



SPECIAL MIDDLE EAST FOLD-OUT MAP

APRIL 1991
48493

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

The Journal of Professional Adventurers

DESERT STORM:

BREACHING
SADDAM'S LINE

IRAQ'S ARSENAL

M14s AT WAR

PATRIOT GAMES

TORTURE IN
KUWAIT

SOF ON
THE GROUND:

LAOS

COSTA RICA

AFGHANISTAN

SOUTH AFRICA

SUDAN



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APRIL 1991



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Photo: Eric Micheletti

SPECIAL DESERT STORM OPERATIONS

MAP SOF Staff
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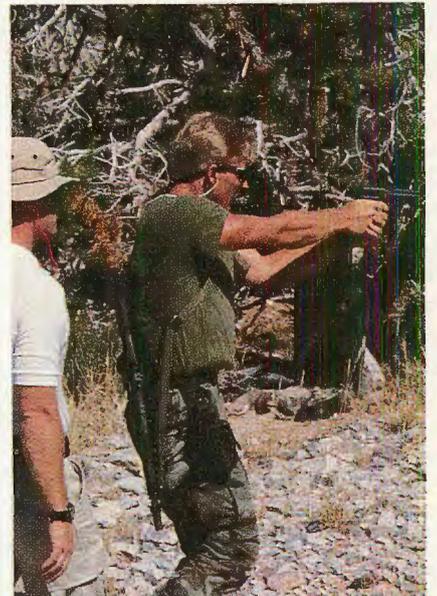
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Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

This issue of Soldier of Fortune Magazine is dedicated to the men and women of Operation Desert Storm — especially those held Prisoner of War. You will not be forgotten.



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Photo: Ross Simpson

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COVER

Our mission in the Middle East has been specifically defined by the commander-in-chief: force the withdrawal of Iraqi military forces from Kuwait, and reinstall the legitimate government of Kuwait. Air power, the dominant force in the first weeks of the campaign, won't do it all alone. To fully carry out the president's directives — especially the second — will require groundpounders to seize, secure and hold territory. That's the way it always is in war. It'll trickle down to some Army or Marine squad physically clearing bunkers, trenches, buildings and installations — just to make sure the viper's nest is empty. It's a helluva job, and these troopers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) are ready for it. Photo: AP/Wide World Photos

BULLETIN BOARD



When we ran the shot of Cpl. Phillip Norman (1/5 Marines) on the January cover, we had no idea he was our neighbor. Here, his dad Bob Norman of American Bowmaster in Northglenn, CO, poses with SOF's Managing Editor John Coleman (L) and Publisher Robert K. Brown (R), in our editorial offices in Boulder.

KEEP 'EM COMING

So far, SOF's Books for the Troops has shipped nearly a *ton* of paperbacks to our troops in Desert Shield. Who's made it work? *You, our readers*, by sending the books to SOF, and staffers Lynne Manchester and Carole Hayden who patiently sorted and boxed them. Also, SOFers SSgt. Kitty Baran (USAFR) and Nick Conklin (California ANG) at Norton AFB, who expedited overseas shipment, and the aircrews who hauled them over.

Another "thanks" for you readers: Sales of our Desert Shield T-shirts were bolting toward the 1,000 mark by mid-January, and as promised we are sending a buck to the USO for each T-shirt sold. And, we're still shipping a couple thousand free copies of SOF to our troops in the Gulf each month.

So how about you? We need *MORE* paperbacks to ship overseas, so box 'em up and send them to: Books For The Troops, c/o SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. And, if you tuck a short note between the pages saying, "Thanks for doing a good job over there," we know the troops would appreciate it.

HAVE A HARTZ

Sending a package to a friend in Saudi? *Don't* send a flea collar! Although troops have requested them in their war with sand fleas, Army medical honchos state the active agent in flea collars can cause lethal reaction in troops exposed to war gas.

ONE RINGY-DINGY HELPS

Third annual electronic protest against gun control slated for 19 April 1991, anniversary of day in 1775 that Redcoats marched from Boston to seize arms from colonials. Colonial Minutemen kicked their butts back to Boston, effectively starting the American Revolution. For more info call Hal Berenson at (719) 576-0632.

GUNS GLOMMED AT HEATHROW

If planning a hunt in South Africa, do *not* route through Heathrow Airport in London. Hunting rifles will be confiscated until your return, because to take your rifle out of, or even through, England to South Africa requires an export license from British authorities. And, of course, they do not issue such licenses. For further clarification call the Department of Trade (the agency who would issue the export license, if such licenses were issued) at London 011-44-71 071 215 8179.

VIETNAM SOUVENIRS

Remember the trinkets/treasures/trash you brought back from 'Nam and then lost? Replacements — everything from MPC to photos and uniforms — are available from: Bien Hoa Productions, Dept. SOF, Box 56, Fayetteville, AR 72702.

THANKS, GUYS

Thanks from Refugee Relief International go to Dr. Bruce Guerdan and Mr. Dean Fish for donations of medical supplies. Medical supplies that don't have to be refrigerated or locked up are badly needed right now. Send to Col. Alex McColl at RRI, SOF Warehouse, 5735 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80302.

WRITE A WRITER

If you served with or have info on the U.S. Naval Advisory Mission to China (1947-1949), contact Peter Gallagher, 2027 Washington St. #21, Ferndale, WA 98248, who is writing a history.

TOP THIS

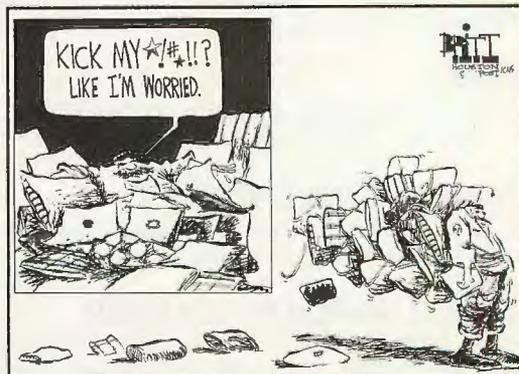
Alan I. Mossberg, president of O.F. Mossberg & Sons, recently told reporters he would push for federal legislation that would make it a criminal offense to possess a gun without a locking device. "It's another discipline we are going to have to accept," Mossberg said, "such as locking the doors." Oh, really? In the event you want more info, you might ask him at O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc., 7 Grasso Ave., North Haven, CT 06473.

REMEMBER RENE

Rene Gagnon, USMC, was one of the six men who raised the Stars and Stripes on Iwo Jima. He has passed away, and his widow Pauline is about to lose their home. Marine Corps League is soliciting donations to purchase his home for a national shrine, and have Pauline stay as caretaker until she passes away. Good idea! Contact Marine Corps League Officer, Box 802, Center Harbor, NH 03226 for details.

