piston is 6.2mm. At its base, the piston's diameter is 8.85mm. The piston travels approximately 22mm before it impacts against the case's interior stop shoulder to seal the front end of the case.

All this leaves us with a fairly heavy package. Total weight of the 7.62x62.8mm low-signature cartridge is 768 grains. For comparison, a World War II .30-06 military ball cartridge (headstamped "U 4 2") weighs 407.5 grains, nominal.

The 7.62x62.8mm low-signature ammunition is packed six rounds to a brown cardboard box. A plastic sleeve, closed at the bullet end and with six compartments, holds the individual rounds. The bullet tips rest in the top channel of an H-shaped block of wood inside the box. There is a plastic strip to protect the base end of the cartridges. In the channel on the underside of the wood block is a small plastic sleeve with three stamped steel clips, each of which holds two rounds around their extractor grooves for insertion into the pistol's chambers and possibly for removal as well.

We should be able to speculate accurately about this cartridge's lethality. Based upon the bullet's weight and the available thrust energy of the piston, I would anticipate that the muzzle velocity is about 500 fps. Even at the short ranges for which it was obviously intended, if fired from a barrel of the standard Kalashnikov twist (1:9.25 inches) the bullet would be likely to yaw in flight and keyhole upon impact with the target, producing unacceptable accuracy. Since the delivery system was

obviously designed in conjunction with the cartridge, we can safely assume that the system's designers have provided both barrels with the required faster rate of twist.

In living tissue, the wound profile of the 7.62x62.8mm low-signature cartridge probably would approximate that produced by the Kalashnikov, which means that the bullet will travel point-forward about 10 inches before significant yaw occurs. However, the temporary cavity will be greatly reduced in diameter and the bullet probably will cease its forward travel in the body with the onset of any significant yaw. Nothing special here, but don't underestimate its potential. It will kill — probably with an upper torso shot and most certainly with a close-range head shot.

Since the 7.62x62.8mm bullet is that of the Kalashnikov, most pathologists would not be able to deduce its low-signature origin. This system is ideal for Third World terrorism. There is no suppressor to disassemble, no baffles to clean, no wipes to change and no gas or powder residue to complicate cleaning the pistol. Nothing to do but load the chambers, aim and pull the trigger. Why double-barrels and not semi-auto? Because there's no slide clatter, and if you need more than two rounds for a clandestine snuff job, then you've blown the op, pal. The loudest noise produced by this weapon system should be the hammer falling on the primer's firing pin. And that would probably be the last sound you'd ever hear. ☒

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## FLAK

*Continued from page 12*

thank you for serving my new country, and welcome home to you."

In the 20 years I have been back in the United States since my Vietnam service, other than the military that pinned medals on my uniform and my own immediate family, I never heard that thank you from any other person, unless he was a veteran.

I was speechless. In one small, sincere gesture this Vietnamese refugee taught me the true meaning of Veteran's Day.

Edd Page  
Poulsbo, Washington

*We sent our best to Vietnam. And when it was over, Vietnam sent its best to us.*

## WHO'S NEWS?

Sirs:

I want to congratulate the men and women who participated in Operation Just Cause on a job well-done. And I would like to send my deepest sympathies to the families of those men who gave their lives to rid Panama of the drug lord Noriega.

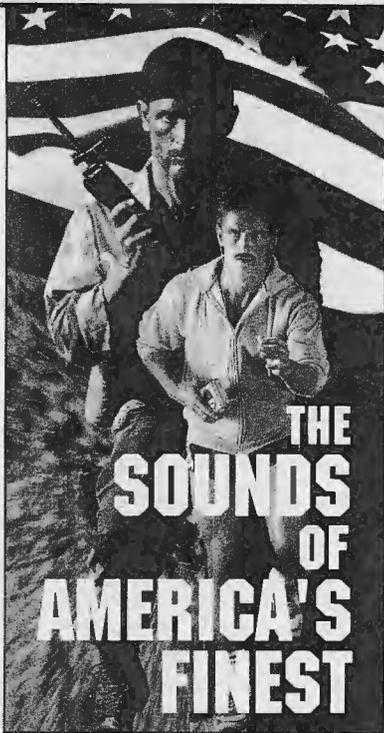
Unfortunately, the news media saw fit to second-guess the president on a tough decision, then spent unnecessary time interviewing so called "hostage journalists" instead of troops and their families. In the case of CBS news producer John Meyerson, not only did WCBS spend time detailing his hostage "saga" (he and a GTE exec were held for three days by a group of men and women loyal to Noriega, treated well, even bidding their captors a tearful farewell), but even interviewed his entire family. No reporter took one moment to comment on, let alone interview, a wife or mother of any of our lost men. I was livid.

These are the people we are concerned with, the young guys who were laying it on the line, and the others who already gave their lives! Only SOF will have the balls to address the issue that counts — the troops. Keep up the good work and I'm re-upping my subscription. I served with the 82nd Airborne from 1983-86 — all the way!

Bryan Galante  
Manorville, New York

*For once we'll take the position of defending mainstream media in its non-coverage of the troops involved in Just Cause. Journalists — both those in-country on 20 December and those who subsequently tried to get in — tried their damndest to cover the fighting, but the military wasn't having any. Even the DoD media pool (whose job it is to feed information out to the rest of the press) was severely restricted in what it could cover. In fairness, the military didn't need a thousand or so press geeks (most of whom have never heard a shot fired, much less in anger) running around getting in the way. Somewhere there's a happy medium — but no one's found it yet. ☒*

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## NASIR

Continued from page 43

wary of suddenly coming upon a road-block. The country was mostly very exposed, with abandoned villages lining the road. The moon came up and bathed the countryside in a subtle shade of pale blue. Far behind, the firing going on around Chanie continued; ahead lay Pakistan and safety. The road crossed a river, ice cold but shallow. We approached Ali Kheyl, the last village we had to pass through before beginning the gentle uphill ride to Pewir Kotal, which lies directly on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Ali Kheyl was now, thanks to regular bombing, no more than a collection of shattered ruins with a few ramshackle teashops and a small mujahideen base. By the time anyone had reacted to the drumming of our hoofbeats we were through the village and on our way to the Pakistan border. Beyond the village we slowed and congratulated ourselves on our success.

As we rode along in silence we heard shouting behind us. Twisting in the saddle we could just make out several mounted figures emerging from Ali Kheyl at a gallop coming toward us. This was no time to wait and find out who was rapidly closing with us or what their intentions were. We lashed our exhausted mounts into a gallop and rode, hell-for-leather, for the border. Under the bright moonlight the dust we kicked up shimmered in pale blue clouds as we sped through a tall pine forest. We were thankful that the bends in the road and the trees kept us hidden from view. My limited veterinary attention earlier was now being well-rewarded, this was a ride I could not afford to founder on.

The last hurdle was to sneak past the Pakistan border guards who manned a post right on the border. Normally they would not let you cross the border at night and this night we could not afford to be held up at the border for the irate posse behind to catch up and apprehend us. While the chase has all the drama of a classic western on writing it up later, at the time it was a heart-pounding, fear-filled, run for our lives. We had aroused suspicions at one of the checkpoints we had ploughed through and they would be in no mood for calm explanations or rational behavior when they caught up.

The saddle of Pewir Kotal drew into sight as we thundered into a clearing. We reined up and slid from our saddles. Despite the urgency of our predicament we had to approach the border on foot if we were not to rouse the border guards. It was a clear but bitterly cold night and we hoped that any sentry would be sitting close the wood-fire brazier and not too vigilant or conscientious.

Both our horses steamed heavily as we pulled hard on their reins and led them toward the border. Just off the road to the right was a makeshift shack that served as

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Some firearms advertised in this magazine may or may not be lawful for sale in California.