THE BUCK, THE BULLET STOP HERE

Retired Marine Col. Oliver North's company, Guardian Technologies International, is marketing a new line of ballistic vests and body armor made from a new fabric called Spectra, manufactured by Allied Signal. "Other products will stop bullets," North said, "it's just that our vest stops more with less." For further information, write Guardian Technologies, Dept. SOF, Box 9771, McLean, VA 22102. ☒



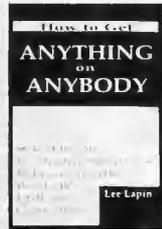
PALADIN PRESS



BUSINESS PARTNERS The Best Pistol/Ammunition Combinations for Personal Defense

by Peter Alan Kasler

When buying an automatic pistol for personal defense, should you go with a high-capacity 9mm Parabellum or stick with the old warhorse, the .45 ACP? Or do you choose one of the relatively new medium-bore calibers: the 10mm, .41 AE or .40 S&W? If you're going to stake your life on your decision, you'd better get the facts. This book is a critical examination of the wounding capabilities of the auto pistols and ammunitions considered to be the top contenders as "manstoppers." Debunking dangerous myths that have been perpetuated over the years, tactical shooting authority Peter Kasler takes a hard look at the strong and weak points of 9mm, 10mm, .40-caliber and .45 ACP ammo, and compares major-caliber handguns from Colt, S&W, Glock, Beretta, SIG-Sauer, IML and others. The result: a practical and realistic assessment of the best pistol/ammo combinations - which bullets work best in which guns to get the job done in a life-or-death situation. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, hardcover, photos, illus., 200 pp. **\$22.95**



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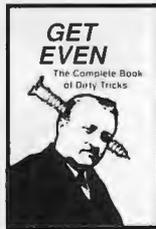
SEALS IN VIETNAM

An Inside Look
In the jungles and canals of Vietnam, U.S. Navy SEALs waged a war of terror against the Vietcong. This action-packed video shows SEALs in training, preparing for missions and hauling in terrified VC prisoners. Voice-overs of SEAL veterans tell you what it was like to go out on deadly excursions deep into enemy territory and the special skills it took to get back alive. Color, approx. 30 min., VHS only. **\$29.95**



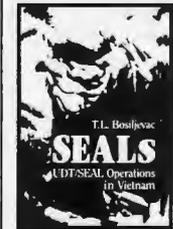
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SEALS UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam

The definitive book on U.S. Navy SEALs' role in Vietnam. Accounts of combat missions reveal incredible acts of skill and valor by SEAL troops under fire. Sixteen pages of rare photos show SEALs in training, on patrol in VC territory and moving up canals in the Mekong Delta. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, hardcover, photos, 272 pp. **\$26.95**



FIELD KNIFE EVALUATIONS

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Hard-Use Knives
by Jerry Younkens
How does that blade you'd like to own measure up when put to the test? Finally, here's a resource that tells you - objectively. Younkens reveals how some of the best examples of hard-use cutlery cut, whittled, chopped and chiseled in the field, then appraises them accordingly. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, softcover, photos, illus., 304 pp. **\$24.95**



THE MASTER BLADESMITH

Advanced Studies in Steel
by Jim Hrisoulas
This advanced study of steel starts where The Complete Bladesmith left off. In it, the author reveals the forging secrets that for centuries have been jealously guarded by guilds. Now you too can marry ancient secrets with modern technology to make swords as the Vikings did, kukris fit for a Gurkha and other blades that bear the master's mark. 8 1/2 x 11, hardcover, photos, illus., 296 pp. **\$45.00**



MANSTOPPERS

Selecting the Right Double-Action Pistol
This video will help you select the right double-action auto pistol for your personal defense needs. Technical advisors Col. Rex Applegate, Wiley Clapp, Tom Campbell and Chuck Karwan contributed to the evaluations of the latest autos from Colt, S&W, Ruger, Glock, SIG-Sauer and others. From the right caliber to the right safety, this video covers it all. Color, approx. 60 min., VHS only. **\$59.95**



GUN IN THE HOUSE

Owning a weapon is more than a right; it's a responsibility. More innocent people are shot by accident than by criminals, and if it happens with one of your weapons, chances are you will be held accountable. This video covers the myths, realities and legalities of personal security, from childproofing your weapon to securing your home to the basics of gun safety. Use it as a tool to protect your family and your home. Color, approx. 30 min., VHS only. **\$19.95**



COUNTERBOMB

Protecting Yourself against Car, Mail, and Area-Emplaced Bombs
by Lawrence W. Myers
The three most common methods of murder by explosives are addressed, including such controversial countermeasures as detonating bombs in the hands of the bomber. Psychological profiles of criminal bombers provide a complete picture of this deadly threat. For information purposes only. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, softcover, illus., 96 pp. **\$14.00**



BLACK MEDICINE: THE VIDEO
Vital Targets, Maximum Punishment
A graphic demonstration of how to exploit the vulnerable vital points of the human anatomy. The instructors - bouncers in some of the most violent bars and roadhouses in the country - focus on strikes that they know from experience will put a man down. Some of the techniques in this video are only appropriate for life-or-death situations. Therefore, this film is for information purposes only. Color, approx. 50 min., VHS only. **\$29.95**

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WORLD SITREP

5

BRAZIL

Interpol says druggies moving here to avoid old smuggling routes; enjoy the good communications and banking facilities.

2

ARGENTINA

Government quashed one-day uprising by rebel soldiers, who claimed they only wanted removal of chief of staff.

1

ALBANIA

Communists allowed formation of opposition parties; Democratic Party was founded by 50,000 at rally in Tirana.

4

BELGIUM

Has disbanded Operation Gladio, its coordination effort for anticommunist resistance networks across Europe. Drunk with glasnost, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Greece, Switzerland have already trashed such programs.

3

BANGLADESH

President Ershad stepped down after seven weeks of protests.

6

CAMBODIA

Worst rice harvest in years ... Khmer Rouge staging for offensive with onset of dry season.

7

COLOMBIA

Army attacks on FARC guerrilla HQ south of Bogota killed 60; led to 15 retaliatory strikes by the guerrillas killing 36 police.

8

CORSICA

Separatists blew up dozens of resort homes in "attack on land speculators."

9

ČECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC

Volkswagen won bid, will buy into Skoda Works for \$5.37 billion.

10

EL SALVADOR

Communist guerrillas shot down U.S. Army chopper (on administrative mission for U.S. Embassy, not part of military advisory team), summarily executed crew.

11

ETHIOPIA

Government rebels reached accord for U.N.-vessel to enter Masawa with food for drought victims.

12

GERMANY

Sending billions in gratis food aid to U.S.S.R., fears invasion of Soviets emigrating for food ... Monstrous cleanup problems at Soviet-operated uranium mines in Saxony ... Bonn says KGB has stepped up spy activities, targeting military, technological, political information.

15

IRAQ DESERT STORM:

*VENI,
VIDI,
VICI!*

13

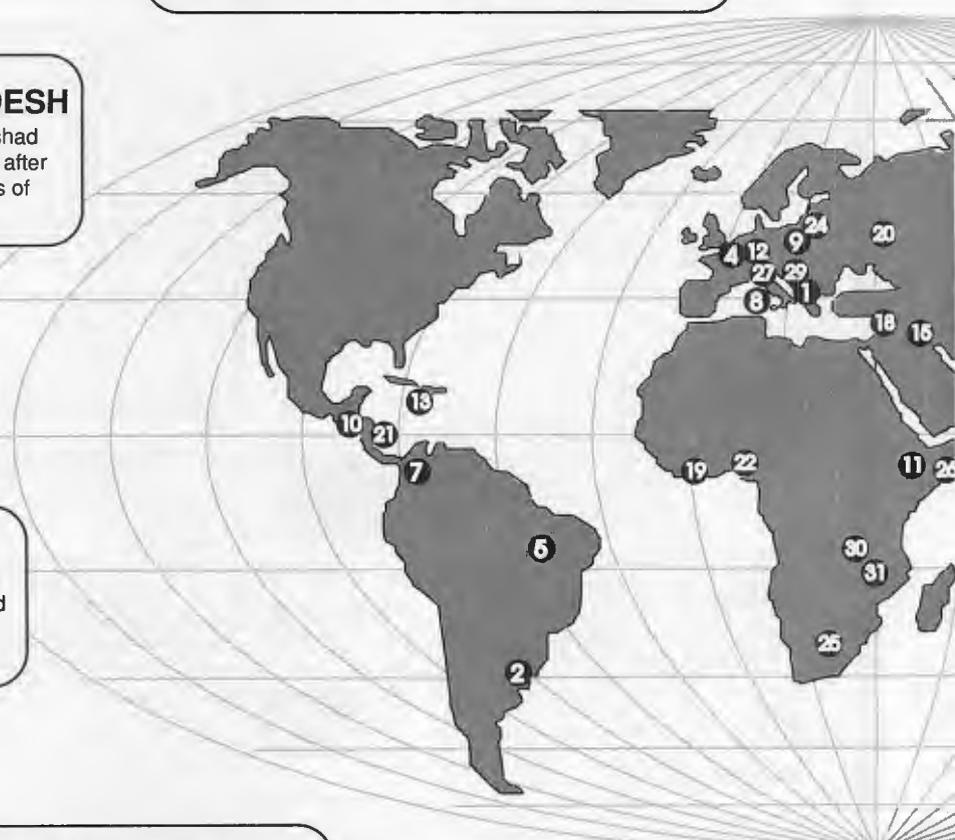
HAITI

Coup attempt by supporters of old Duvalier regime quashed, 37 dead.

14

INDIA

Police fired on mobs of Hindus and Moslems to stem rioting in Agra ... Hindus and Moslems fought with knives and swords in dispute over mosque in Hyderabad, 14 killed ... Separatist rebellion in Assam ... Sikhs killed 25 in Punjab.



31**ZIMBABWE**

Parliament approved constitutional change allowing the state to nationalize factories, farms, even private homes; Western diplomats expressed dismay, as move will block much-needed foreign investment.

30**ZAMBIA**

Laws passed legalizing opposition political parties, ending 17-year one-party rule.

29**YUGOSLAVIA**

Army warns it will use force to disarm police and territorial defense units in rebel republics.

28**THAILAND**

Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan resigned, reinstated following day by king. Promises to clean up his act.

27**SWITZERLAND**

Has disbanded anticommunist guerrilla resistance network, saying they're "ready to abolish the vestiges of the Cold War." Oh, really?

26**SOMALIA**

Rebels claim imminent victory; whereabouts of President Siad Barre unknown; hundreds of foreigners evacuated.

16**JAPAN**

Ten Japanese companies donating 20,000 Walkman-type cassette players to U.S. forces in Gulf; Japanese government refused to spend funds to fill request for 40,000 of them.

24**POLAND**

Walesa won presidential vote by landslide, unseating Gen. Jaruzelski who jailed him nine times.

25**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Factional violence continues in black townships among Zulus and Xhosas; death toll mounts.

22**NIGERIA**

U.S. evacuated 600 Libyan prisoners of war from Chad to Nigeria; Libyan ambassador to U.N. accused U.S. of training Libyan prisoners in Chad as anti-Khadaffi guerrillas.

23**PAKISTAN**

Still proceeding with nuclear program; chafing at suspended U.S. aid over the matter; denies they are building bomb.

20**MOLDAVIAN SSR**

200,000 rallied in capital of Kishinev to reject proposed new union treaty.

17**KIRGHIZIA**

Declared itself a free and independent state from the U.S.S.R.

18**LEBANON**

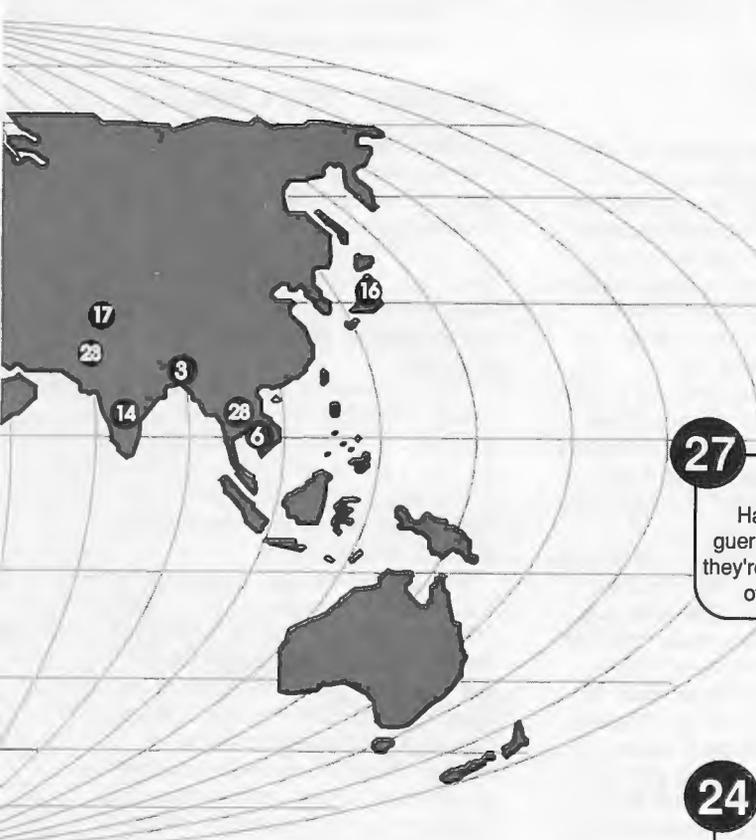
American Embassy restaffed and back in business in Beirut.