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- A. All of the following rifles:
1. Automot Kalashnikovs (AK) series
  2. UZI and Galil
  3. Beretta AR-70 (SC-70)
  4. CETME C3
  5. Colt AR-15 series and CAR-15 series
  6. Daewoo K-1, K-2, Max 1, and Max 2.
  7. Fabrique Nationale FN/FAL, FN/LAR and FNC
  8. FAMAS MAS223
  9. Heckler & Koch HK-91, H-93, HK-94 and PSG-1
  10. MAC 10 and MAC 11
  11. SKS with detachable magazine
  12. SIG AMT, SIG 500 Series, and SIG PE-57
  13. Springfield Armory BM59 and SAR-48
  14. Sterling MK-6 and SAR
  15. Steyr AUG
  16. Valmet M62, M71S and M78
  17. Armalite AR-180 Carbine
  18. Bushmaster Assault Rifle (armgun)
  19. Calico M-900 Assault Carbine
  20. Mandall THE-TAC-1 Carbine
  21. Plainfield Machine Company Carbine
  22. PJK M-68 Carbine
  23. Weaver Arm Nighthawk
- B. All of the following pistols:
1. UZI
  2. Encom MP-9 and MP-45
  3. MAC 10 and MAC 11
  4. INTRATEC TEC-9
  5. Mitchell Arms Spectre Auto
  6. Sterling MK-7
  7. Calico M-900

- C. All of the following shotguns:
1. Franchi SPAS 12 and LAW 12.
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  3. Encom CM-55

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the border post. Two of us could not hope to pass unnoticed and would probably be stopped but there was no time to stagger our passing. So we decided to split, one to pass the border post and one to lead his mount along a gully that ran close by. As Philippe spoke better Dari (lingua franca of northern Afghanistan) than I he could pass himself off as an Afghan from the Dari-speaking north. So I ended up in the gully and thankful for it, as I knew there was a fair probability that the border sentry would make Philippe wait for the border to open at eight.

We shook hands and wished each other luck and each went our own way. The gully quickly cut deep and hid most of my mount, which was grey and seemed distressingly luminous in the moonlight. Unexpectedly I encountered a barbed wire fence, which had to be pried apart strand by strand while I fed my reluctant steed through. Halfway through this delicate procedure I heard the sentry call out and a torch beam probed the darkness. I froze still, then heard Philippe call out a warm and affectionate greeting in Dari, which while not understood by the Pathan sentry, he would recognize as Afghan. I was even more grateful that I had ended up in the gully feeling safe and secure that I would be able to pass undetected.

A few Islamic pleasantries, similar in the local Urdu language and Dari, were exchanged. Then a short discussion ensued, in which neither party understood the other. I had to admire Philippe's calm manner as he continued to bluff his way while aware that the men behind us must be drawing close by now. At last I heard Philippe bid his farewells and the clip clop of his horse as he led it into Pakistan. Relieved that Philippe was through I concentrated on my own problems.

The night was cold enough to deter the sentry from loitering outside; his torch beam briefly passed above me and vanished without any call of alarm. I carefully negotiated the last strands of barbed wire and led my horse on only to be stopped by a second set of barbed wire. I took equal caution to avoid any noise as I negotiated this second barrier. This one was a little more tricky as a wooden board was tied to the barbed wire, keeping the barbed wire close set.

I took out a penknife and cut the rope attaching the wooden board to the barbed wire until it hung by one corner. Half-way through this delicate operation I heard the noisy arrival of the Afghans in pursuit of us. The duty sentry ordered them to stop and a loud screaming debate began between him and horsemen as they demanded to be allowed to cross into Pakistan. It really pays to ease your way through such problems. The sentry took exception to the knot of angry horsemen and pointedly refused to let them pass, insisting they wait until the border officially opened at 0800 hours. For once I was grateful to have found a dutiful sentry with a bureau-

cratic mind!

The first signs of dawn were creeping onto the horizon. Philippe was well ahead of me on the path leading down to Teri Mangal, which was beginning to twinkle with lights as people woke up in time for the first prayers of the day. It took a few minutes to clear the barbed wire. As I prepared to mount up I saw for the first time the other side of the wooden board that had slowed my passage through the last barbed wire fence. It was a pale yellowy color with cyrillic writing and a single large English word explanation. It said, "MINES!"

## TOO CLOSE TO COMBAT

*Continued from page 63*

passport, watch, money and belt-pack with all my film. I strive to tell him that the film must go to *Newsweek*, but I am now very weak and can hardly talk.

The place reminds me of the movie "MASH," pretty girls in camouflage fatigues all around. The doctor turns me over and finds out that I had eggs for breakfast. Now I know I will die. When the doctor can tell what you had for breakfast by looking at a hole in your back, you are going to die.

The doctor then tells me that I cannot be treated here and soon a helicopter flies me to Gorgas Military Hospital. Here, in a matter of seconds, I'm stripped of my clothes, given shots, pipes are stuck up my nose and I'm laid on the operating table.

A doctor smiles at me and says this is the end of the pain. He puts a mask on my face, under which I fall asleep.

Three hours and 30 minutes ago I was shot to death. Much later I wake up. First thing I see is a priest looking over me. I say, "Shit." He is astonished and asks whether I am a Catholic. My answer is yes, I am a Catholic. He gives me his benediction.

A few hours later a surgeon sits on my bed and introduces himself as Dr. Lopes. He explains that he is a Honduran surgeon and he operated on me. He says I'm very lucky and that I lost a lot of blood and was close to dying.

I ask him how much damage I have. He answers with a big smile and says it's okay, "I cut your balls off, but you can live without them. No problem."

What!

"No, no, I mean, we cut parts of your bowels off, cleaned the inside, patched up ten holes and left the exit open to drain. You should make it," he said. Hearing that was a relief.

I tried to find whatever the fuck good there was in this event covering the U.S. military. My life was saved under fire by two U.S. soldiers, Sergeant James Anderson and Specialist Timothy Deal, from the 3rd Platoon, 82nd Airborne. They ran to

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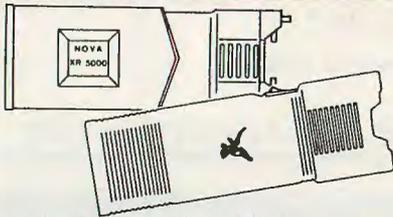
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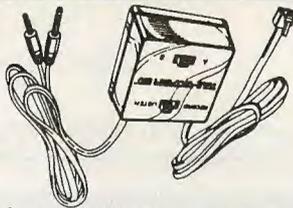
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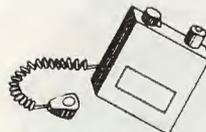
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help me and stayed with me until I could be placed into competent hands.

I'll feel better about this entire fiasco when the officer who ignored his mission and forbade us from entering our hotel says he is sorry. But I'll never forget the unknown coward whose jitter fire started this firefight. Final tally for his nervous trigger finger: One Spanish news correspondent KIA, two photographers WIA, including myself, a witness still alive. ✕

## DEATH IN THE DARK

*Continued from page 26*

1.8 inches and a height of 2.8 inches.

A switch on the left side of the battery housing controls the power source. Depress the spring-loaded lock-button and rotate the lever clockwise until it is positioned directly over the lock-button. When you look through the ocular you may notice a fine, hexagonal, honeycomb grid pattern in addition to the viewed image. This grid is part of the intensifier tube's manufacturing process. If you rotate the power switch to its uppermost position, a red light will blink intermittently at the bottom of the viewing screen. It indicates an adequate battery charge. At center, the resolution of the NL-100-3 is 2.1 Lp/mRad (2.1 Line pairs per milliRadian).

There is a removable protective cap over the objective lens with a pin hole in the center to permit diopter adjustment and zeroing the laser designator during daylight hours. A rubber eyecup on the ocular lens can be easily employed by those with, or without, eyeglasses. In addition to the manually operated switch, this is an asset, as the eyecup on both the U.S. AN/PVS-2 and AN/PVS-4 must be kept depressed against the face to turn on the power source and view the target area — an awkward procedure for those wearing eyeglasses.

Since there is no reticle pattern on the NL-100-3 viewing screen, a laser designator must be incorporated into the system for use as a weapon sight. The word "laser" is an acronym for "light amplification by simulated emission of radiation." A laser is a device for creating electromagnetic radiation at considerably higher radiant energy than normal light.

A laser generator is an optically active medium (either gas, solid or liquid) held within an optical cavity between two reflecting surfaces. The simplest method of producing laser radiation is to fill an electric discharge tube with a mixture of helium and neon and to apply a high voltage across the tube to ionize the gas mixture. To obtain laser radiation from the tube, the ends of the tube are provided with mirrors facing each other. As the light reflects back and forth between the mirrors, it becomes amplified. During the light's oscillation back and forth from one mirror to another, the light quanta, or photons, collide with

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the electrons of the gaseous atoms and transfer photonic energy to the electrons, causing them to re-emit photons with the same frequency and wavelength. As this action increases the number of photons in the tube, the intensity of the oscillating light is further amplified. To permit projection of the laser radiation to the outside, one of the mirrors is made 40 to 50 percent transmissive. The accumulated photon radiation within the tube projects through this output mirror in a pencil beam of a diameter equal to the optical aperture of the tube.

An AIM-1D laser designator was provided for SOF's test and evaluation. Manufactured by International Technologies (Lasers) Ltd. (Dept. SOF, 12 Hachoma St., P.O. Box 4099, Rishon Letzion 75140, Israel), the AIM-1D weighs less than 9 ounces complete with two AA batteries and remote control cable. This compact package of laser power measures only 3.68 x 2.28 x 1.96 inches (LxHxW). It can be clamped to the barrel of any number of handguns, submachine guns, rifles, shotguns and squad automatic weapons. A filter over the front mirror permits only the infrared portion of the electromagnetic spectrum to be projected downrange. When coupled with second generation passive night-vision equipment, this beam projects as a bright dot on the viewing screen. There is no change in the beam's diameter out to 2 kilometers.

We attached both the AIM-1D and NL-100-3 to an M16A2 rifle. Adjustment knobs on the bottom and right side of the AIM-1D allow the mean point of impact (mpi) of the laser beam to be moved in a vertical or lateral direction, respectively. The operation switch has five positions: Off, Low (50 hours of battery life), High (10 hours of battery life) and remote High and remote Low. The last two are for use with the remote control cable, which should be mounted to the left side of the handguards with a "Ranger" band or similar elastic strap. Since the infrared beam can be detected by others, it's advisable to first acquire the target through the NL-100-3 and then switch on the laser designator by means of the remote control cable for only as long as it takes to fire the shot(s) required to neutralize the enemy. The black-anodized aluminum mount places the operator's eye about 1½ inches from the ocular face and this is just about ideal. That the scope sits too high above the barrel is a function of the M16 series carrying handle, not the NL-100-3 or its mount. Consequently, always remember that at extremely close contact distances you must aim for the top of the head for your shots to impact between the eyes of the target. Noga Lite Ltd. also can provide mounts for the M14, Galil, Kalashnikov and just about any other military rifle.

SOF tested this equipment under a variety of night environments ranging from starlight-only to a full moon. As the ambient light increased in intensity, so did the useful range. The image was sharp and

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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.

#107 September 1986: WEAPONS —H&Ks bolt-action sniper rifles; SOVIET UNION —First look at captured Soviet grenade launcher; HANDGUNS —Taurus M85 revolver; DOMESTIC AFFAIRS —Strike violence in the USA; SPECIAL UNITS —UDT teams in Korea.

#108 October 1986: BORDER PATROL —Ops on the Tex/Mex border; WEAPONS —Kalashnikov side folder; CENTRAL AMERICA —Sandinistas bungle Honduran invasion; HISTORY —Saga of General Jack Singlaub; SOUTHEAST ASIA —Inside Cambodia.

#109 November 1986: WEAPONS —Caspian Arms .45; VIETNAM —Civilian MIAs in Indochina; WEAPONS —Skorpion machine pistol; HISTORY —Dezinformatsia, Soviets con Allies in the Balkans; MIDDLE EAST —SOF on the green line in Beirut; ELITE UNITS —Korea's mountain infantry.

#110 December 1986: VIETNAM —MIA lab scandal uncovered; ELITE UNITS —Norway's cold weather commandos; training U.S. Army snipers; WEAPONS —Israeli FALs; AFGHANISTAN —Lance Motley's holy war combat tour.

#111 January 1987: WEAPONS —French FA MAS Bullpup; CENTRAL AMERICA —Tales of a combat correspondent; PHILIPPINES —In the bush with the New People's Army; VIETNAM —Op Apache Snow, the taking of Hamburger Hill; AFRICA —South Africa's native trackers.

#112 February 1987: MARINES —Carlos Hathcock, super sniper; AFRICA—Ethiopia's Eritrean rebels; WEAPONS —H&K clones go full auto; Hungarian AKM; HISTORY—Singlaub with the OSS in the CBI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#119 September 1987: COMBAT REPORTS

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

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

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

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

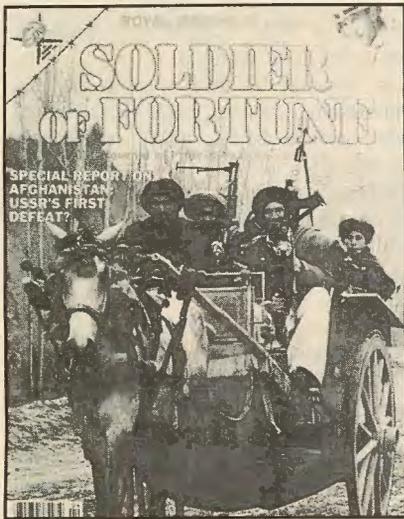
#123 January 1988: USA —Spetsnaz invade America; U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division; VIETNAM —America's missed opportunity to invade the north; BURMA —Open season on Duck Mountain; SOF correspondent jailed; AFRICA —SOF rescues missionaries from Mozambique; WEAPONS —SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 4 —Tank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

#124 February 1988: AFRICA —Eritrea's fatal females; ELITE UNITS —U.S. Navy SEALs in Libya; VIETNAM —Spike team shot out of Laos; SPAIN —"Foreign" legion for nationals only; WEAPONS —Sandinista foot-poppers; Army's M9 bayonet; SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 5 —General purpose MGs.

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

#126 April 1988: AFGHANISTAN —U.S. media spreads disinformation; Four battles that turned the tide; Endgame: Soviets and muj jockey for position; ARABIA —Royal Marine leads Omanis through ambush alley; VIETNAM —Two-tour vet flies his last mission over North





Vietnam; WEAPONS —SOF T&Es Chinese weapons Pt. 7—Pistols.

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

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

#129 July 1988: COMBAT REPORTS —SOF editor chases terrors in Angola; Afghans fire up fort at Shah Kabul; ELITE UNITS —Sri Lanka's Special Force; Philippine Scout Rangers in training; VIETNAM —Deadly day for Aussies; WEAPONS —Remington M24 sniper weapon system.

#130 August 1988: COMBAT REPORTS: SOF staffer spends five months inside Nicaragua; DEA, U.S. Army and Bolivian Leopards on drug raid; ADVENTURE —Hunting for Japanese war booty in Philippines; WEAPONS —Glock's compact 17.

#131 September 1988: AFGHANISTAN —SOF team in-country to witness Soviet withdrawal; FALKLANDS —Charting the invasion beaches; POWS —Japanese holdouts on Guam after WW II; WEAPONS —South Africa's SS-77 GPMG; S. Africa's R4 rifle.

#132 October 1988: AFGHANISTAN —SOF team joins muj in attack; DRUG WAR —A look at U.S. Customs Air Branch flying aces; ELITE UNITS —Marine's 3rd Force Recon; SRI LANKA —In the field with insurgent Tigers of Eelam; WEAPONS —Complete guide to AK imports.

#133 November 1988: GRENADA —Part one of the real story behind the invasion; CENTRAL AMERICA —Winning hearts and Mayans in Guatemala; AFGHANISTAN —With muj convoy in bandit country; WEAPONS —Remington's Model 870.

#134 December 1988: GRENADA —Part two, the 82nd Airborne's role in securing the island; MIDDLE EAST —Israeli commandos kill Abu Jihad; Next target —Abu Nidal, called the most dangerous man in the world. AFRICA —20th century's most successful merc, the

Robert Denard story; WEAPONS —Knives for combat; wound ballistics.

#135 January 1989: SPETSNAZ —SOF hunts Soviet elite in Alaska; HISTORY —U.S. plans to strike Japan before Pearl Harbor; GRENADA —Marines role in Op Urgent Fury; ELITE UNITS —SOF with Salvador's ATLAT-CATL; Irish Rangers; Jerusalem's sappers; WEAPONS —Wound ballistics part two.

#136 February 1989: MERCs —The Barry Sadler story; Merc bar in Guatemala City; AFRICA —SOF in Chad; HISTORY —Brits face Afghan death march; PHILIPPINES —Government victory on Panay; WEAPONS —Guns of Ovamboland; Ruger mine thirty; Swedish Ks.