19**LIBERIA**

For what it's worth, a cease-fire between all three warring factions.

21**NICARAGUA**

Four Sandinista officers arrested for flogging 28 anti-aircraft rockets to communist guerrillas in El Salvador.



PESTS IN PARADISE

I deployed to the Middle East a little more than a month ago. Before I left Fort Bragg, the media made Saudi Arabia sound like hell. To my surprise, it's rather bearable, and the worst thing about the place is the flies — they never lay off.

I realize the media loves to portray things as worse than they are. Fortunately, the Army of today has press officers who are highly skilled at dealing with reporters who want more than the Army will allow.

PFC Beazley
327th Signal Battalion
Saudi Arabia



DESTROYERS IN THE GULF

I picked up a copy of SOF a few nights ago and wanted to comment on your articles in "Desert Shield Show-down." I thought they were great, in good detail, and probably told it like it is, but you failed to mention the men who are currently serving aboard the U.S. Navy's destroyer force on station there.

I served three years aboard the *USS Stickle* (DD-888), a 2200-ton *Gearing*-class FRAM I destroyer. I caught it in '63 when it was an "all gun" ship, with six 5-inch, thirty-eight caliber guns and a twin 3-inch, fifty caliber on the stern, not to mention Hedgehogs, torpedoes and small arms of all types. It had a "crack" crew, was fast, and had lots of power.

Modern destroyers are nothing short

of awesome. But, SOF is not the first magazine to ignore the fast, powerful and effective destroyers of the U.S. Navy.

Norm Perchikoff
Defiance, Ohio

SOF doesn't ignore the U.S. Navy; it's just that our primary focus on international combat, such as in Suriname and Burma (two recent examples), usually doesn't involve naval forces. Most all of the 30-odd conflicts currently being waged around the world are happening in the bush, as opposed to on the sea.

Modern U.S. destroyers are indeed awesome. A list of Spruance-class

destroyer weaponry reads like a what's what of things that go boom. All have Harpoon surface-to-surface missiles, Sea Sparrow surface-to-air missiles, two 5-inch dual-purpose Mark 45 guns, two Phalanx close-in weapon systems and six 12.75-inch triple-tube torpedo launchers. Most have Tomahawk sea and land attack cruise missiles and ASROC

antisubmarine torpedoes.

KNOCK KNOCK

With the new year, the nightmare of the Roberti/Roos Assault Rifle Law has begun. Like a scene from a Nazi war movie or a Solzhenitsyn book, the BATF and the California Department of Justice are collecting the names of people who legally purchased these weapons years ago, and have started to hunt them down.

As if law enforcement isn't already overwhelmed by real criminals, these two clown organizations just created a whole new class of "criminals" out of law-abiding citizens. The lives of thousands of citizens are going to be ruined, and real criminals will not be affected at all.

The only answer is for the Supreme Court to find this law unconstitutional.

Michael A. Pacer
Glendora, California

ONWARD AND UPWARD

I would like to congratulate you on the very impressive evolution your publication has made over the years. Thumbing through an issue 10 years ago, I, like many other people, saw a magazine that could have been titled, "Nightmare Flashbacks," or "Journal of Professional Whackos." Not any more.

The increased intellectual focus and quality of writing molded into your publication over the years causes even members of the rather dry crowd I run with to ask, "What does *Soldier of Fortune* say about that?" when discussing current affairs.

One issue I do have a problem with is your somewhat one-sided coverage of the "drug war." It is obvious to me and many other people that this is nothing more than a transparent excuse on the part of the federal government to impose martial law on its citizens. We are now seeing all three branches of our government seeking to disarm us in the name of "safety." As a matter of public record, prohibition does not work — it generates violent, well-financed and well-armed criminals.

Jerry Whitmore, CPA
Scottsdale, Arizona

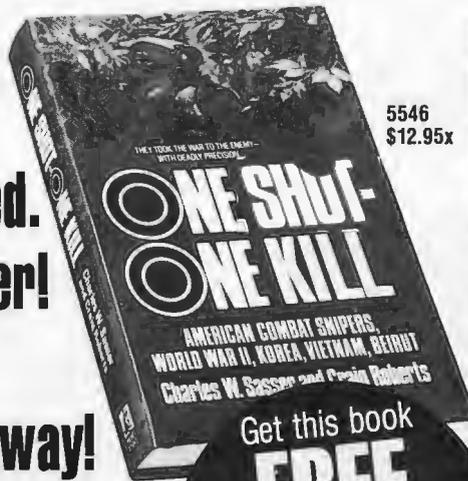
Thanks. We agree SOF has come into its own. Unfortunately, however, usually only those who are capable of thinking for themselves are aware of this. In the main, our critics have never picked up a copy of SOF, let alone read it. To be considered a good leftist intellectual, one must know all about our magazine without ever having "lowered" oneself to take a look inside ... Goodness, one's colleagues might even catch one with the magazine, and one cannot allow that to happen.

PRISONERS AND PROPAGANDA

Regarding your December '90 article on POW survival, I would like to make a suggestion. (I have never been

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a POW, so freely admit to "writing from the armchair.") Many nations the West is likely to be in conflict with will attempt to make propaganda by presenting prisoners who have "repented."

Why not debase the value of these "confessions" by authorizing troops in advance, if not actually ordering them, to sign as many statements as they want? If it were common knowledge that such statements were to be made, the propaganda value would be minimal. Also, this would serve to negate the statements made by genuine "turncoats."

Anthony David Jones
Lancashire, England

DANES ARE THERE

It's nice to see so many countries joining the United States in Operation Desert Shield, but it's not nice to see that one flag is usually not represented. While Denmark has sent only one ship to the Gulf, the ship's crew is very determined to do its part in helping to stop the Butcher of Baghdad.

Jan Michael Moller
Lyngby, Denmark

GREEKS ARE THERE

I read your article on the Gulf crisis (December '90), and have the opinion you could be misinformed about the contribution of Greece in Operation Desert Shield. So far, Greece has 1) sent two very modern and well-equipped warships, both with Greek SEALs onboard, 2) checked several Iraqi aircraft passing through air corridors of the Hellenic territory, and 3) facilitated the efforts of American troops stationed on the island of Crete. Greece will also be providing hospital facilities for wounded American soldiers.

Steve Papakostas
Athens, Greece

SADDAM SAVES THEIR LIVES

Little did I know when I purchased your December issue how much enjoyment my friend and I would get from the Saddam Hussein target poster inside the magazine (it even saved

our asses).

My buddy and I went to support Marines deploying to Saudi Arabia from West Palm Beach, Florida. When we arrived, much to our surprise, we were the only ones there. To some of the Marines, we must have looked like protesters. You can imagine how the atmosphere changed when it looked as though things might get violent.

Quickly, we took out the Saddam posters we had brought, establishing ourselves as friends. The Marines went crazy when they saw us there to offer support. We let them take the posters so they could make copies for troops in the Gulf.

Outstanding job, SOF.

Terry L. Hogan
West Palm Beach, Florida

SNIDE REMARKS FOREVER?

I returned to the United States from duty in Germany in the late '70s. Because I was wearing my military uniform, I had to wait for three hours to get service at a restaurant in Savannah, Georgia. I could not get served. On top of this, I had to listen to college kids and their snide remarks. For a while, I wasn't sure if I had landed in the right country.

I don't want this to happen to our people serving in the Middle East when they return. To combat the growing numbers of "peace" activists, get out and show your support for our troops — in town squares, town greens — anywhere you can get media coverage. That way, when our people come out of the desert, this support can get on CNN and other news programs, showing that a lot of us care.

As for me, I'm going to be at Westover AFB as our troops get off of the planes, whenever that time may be. I'm going to shake their hands, say welcome home and tell them I'm glad they made it back. If all they have to look forward to are protesters, their lives are going to be miserable.

Dave Wilson
Milford, Connecticut

THE 2% SOLUTION

At least one coffee company, Folgers, is back in the business of buying beans from El Salvador. According to a letter sent in January, "Right now, the United States has an open trade policy with El Salvador, and we are abiding by that policy in buying a limited amount [2%] of coffee beans from El Salvador for our blend." Folgers says that because the U.S. government, and not their company, makes foreign policy decisions, they will continue to buy coffee beans from El Salvador until told not to.

SAFETIES

I enjoyed Peter Kokalis' article on the S&W 4516 ("Big Boomer," Feb. '91). Despite all of the tripe in the gun magazines about the 3rd generation Smith autos, this was the first article that covered the nitty-gritty technical points of these pistols.

I was a little disturbed, however, by Kokalis' comments about the use of the slide-mounted safety on the pistol. He suggested that it be used only as a decocker, and that the pistol be carried with the safety off. Safeties are made to be used, and anyone who cannot train himself to quickly disengage this type of safety — common on auto pistols since the Walther PP and P38 designs — has no business carrying a weapon in my opinion.

Keep up the good technical work, Peter, but please think twice about recommending tactics that increase the risks inherent in handling firearms. Besides the human cost, every accidental shooting gives the antigun nuts more political ammunition.

James L. Woods
Los Angeles, California

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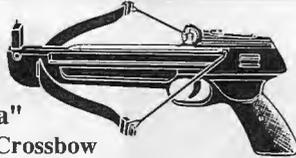
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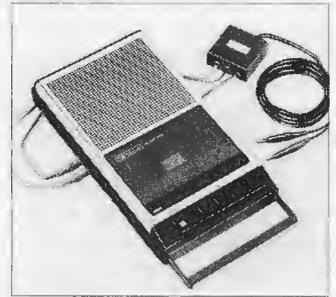
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The Side-Winder is a versatile and utilitarian rig that looks to fill an open niche in the holster market. At \$39.95, it's a bargain. Contact DeSantis Holster & Leather Goods, Dept. SOF, 149 Denton Ave., New Hyde Park, NY 11040; phone (516) 354-8000. Send \$2 if you want their catalog.



SURVIVAL LIGHT

There are hundreds of flashlights on the market, many at give-away prices. Precious few, however, fall into the high performance category. One that does is the new Survivor by Streamlight Inc. It features a 10,000 candlepower, prefocused halogen bulb that projects a 2-1/2 foot circle at 20 feet and has special smoke-piercing capabilities.

Survivor is powered by rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries that assure 1-1/2 hours of uninterrupted light per charge. The battery pack can be recharged up to 1,000 times from either standard 110 volt AC, or the 12 volt DC from your car battery.

Survivor weighs under 16 ounces and has a stainless steel clip for attaching to a belt or pocket. List price is \$179.95, which includes a limited lifetime guarantee. Contact: Streamlight Inc., Dept. SOF, 1030 W. Germantown Pike, Norristown, PA 19403; phone (215) 631-0600.



STAINLESS BULLS

Taurus Firearms is adding stainless steel versions of their double-action .380 ACP and 9mm pistols to their lineup. They can be easily identified in the Taurus catalog, as these versions have the prefix "SS" before their model numbers. They should be available at your firearms dealer as you read this.

Taurus recently moved to their new North American headquarters and soon will be producing pistols in the United States in addition to importing weapons from South America. Contact them for further details:

Taurus International Firearms, Dept. SOF, 16175 N.W. 49th Ave., Miami, FL 33014; phone 1-800-627-3776.



BIG HORN BINOCULARS

Germany is known for producing superior quality, if not particularly innovative, optics. The German firm Steiner aims to buck this trend with their new "Big Horn" 9x40 hunting binoculars. The Big Horn is manufactured with first-rate glass to be sure, but also features a new focusing system that puts them at the head of the herd.

Its long depth-of-field lens system eliminates the need for focusing to any distance beyond 20 yards. You adjust the glasses for your eyes once, and never need to focus again. This greatly aids in rapid target identification and

allows easy one-handed operation (even while wearing heavy gloves or mittens).

With a magnification factor of nine, the Big Horn allows you to see the distances required when tracking in the mountains, plains or open prairies. Its 40mm lenses have the light-gathering properties necessary to see at dusk and just before dawn. Surprisingly, these features come in a slim, light-weight package, only 26 ounces, that gives the Big Horn the feel of compact binoculars rather than rugged field glasses.

The Big Horn comes in only one color, forest green. It's wrapped in

silicone armor and incorporates all the shock and environmental protection features of Steiner's Military Marine binoculars. Steiner's Big Horn is available in hunting supply stores with a list price of \$649. Contact: Pioneer Marketing & Research, Dept. SOF, 216 Haddon Ave., Westmont, NJ 08108; phone 1-800-257-7742. ☒

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COMBAT CRAFT

by Chuck Fremont

Keeping Your Feet in the Fight

GROUND pounding is rough on an infantryman's feet. Medics and corpsmen do a big business patching up bloody and blistered feet during training marches, but they may be busy with more urgent problems when the bullets fly. It's critical that the individual foot soldier be skilled at keeping his feet in the fight.