#137 March 1989: AFGHANISTAN —SOF debriefs four Afghan helicopter pilots; SOUTH AMERICA —SOF staffer wounded during Peruvian live fire; WEAPONS —Taurus .357 Magnums; Today's surface-to-Air missiles keep aircraft at bay; U.S. Army sniper rifle specs ill-conceived.

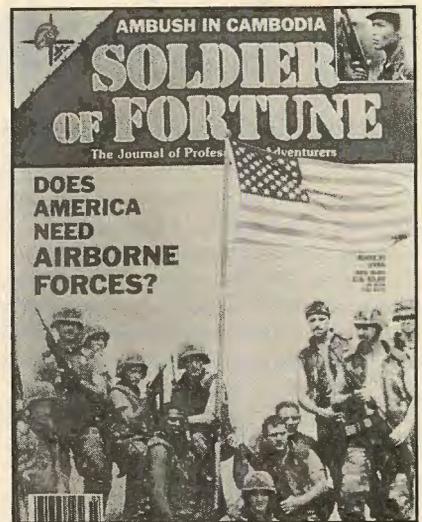
#138 April 1989: MIDDLE EAST —Golani Brigade's battle at Beaufort Castle; Beirut's forever war; DRUG WAR —SOF in Peru's cocaine valley; AFGHANISTAN —Muj fighting to win the peace; WEAPONS —10mm handguns; Demented inventions; UZI caliber conversions.

#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.

#140 June 1989: DRUG WAR —Crack in America and L.A. gang warfare; AFGHANISTAN —Muj defend Safed Koh mountain passes; MILAN beginning to appear in Afghanistan; AFRICA —Mike Hoare's Congo Mercs' Masterpiece; WEAPONS —Applegate-Fairbairn classic smatchet; H&K's P7K3 pistol.

#141 July 1989: SOUTHEAST ASIA —Escape and Evasion in Cambodia; ELITE UNITS —Colombia's Lanceros; STATESIDE —Crack and drug gangs invade the heartland; AFGHANISTAN —Congressmen Wilson gets muj Stinger missiles; WEAPONS —New Detonics compact .45; Facts on gun ownership.

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ONS —S. Africa's 155mm artillery.

#143 September 1989: VIETNAM TODAY —Ho Chi Minh City's ARVN vets; AFRICA —Combat tour to central Angola; Insiders account of Rhodesian Fire Force's air component; ELITE UNITS —SAS ops in Northern Ireland; MERC WORK —CTU rescues American held overseas; WEAPONS —H-S Precision's take-down sniper system.

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#145 November 1989: ELITE UNITS —What it takes to wear the green beret; British commando gunners; SWA/Namibia's Koevoet counterinsurgency police; AFRICA —SOF staffer again rescues westerners from Mozambique; WEAPONS —Soviet LAW, RPG-22; North American Arms' pint-sized .22; Finally a knife designed for U.S. airborne.

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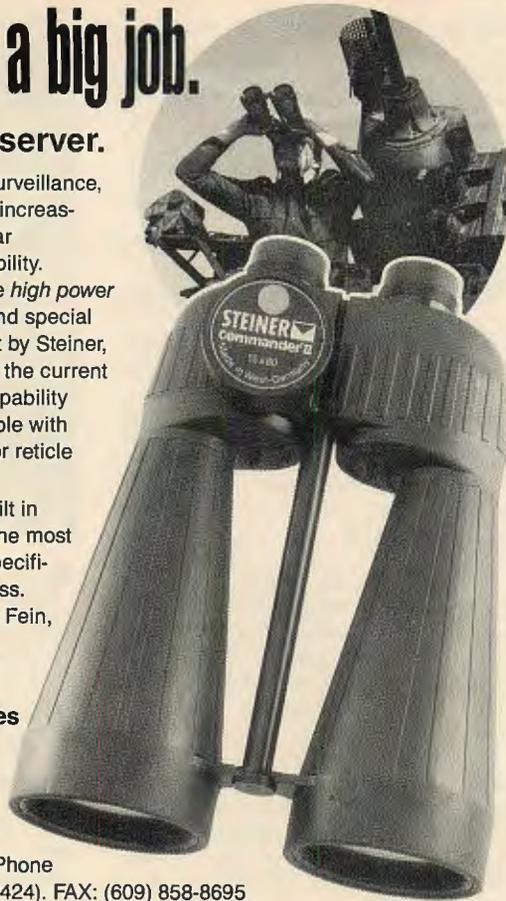
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In addition to their obvious military applications, modern night-vision equipment, such as the NL 100-3, can be used for security surveillance (border patrol, maritime, street gang, drug control, criminal or counterterrorist), night photography (35mm SLR and video camera adapters are available), detection of IR sources, paramedic and fire fighting needs, search-and-rescue operations and astronomy.

International Logistics Network (I.L.N.) imports a diverse range of other night-vision equipment, including: the NL-100-2 with a 50mm objective lens and 2X magnification; the first generation NL-10 scope (with either 25mm or 50mm objective lenses) which weighs only 14.5 ounces and has a built-in IR illuminator (for examining maps or other objects in extremely dark conditions); the cost-effective second generation NL-50 with either 25mm, 50mm or 75mm objective lenses and IR illuminator; the NL-200, which is an AN/PVS-4 adapted for AA batteries; the Model #5051 EL-OP first generation passive Starlight binocular goggles; and the Model #5053 EL-OP second generation passive binocular goggles. Very shortly a version of the NL-100 series will be introduced with a built-in reticle pattern and internal zeroing adjustment controls that will cancel the requirement for a laser designator when this scope is employed as a weapon sight. Contact I.L.N. directly for further information about these products and their current price list (catalog \$2).

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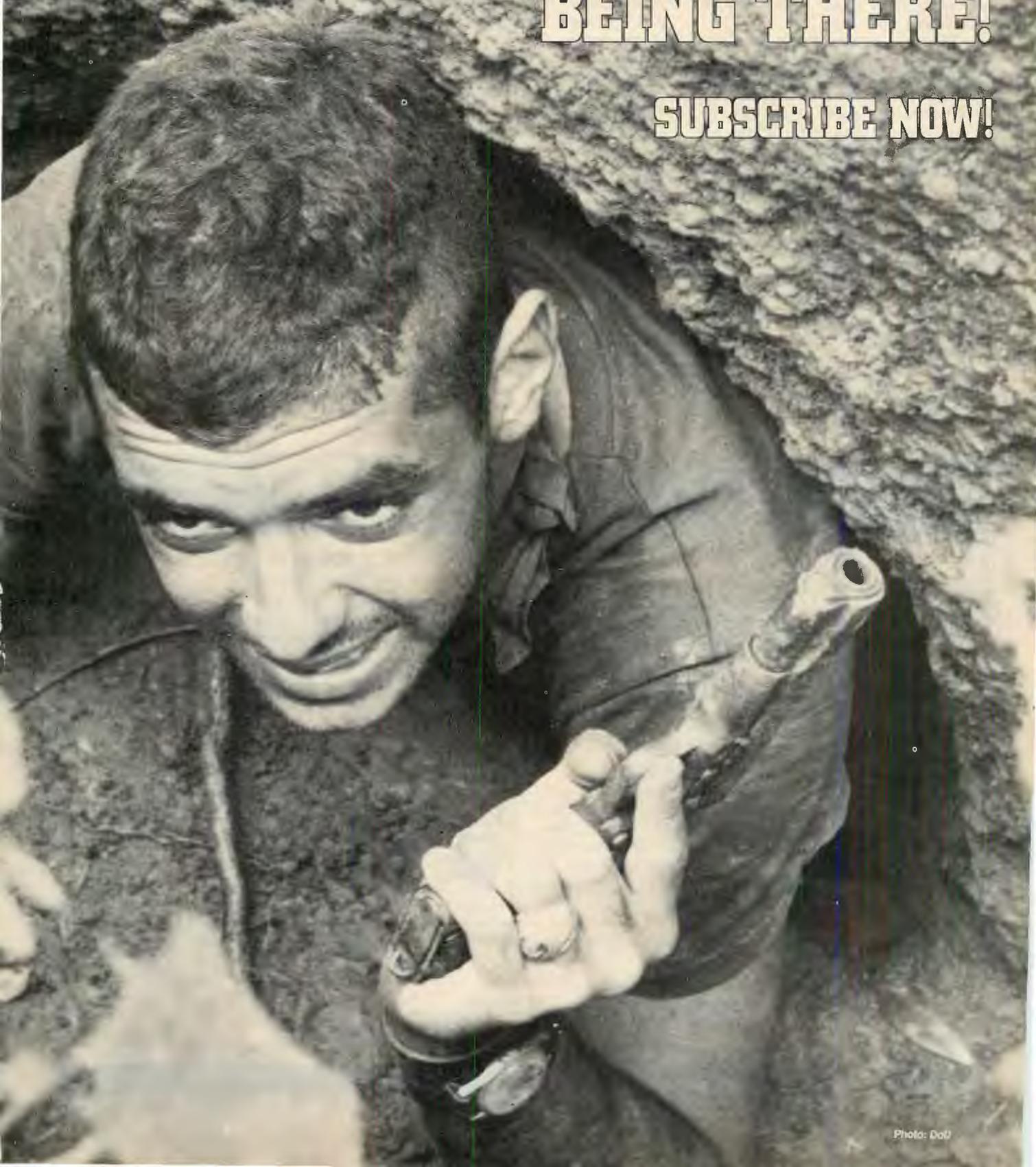
Continued from page 27