Three skills are necessary. Most important is knowing how to avoid foot injuries in the first place. But when things go wrong — after all, Murphy was a grunt — we need to be able to march on, despite injured feet. Finally, it's important to know how to care for injured feet once the dust of battle settles.

Blisters and abrasions are the big worries, and friction causes both.

Conditioned feet are more resistant to abrasions. I've toughened mine by walking and running in jungle boots with no socks, gradually building the thickness of callouses by deliberately inducing friction. If you try this, monitor your feet carefully and stop before doing harm. Running barefoot on sandy beaches is also good. But the underlayers of the toughest feet are still vulnerable to blistering.

The best way to prevent blisters is to eliminate friction. Moist, hot feet are especially vulnerable. Frequent powdering of feet and sock changes help, but aren't always possible. Friction also may be reduced by coating feet with petroleum jelly (Vaseline) so that boots slide over skin rather than pulling it back and forth. This works especially well in wet environments, where powdering feet is wasted effort.

Sockless in the Swamp

Heavy socks turn into sponges once they're wet, locking moisture against your feet. Wearing two pairs of thin polypropylene socks (or similar nonabsorbent material) rather than one thick cotton or wool sock works better in hot or wet environments. I've even gone completely sockless in coastal swamps when my feet have been well-conditioned to jungle boots. This allows my feet to dry out and breathe when out of the water. I prefer the breathable GI "waffle" insoles in wetland environments.

Everyone's feet are different. Mine, for example, look like SCUBA fins:

wide up front, but narrow in the heel. Combat boots that fit me allow my heels to slide around too much, a guaranteed cause of blisters. I cured this by inserting the sockliners (removable insoles) from my running shoes into my boots — both jungle boots and regular combat boots. The preformed heel cup in the sockliner locates my heel securely, eliminating a big source of friction. You may need a half-size larger boot to have enough room for such a liner; try on boots with the socks and insoles you plan to wear for a march.



With proper conditioning and care of feet, the thinking grunt will avoid giving medics business they really don't need. Photo: Tom Slizewski

A proper boot fit is essential. Feet often swell when they get hot; they also swell when cold. Boots that pinch the feet are just as no-go as boots that allow your feet to slide around inside. If you wear heavier socks in the winter, your winter boots will probably need to be at least a half-size larger than your jungle boots.

If a particular area of your foot is vulnerable to blisters, you can protect the area in advance. There are a number of different products on the market — traditional moleskin, liquid-filled plastic "second skin" and others. If you feel a blister or abrasion developing, get your boots off as soon as possible and check it out. If no blister has yet formed, you may be able to prevent one by fitting moleskin to keep your boot away from the sensitive area.

Blister Care

If a blister has formed and you need to keep moving, you'll probably need to drain it. Scrub the blister and surrounding area thoroughly with povidine-iodine (such as Betadine) or

soap and, if available, sterile water. Sterilize a needle or knife point with a flame and carefully puncture the blister at the base, draining the fluid. Then clean the affected area again.

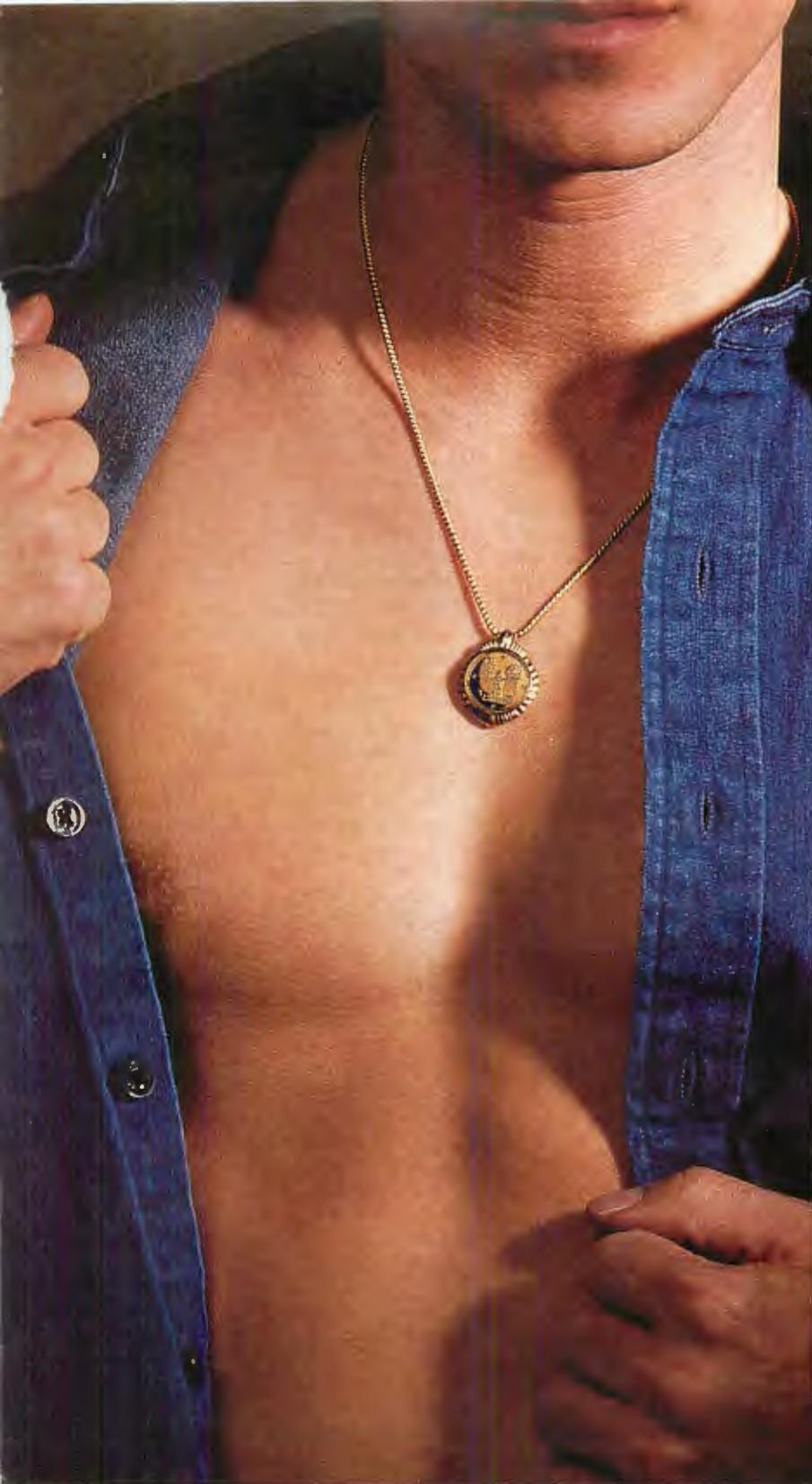
It's important to preserve the blister roof, as this will reduce risk of infection and speed healing. Protect it from further injury by covering it with sterile gauze or, even better, a non-adhering dressing such as an adaptic or Telfa pad. Then cover the blister with a larger piece of moleskin or tape. You may need to drain the blister fluid several times in the first 24 hours.

If you're treating an abrasion, or even a blister from which the roof has been torn, scrub it thoroughly as described above, removing wound debris and loose skin with sterile forceps or scissors (medics call this "debridement"). Protect the wound as with a drained blister. A "doughnut" made with several layers of moleskin, with a center cutout a little larger than the wounded area, will help keep the boot from causing additional damage while the abrasion is healing.

Recovery depends on avoiding infection. At least twice a day, thoroughly clean and debride the abrasion, scrubbing aggressively with soap and water or povidine-iodine to remove dried pus and scab material that harbor bacteria. It's OK to make it bleed while you're cleaning it. The idea is to allow the wound to heal gradually from the edges inward while it continues to drain. An antibacterial ointment may be applied after each cleaning. If there is any sign of infection, see a medic.

Once in bivouac, get out of your boots. The nylon-webbed "Teva" sandals developed by kayakers are a lot sturdier than shower flip-flops if you need to walk around — or even run. Getting air to the wound will hasten healing, and with a pair of these on, you can still fight.

Finally, a word for the leaders. Be aware that each of your guys is probably different when it comes to foot care needs. Don't let the guy who was born with buffalo-hide feet set the standard — you may lose the rest of your team. And if you know that you have a guy with delicate feet, get him on a sensible program to toughen them up before the mission. ☒



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I WAS THERE

by John Kreiger

僕の潜水艦のあそび

I thought I was ready for anything, but I guess I wasn't.

"Let me get this straight. Where is the place I actually sleep?" I asked, "like when it's time to go to bed."

"Well, it's just for a few nights," Lieutenant Commander Sato of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force explained. "Look, you probably won't get much sleep this week anyway." Sato was XO of the submarine, so there was little I could do but smile.

I stared down at the wire mesh separating two torpedo tubes, my new home. My "bed" was a slab of oily steel, about 2 feet wide and 5 feet long. Sato threw me a blanket and pillow, unable to keep from laughing a little as he disappeared into the darkness.

After three years in the U.S. Navy, I had never been on a sub until now. Strangely, my first sub would not be American, but Japanese — SS-571, the *Takashio*. The insides of the fish seemed so dark. Metal pipes twisted all around me, and orders yelled in Japanese could be heard echoing through the Mitsubishi-made steel corridors. Mixed with this was the pinging of active sonar — very loud for some reason, and constant.

Japanese sailors came running past, obviously on some urgent sub business, or so I thought. One of them stopped, eyes wild like his birthday had finally come. "*Ima desu! Shokuji de-kitta yo! Tabeyo!*" — Soup's on. I didn't know who this guy was, but that was all I needed to hear.

I soon found myself standing in front of steaming piles of teriyaki beef, giant slabs of fresh sashimi, porterhouse steaks dripping with butter, sushi of every variety, curried rice with marinated pork and enough steamed rice to feed a subload of samurai.

A little later, very happy after dinner, I slid into my "bed." Sato was right, though, and I didn't sleep a wink. I had been staring at pipes for a few hours when the sub began "snorkeling" — cruising around on the surface to recharge the batteries on our Kawasaki diesel engines.

This was great fun. A strong vacuum effect made me feel as if my brain were being sucked into a drain one second, then spit back out the next. It was like shooting from space to earth at warp speed in a jet without atmosphere

control, back and forth, for hours. I soon lost my sense of hearing. A little spaced out, however, I was enjoying the whole thing, and lay there smiling between the torpedo tubes.

I was just starting to get the feeling that I would carry around for the duration of this trip: not knowing what the hell time of day it was or how it really mattered. Noon may as well have been midnight, and time on a clock became meaningless.

Snorkeling completed, we began dropping into a steep, 45 degree angle

preparing for a sonar class at the base. Interpreting for the American commander was supposed to be the last leg of my assignment.

On board were the five guys I had been interpreting for, so I went off in search of them, anxious to find something to do. After bumping around in the dark for a while, I finally stumbled into the sonar room. There they were, as if they had been waiting. "*John-kun! Irrasshai yo! Doozo suwatte kudasai!*" — Where have you been? Have a seat.

I had a job. With a nod from Sato, I was no longer a useless interpreter ... I was a Japanese sonar technician. I understood little at first, but eventually came to know the basics, and was given some responsibility. Our mission was to "fight" three U.S. Navy destroyers, searching for us on the water above.

Hours and days went by, the sub usually under conditions of absolute silence. Sonar was passive only, and I sat with headphones crammed to my skull listening for any sound of the American ships. Most of the time, all I could hear were fish and whales, endlessly screaming into my ears. Every couple of hours, the screws on the destroyers would kick up; we would hide in the noise, change position slightly, maybe dive deeper.

Considering what I had to look forward to for a bed, I couldn't get enough of this cat and mouse action. Sixteen hours would pass, and still I felt I personally had to evade the "enemy" destroyers. The Japanese were taking this exercise very seriously, and I began to feel as if we would live or die depending on the outcome.

As an American sailor, I felt as if I were in a black-and-white World War II movie, albeit on the wrong side of the battle. It occurred to me that John Wayne or Humphrey Bogart should be out there somewhere, looking for me and my Japanese boat.

More days crept by. Around Oahu we chased, never quite in a position to "kill" one another. The destroyers would find us, we would go into a deep, hang-on-to-whatever-the-hell-is-available dive, and escape. Likewise, just

Continued on page 83



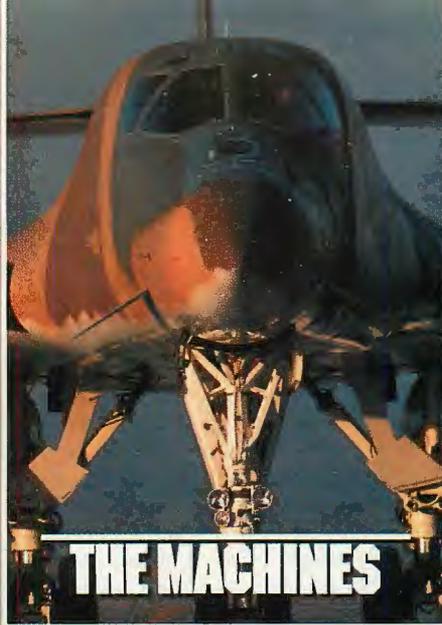
dive. Blood rushed from my head to my feet and I began to feel as if I were in a Japanese spaceship.