In just a few hours, burp gunners and serious pistoleros can crank out all the fodder they need for a training session.

The RL450 Jr. comes delivered to your door with the dies set in the tool head. It is adjusted for the most commonly employed bullet in the caliber you have ordered. Once you've assembled the reloader using the instruction manual and the tools provided, mounted it securely to your reloading bench, and adjusted the powder measure, you're only moments away from punching out loaded cartridges.

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The shell plate, surrounded by a white Delrin locating ring, rests within a substantial O-frame, pressure-cast from aircraft quality aluminum. Insert an empty case into station 1 (so marked on the tool head) and pull down and forward on the operating handle. The case is resized and de-capped on the shell plate's up-stroke. Insert a primer into the tool's spring-loaded primer cup and push up and rearward on the operating handle. This will drive the primer cup's arm away from the operator and seat the primer to the correct depth during the shell plate's down-stroke.

Release the operating handle and manually rotate the star-shaped indexer above the shell plate clockwise to move the case over to station 2. Insert another case at station 1. Pull down and forward on the operating handle again and the tool will bell the case mouth at station 2. Drop a charge into the belled case with the powder measure at station 2, while the shell plate remains in the upper position. Push up and rearward on the operating handle and then release the operating handle. Rotate the case to station 3. Insert a bullet into the case mouth. The bullet is seated at station 3 during the shell plate's up stroke. When the cartridge is rotated to station 4, case crimping takes place during the shell plate's up stroke. Another rotation will complete the cycle and drop the completely loaded round into the collection box.

It sounds simple and it is, if you follow

the instruction manual. But why bother to reload in the first place? The suggested retail price of Remington .45 ACP FMJ is \$22.74 plus tax for a box of 50. That's 45 cents per round. If you buy a box, stuff seven rounds in your Colt M1911A1, lock it and the rest of the box in the dresser drawer and then sit back waiting for Armageddon, you don't need an RL450 Jr., or any other reloading equipment for that matter. Hunters who consume one box of Winchester .30-30 per year don't require the capabilities of a progressive reloader either. However, most SOF readers are serious shooters. To reach, and maintain, proficiency with a handgun intended for self defense requires and expenditure of at least 100 rounds per week, consistently. That's 5,200 rounds per year. Using hard-cast round nose bullets you can load .45 ACP ammunition on a RL450 Jr. for a component cost of about 6½ cents per round. During a year's time, this represents a savings of more than \$2,000 under the price of factory ammunition — and that will pay for a lot of new toys. Those with automatic weapons commonly consume up to 2,500 rounds per month. Now we're talking megabucks.

You also can reload rifle caliber cartridges on the RL450 Jr. and Dillon produces die sets in 5.56x45mm NATO, 7.62x51mm NATO and .30-06 for that purpose. In fact, standard 7/8x14 dies of any manufacture in calibers ranging from

.25 ACP to the large belted magnums can be used. However, for rifle calibers you must employ the RL450 Jr. as what might be termed a "semi-progressive" reloader. Station 1 will still resize, de-cap and prime the case, which can then be rotated to station 2 for dropping the propellant charge. But at that point the cases must be removed, the die at station 1 replaced with a seating/crimping die and the cases reinserted to complete the cycle. Personally, I believe the RL550B (\$295.95, less dies) is far better suited for rifle-caliber reloading.

With introduction of the RL450 Jr., Dillon completely covers the reloading waterfront. Dillon progressive reloaders range in price from \$94.50 to \$895 (for the RL1050). With four complete systems, you can match their equipment to your anticipated work load. In addition, they produce a case tumbler, military primer pocket swage and electric case trimmer that are all excellent. Spare tool heads, powder dies and powder measures are also available to speed caliber changes.

Whether measured by price, design, quality of execution, warranty or technical assistance, Dillon's reloading equipment is unparalleled. For further information about the RL450 Jr. or any of their other superb products, contact Dillon Precision Products, Inc., Dept. SOF, 7442 E. Butherus Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85260; toll free phone: 1 (800) 421-7632. ☒

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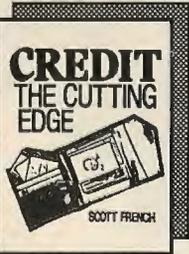
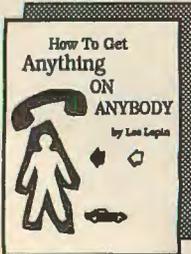
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# DEVIL IN DISGUISE

Continued from page 46

Each of the four 4,910-horsepower Allison turboprop engines groaned as we lifted off the runway and climbed over the Bay of Panama where the crew would wet-bore, or "tweak," the guns before relieving another gunship over the capital city.

The 105mm howitzer was the first weapon to be fired. The three-man crew that serviced the weapon worked like a crack pit crew at Indianapolis. Tech Sergeant Betterelli lifted WP out of a rack on the right side of the gundeck and slammed the 105mm round into the howitzer's breech as another sergeant punched a series of buttons on an electronic display panel and another crewman lowered the weapon to its proper firing angle.

Spectre gunships can fire their guns two ways: fixed, where the pilot does all of the shooting, or trainable, where the guns are being trained to look exactly where the sensors are looking, but Col. Guidry says it takes three people to fire the guns in the trainable mode.

"When the sensor operator, the fire control officer and the pilot all give consent," said Guidry, "the fire control computer determines the gun has been cleared to fire, and it's fired." And while the array of guns on Spectre is extremely accurate, with the 105mm howitzer you

only have to be close.

"BOOOOOM," bellowed the 105 as the converted field piece recoiled and a hot smoking shell casing was pulled from the breech.

Looking out a porthole near the rear ramp I could see the round impact on a target range below, flashes of white phosphorus marking the point of impact. Once the 105 was registered, the gun crew moved up front to the twin Vulcans.

"Brrrrrrrrrrrr," chattered the 20mms, spewing empty shell casings into a wooden trough behind the firing curtain so fast a crew member with a coal shovel could barely keep the floor clear of casings. The Vulcan cannons sound like jackhammers hitting concrete as the spent brass clears six spinning gun barrels. The 20mm Vulcan, or gating gun, is an area suppression weapon which moves while it's firing. With a 5-second burst, Spectre can saturate an area the size of a football field.

The 40mm Bofors cannon drummed out a steady beat like the old Navy pom-poms in World War II as it pounded the Balboa Target Range. But unlike "Puff the Magic Dragon" and "Spooky," which provided close-air support for troops in the early days of the Vietnam War, the AC-130 Spectres don't have to fire tracers to tell where the rounds are hitting.

Tracers, or incendiary ammunition, give away a gunship's location when a stream of liquid fire pours down from the aircraft.

Now sophisticated sensors enable Spectre to fire its guns on target in total darkness.

A master sergeant sitting at a console in a darkened room called the "Black Box" tracks potential targets by using a joy stick to put a cursor on the moving target. The low-light-level TV camera at his disposal enables him to see in the dark. The camera is so sensitive you can see a man's legs moving as he walks along a dark street below the gunship. As technology improves, the cameras will get even better.

"You can run, but you can't hide from Spectre," said Col. Guidry as he leveled off at 5,500 feet over Panama City and executed a lazy left turn.

"The 40mm Bofors cannon is our most accurate weapon," Guidry said, "But the 105 is our weapon of choice."

Guidry explained that the Air Force decided to experiment with a howitzer when it became apparent that the North Vietnamese were able to repair trucks riddled with miniguns. "Now there aren't enough pieces to put a truck back together again," laughed Guidry.

"Spectres blew the roof off the Commandancia the night of the invasion," according to Col. Mike Snell, commander of the 193rd Infantry Brigade, who along with the 6th Mechanized Battalion, light tanks and the 5th Battalion of the 87th Infantry, attacked Noriega's headquarters. Colonel Snell's in-country force (personnel stationed in Panama) spearheaded Task

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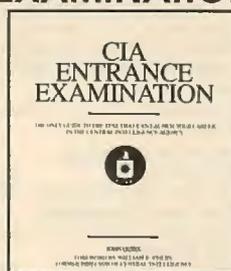
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Force Bayonet, but needed help from Spectre to reduce the fortress and capture the 400-man garrison.

"There was a great deal of confusion on the ground," said Snell as he stood in front of the shell-pocked Comandancia. "There was a large force waiting for us." Some were members of the Dignity Battalions, a force Noriega was building to replace the PDF, which he didn't trust after a coup attempt in May.

The objective of Task Force Bayonet was to isolate the Comandancia and reduce the garrison with light infantry, but the PDF put up a "helluva fight for about four or five hours," Snell said.

Because Noriega had located his headquarters in the center of El Chorillo, the slums of Panama City, it was imperative to have pinpoint accuracy. "And Spectres were our primary means of fire support during the night of the invasion," Snell said, pointing to the upper floor of the Comandancia now blasted away after taking a 105mm howitzer hit.

Most of the damage to the 40-year-old building was done by Spectres. Small arms fire and .50-caliber rounds from armored personnel carriers simply bounced off the 2-foot thick reinforced concrete walls of the Comandancia like pingpong balls. However, several hits from Sheridan tanks on a hill overlooking the Comandancia were able to silence snipers in the upper floors.

"Every time the PDF stuck an AK-47

out the window and hosed down my men running the so-called 'Gauntlet,' the street in front of the Comandancia, the tankers would put some HE right down their throats.

"I didn't want to send infantry in there to clear this (building) by traditional means," Snell said, "because it's too costly in terms of manpower." So as troopers from the 193rd Infantry Brigade started taking fire from rooms in the headquarters building, Snell determined "The solution was a tank round."

Heavy automatic weapons and antitank fire from the headquarters forced Snell to call for two Spectre missions. The first pass hosed down the walled fortress, setting fire to vehicles including two water cannon trucks. The second pass sent high explosive artillery shells crashing through the roof into the third floor of the building.

Before Task Force Bayonet crossed its line of departure at about 0030 on 20 December, Snell's people started taking fire. "They (Noriega's people) were locked and loaded and waiting for us," Snell said. But Snell is not prepared to say if General Noriega knew in advance an assault force was coming, as some reports indicate.

At about 0100, an Army Ranger battalion, backed by fire from Spectre gunships, parachuted from 500 feet onto the runways of Torrijos Airport in the outskirts of Panama City and seized the facility.

A second Ranger battalion, the 3rd from

Fort Benning, Georgia, dropped onto Rio Hato, where Noriega's most loyal units were based, and engaged in fierce fighting. Before the armory fell and 250 PDF troops surrendered, some of the fiercest fighting of the invasion (or liberation, as Panamanians prefer to call the conflict) occurred at Rio Hato.

Like Col. Snell's men at the Comandancia, men of Alpha Company, 3rd Ranger Battalion, credit Spectres with saving lives. "When we jumped in, they (the gunships) had already prepped a lot of the field for us, and knocked out the anti-aircraft guns," said PFC Dean Hohl from Freeport, Illinois. "But even without hostile AA, all 16 birds (transports) had bullet holes in their bellies," Hohl said.

"Some of the guys in my plane were hit while they were hooked up ready to jump," according to PFC Chris Campbell from The Woodlands, Texas, "but those Spectres really saved our ass."

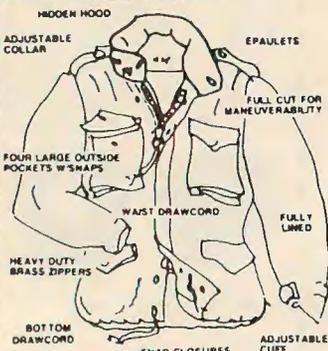
Even after the Rangers secured Rio Hato, PDF personnel who escaped the initial slaughter tested the perimeter, but these probing attacks were beaten back by Spectres whose target acquisition cameras turned the dark of night into day, separating friend from foe, and sending streams of surgically accurate cannon fire into PDF ranks.

"We could see fountains of sparks flying as Spectres hosed down the area," said Hohl. "It looked just like the 4th of July."

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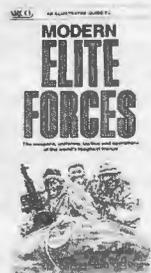
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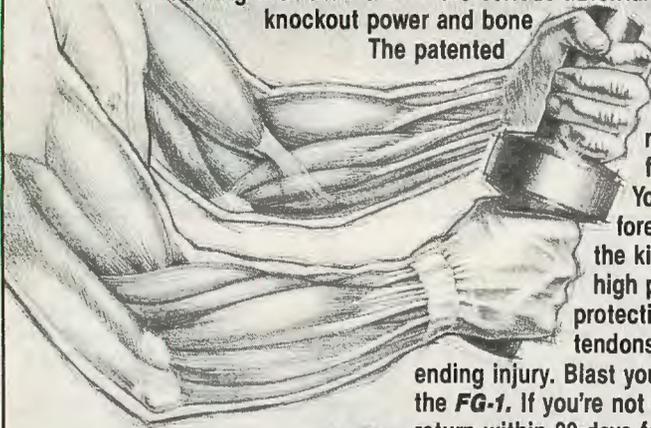
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## SALVADOR'S TET

*Continued from page 55*

"Papito." Papito was born in 1942 in Havana, Cuba, where his father had been a soldier for 30 years. Papito left his military school and escaped from Cuba in a small boat in 1960. His association with various Cuban-American anti-communist groups led him to volunteer and fight for the ARDE effort until Pastora quit. He settled in San Salvador with his family, where he runs a small business. Papito showed up at the airbase the morning the operation began, ready to go. Major Hurtado knows him well, so Papito went along as a volunteer.

I enjoyed talking with Papito very much. One day we climbed onto the roof of a house with a good view to countersnipe at some rooftops. I had the opportunity to use an almost-new Soviet RPKM that I had cleaned earlier in the day. We slid to a forward edge of the corrugated roof obscured by vines and leaves. The RPKM's bipod proved very useful, as we could comfortably scan with binoculars and still be ready to deliver fire quickly. I was impressed at how Papito could distinguish between little whiffs of cooking-fire smoke and enemy sharpshooters. There were any number of individual soldiers who also impressed me with their courage and determination.

About 2100 the night of 16 November we were quietly alerted to move out under cover of darkness. At 2200 the battalion was ready to move and we began our march. It was a very orderly and quiet, long, single file. It was eerie in the darkness and faint light to see the long file snaking its way through the streets leading out of Soyapango, everyone silent except for their footsteps, and keeping interval. The march was uneventful, taking almost two hours before we reached the air base. Although we had been out only days, it seemed like weeks. I'm sure everyone was dirty and tired. It really felt great to be back at the base.

The decision to withdraw was a practical one. The FMLN terrorists had been so badly mauled that the majority lost their will to fight and abandoned their arms to slip quietly away. Only small numbers of terrorists were thought to be able to continue the fight.

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the Airborne Battalion received a request to dislodge some heavily armed terrorists from a sturdy house in Guadalupe, also part of Soyapango. A jeep was loaded with a Browning M2 .50 caliber machine gun and tripod. I was invited along to help set the headspace and timing of the gun. A 6x6 truck was brought up from the motor pool and a 106mm recoilless rifle was lifted into the back and we were off.

We wheeled up to an abandoned school and while the majority of troops spread out I began helping "Rambo" set up the M2 Browning in the street. Once it was test-fired and correct, three troops carried it in back of the schoolyard. There we could look around a wall or through some brush, across a ravine and slightly down at the impressive house. The house was large, well-built, and fairly isolated, and no doubt owned by someone fairly well off.

I doubt the owners were thrilled about having to turn their house over to a group of RPG-and-mortar-wielding communist terrorists. "Rambo" did a very credible job of pouring a large volume of .50 fire into the house to dissuade the terrorists. Meanwhile the 106mm recoilless rifle was wheeled through the schoolyard and set up with a clear field of fire. A .50 spotting rifle was mounted over the barrel for aiming purposes, but neither firing a spotter round nor mounting the optical sight seemed important to anyone. I watched as a sergeant from 5th Squadron, who seemed to know exactly what he was doing, opened the rifle breech and bore-sighted it directly on the house. Meanwhile, the two soldiers who had carried up a crate of ammunition had the Korean-made rounds unpacked and ready to go.

The rest of the 18 or 20 troops were spread out in the schoolyard, some lying down behind their weapons off to either side of the 106. Directly behind the 106 about 18 meters away was a good sized square wood-and-metal snack shack. It had an awning all the way 'round but the four flaps and door were all closed up. I went over and sat down on some concrete blocks behind the shack to talk with a few friends and change the film in my camera. I had put my ear plugs in just in case and am very glad I did.

Just when we least expected it — KABOOM! Dust, dirt, sticks, paint chips and debris were falling all around. Startled and stunned, we looked around at the smoke and dust. I saw quite a few paratroopers screaming and scooting, dragging their rucksacks to get as far away from the back-blast as possible. When I looked at the snack shack I had to laugh. The whole thing had instantly become a big pile of trash. The back blast from the 106 had bulged and split every joint in the shack. Every panel was either severely bent inwards or bulged outwards.

I moved up to a position right next to the brick wall and just left of the recoilless,

Continued on page 95

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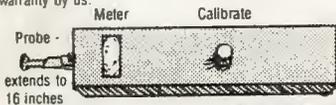
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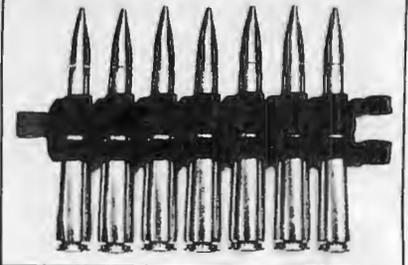
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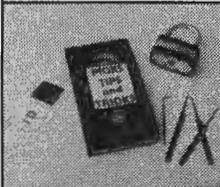
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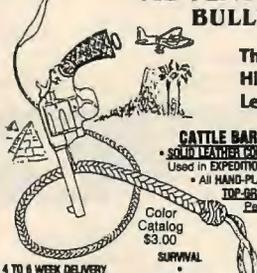
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**SALVADOR'S TET**

*Continued from page 87*

about 15 feet away. This time I photographed the aiming, loading and finally the firing of the big 106. The roar and flame were tremendous. Looking over my shoulder, I could see the poor old snack shack was just about as demolished as it could get.

With two direct hits the house was considered sufficiently "softened" to pack up the 106. While that was taking place, I went over to the front of the school to see what was going on. Cookies, candy and crackers were being passed around and munched.

I had arrived unarmed, and as the fighting from nearby blocks seemed to be heating up, one of the guys loaned me his M79 grenade launcher and a couple others gave me some bandoleers of 40mm HE. I went back to where the house was and bounced two rounds off it just to make sure the launcher was OK. I returned to the front street where two Salvadoran-made armored cavalry vehicles were parked next to our 6x6. The word was that some terrorists had

gone on a rampage, setting afire and blowing up as many of the factories in the area as they could.

The building behind us across the street erupted in flames, then we started to catch small-arms fire skipping from down and across the street. Some of our guys began returning fire but I couldn't tell where it was coming from. We had a few large trees and the trucks to take cover behind. Then a few RPGs and some grenades or mortars lived things up for us — but we weren't in a very good position from which to fight.

It was something of a relief when the helicopters arrived, but when rockets and 7.62 from the miniguns started landing near us it made us wonder if they were a mixed blessing. Since our job there was done, we hurriedly loaded into the 6x6 and cautiously headed back to base. We passed a number of clothing factories that were burning, and noxious black smoke still poured from the oil storage facility which had been attacked days earlier. Darkness had set in and we rode back to base with lights out. The road back is long and gently sloping, so the driver cut the engine and we coasted almost a mile. Everyone was alert as we slowly rolled along. One could watch the busi-

nesses pass by and see M16-toting security guards in the watch towers and concrete positions along the walls. That's the way it is in San Salvador.

I stayed with the airborne through the holidays, finally leaving El Salvador on 11 January. During that time, the airborne continued to stay active with routine patrols, seizing caches of arms, medicine and equipment as a result of information developed from informants or intelligence sources.

The November communist offensive ran from 11-20 November 1989. During that period the paracaidistas of the airborne battalion captured more than 80 firearms of various types, plus RPG rocket launchers, LAWs and grenade launchers. Ammunition captured amounted to more than 22,000 rounds and 200 blocks of TNT, numerous PG rockets, grenades, rifle grenades, 20mm rounds, 60mm mortar bombs, and 90mm recoilless rounds.

Of the estimated 800 terrorists in all of Soyapango, the airborne tallied 260 dead, although the actual count was probably higher. The airborne lost 14 soldiers, one lieutenant, and two sub-lieutenants. A total of 56 troops were wounded, including a

soldier who had an AK round punch two holes in his beret and skim the left side of his head.

The FMLN had planned this "final victory" for almost two years. Their miscalculations were numerous and significant. The communists attempted a face-to-face confrontation with the armed forces and had their heads kicked in by the FAS. Instead of rising up as promised by the communist mentors in Nicaragua and Havana, the civilians utterly rejected the subversives and great numbers actually helped the military and police at no small personal risk. The communist strategy of causing tremendous economic destruction to create the desperate poverty needed for a popular insurrection failed miserably and turned many uncommitted people solidly toward the government. High morale of the FMLN terrorists eroded quickly, and those who survived were reduced to hiding out in safe houses and instigating some few and usually ineffective terrorist actions.

In the aftermath, the FMLN leadership faces the double problem of explaining why almost nothing they predicted happened, and keeping their remaining fighters away from their traditionally safer rural areas where they would have to face the demoralizing realization of just how badly they lost.

The Salvadoran armed forces knew the offensive was coming, but didn't know when or where. As Maj. Hurtado noted, "The Airborne Battalion was not ready for urban fighting and was short of the LAWs, grenades and M79 rounds to fight. But the airborne trooper of El Salvador always stands ready to defend the nation and accomplish the mission." ❧

## BULLETIN BOARD

*Continued from page 6*

the Islamic revolution, two oil crises, and an eight-year gulf war killed any hopes for construction. Iraq and Iran hope to coax new joint venture capital into the region now that they have temporarily run out of steam, 12-year-old soldiers and mustard gas.

### KGB: LESS AT HOME — MORE ABROAD...

CIA director William H. Webster noted recently while the KGB is lessening its efforts at suppressing dissidents at home, they have stepped up their efforts at recruiting spies abroad. He said as less and less money is made available to develop technology within the Soviet Union, that "more and more effort needs to be applied to obtain that kind of technology through clandestine means."

## SOLDIER OF FORTUNE'S JUNE INCOMING

**LEBANON:** SOF Correspondent Jack Thompson visits Lebanon for a close look at the Lebanese Forces. He found the Christian forces have made great strides since 1980 when Bachil Gemayel unified the various rag-tag militias into the LF. But with a legion of enemies (a bewildering array of Moslem forces, the primarily Christian but hostile Lebanese Army headed by Gen. Aoun and with Syria stirring the pot) they face an uncertain future.

**AFGHANISTAN:** Mike Winchester, SOF's Afghanistan correspondent, provides us with an exclusive eyewitness report on the armed propaganda teams the anti-communist resistance forces in Afghanistan have been sending into the USSR. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 they may have kicked over a nest of hornets that will sting them in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Turkmen Republic. Teams of Afghan fighters have crossed the Oxus River into the USSR to smuggle in Korans, Islamic propaganda and arms, and to launch attacks on Soviet targets. KGB border guards have tightened up patrols on the frontier and retaliated forcefully against the armed attacks but the Afghans appear to be committed to encouraging religious trouble in the USSR's Moslem republics.

**NICARAGUA:** An SOF team visits the Contra base camps along the Nicaraguan border for a report on the anti-Sandinista forces. They have been abandoned by America and are short on the wherewithal to carry on the war but have not yet given up.

**VIETNAM:** Everyone knows about

the Special Forces raid on Son Tay prison aimed at bringing out American POWs, but lost until now was a daring attempt by U.S. Navy SEALs to spirit out American POWs in 1972. The POWs were to break out of their camp, steal a sampan for a dash down the Red River to the Tonkin Gulf and be picked up by helicopters from the Seventh Fleet. SEALs, inserted by submarine onto a North Vietnamese-held island, were to provide surveillance on the area where the pickup was to occur.

**PANAMA:** The liberation of Panama was primarily an Army show but Delta Company of the USMC's 2nd Light Armored Infantry Battalion was in the right spot and got to try out one of the Corps' newest weapons systems, the LAV-25, in the taking of Panama City. Correspondent Ross Simpson was in Panama to talk with the Marines about their role and obtained some dramatic shots of the action taken by USMC photographers.

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Remember, if you don't see SOF where you shop, ask that it be added to the magazines they carry. Because of negative publicity in the last four years SOF has been taken off a lot of newsstands. We're doing all we can to improve SOF's distribution but requests from readers to newsstand dealers to carry the magazine has more impact than all our prodding from Boulder does. You can help us tremendously by asking clerks and store owners where you shop, every time you shop, to add *Soldier of Fortune* to their newsstand.

### LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD VETS...

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### KABUL NOT KIDDING AROUND...

Saudi Arabian Hassamuddin Mahmood has been sentenced to 20 years in prison by the Kabul Regime for illegal entry into Afghanistan. A Spanish writer named Garcia was given three years for the same offense. So far, no SOF correspondents are missing.

### SOUSA WOULD BE PROUD...

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### U-BOAT BUFFS...

*Sharkhunters*, an organization for those interested in submarines in general and German submarines in particular, publishes a monthly newsletter *KTB* and stages periodic get-togethers. Write Harry Cooper, Sharkhunters, Dept. SOF, Box 21776, Tampa, FL 33622. ❧

## The Action Is Back!

It's Soldier of Fortune Magazine's 15th anniversary, and to celebrate, we're kicking back to the rough-and-ready SOF Conventions that made history and memories. Contests, obstacle course, weapons, good times. Come to this special Convention and enjoy yourself with people who really know how to rock 'n' roll. It's going to be a blast!



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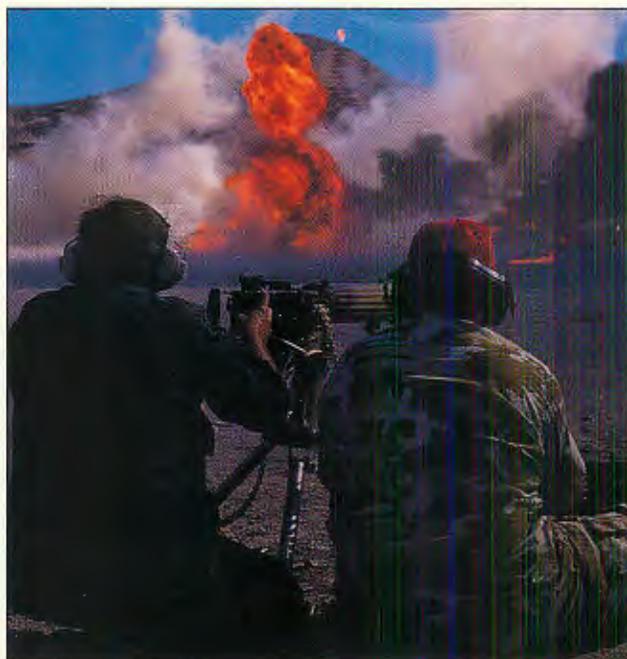
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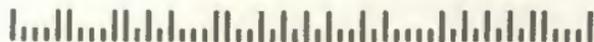
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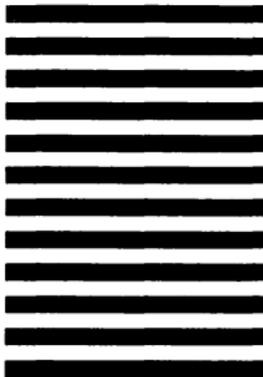
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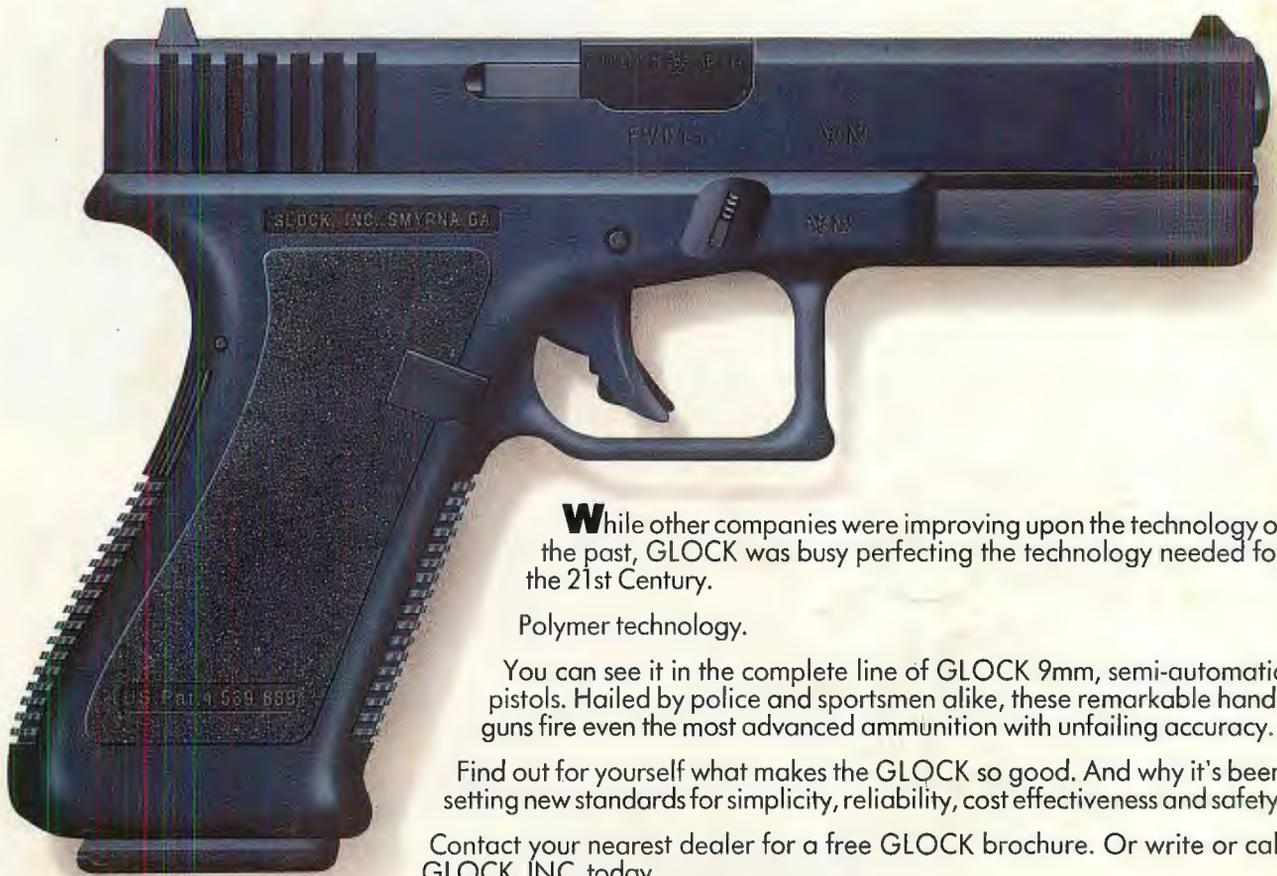
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