The next thing I knew, it was time to go to work. "Welcome to the real Navy," I thought, eyes as red as tuna sashimi. My job on this trip was to be an interpreter for an American commander, who had also never been on a sub. I staggered to the conning tower where Sato told me that I looked like hell, and that the American commander was just a wee bit seasick. It turned out he had been vomiting for hours, and couldn't even get out of his rack.

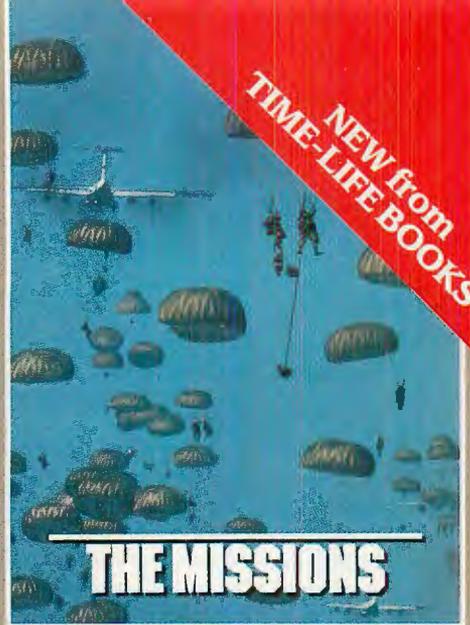
My sole reason for being on this Japanese fish was in peril. I crawled down from the tower, suddenly with nothing to do. The *Takashio* was on a training mission at Pearl Harbor, and I had just finished two months of inter-



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WAR NOTES

by John Coleman

This month, I'm preempting In Review for a few comments on the war.

WAR protesters. Here's my feeling: You can bet that if any of the Iraqi forces are being fed information from the outside world on the war, then a lot of it centers around anti-war protesters in the United States and elsewhere. That may give Iraqi forces the impression that there's a massive anti-war movement afoot. They know what that did to our resolve in Vietnam, and that may give *them* the resolve to hold out for just that one more day against U.S. and allied attacks. And that, I promise, will result in the deaths of many more U.S. and allied air crew and ground troops. You can count body bags on it.

I won't say every protester belongs to the tight-knit bunch that stands around banging drums in a state of drug-induced psychosis, intent on reliving the '60s and aching for their 10 seconds on the 6 o'clock news. A few are of good will, and sincerely hate the idea of war. So do I. But I remember how *I* felt in Vietnam, listening to and reading about the protests back home. It hurt. Do you think our forces now in the Middle East feel differently? Whether you support the war is one thing — what is important now is that we all support the troops fighting it. During Vietnam we confused the warriors with the war. Let's not repeat that mistake now.

We've already been hearing grum-

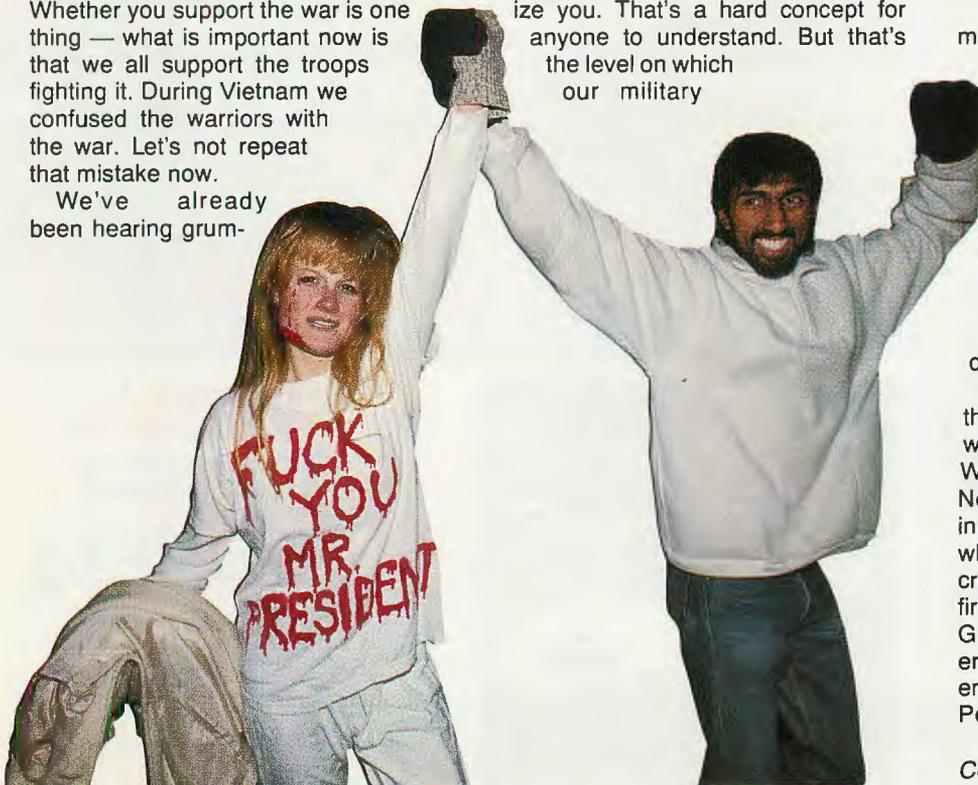
blings about the "lack of humanity" shown by military officers who have been giving press briefings on the war. To wit: they've been using terms like "collateral damage" — damage done to other than the intended target — to describe hits on civilians in military target areas. Detractors say the military is trying to hide behind language to hide the horrors of war. OK, they are, and there's a reason for it. Never forget that it's the military fighting this war — no one else. They're the ones who witness battle, close-up and personally. They're the ones who have to kill, and be killed in the process. If, for a minute, they allow themselves to think about what they're doing in personal terms — allowing "humanity" to interfere in a situation which is most definitely inhumane — then they will hesitate, perhaps for a life-or-death split second, and die. Or their fellows will die. There is no such thing as a "good war" when you're the one fighting it, and with that as a given, you must suspend many of the values and beliefs that you have lived by. You must "dehumanize" enemy military forces and think of them as targets that must be neutralized — before they neutralize you. That's a hard concept for anyone to understand. But that's the level on which our military



War protesting — the new art form. Photos: David Bjorkman, National News Service

must think, and that's the way they report it. At the individual level, however, and I can promise you this: They take it personally. Very personally. They've necessarily tucked their emotions and feelings away for now, but they will surface when the war's done. Men and women fighting this war will be different people from those you knew before they left. Remember that, when they come home again.

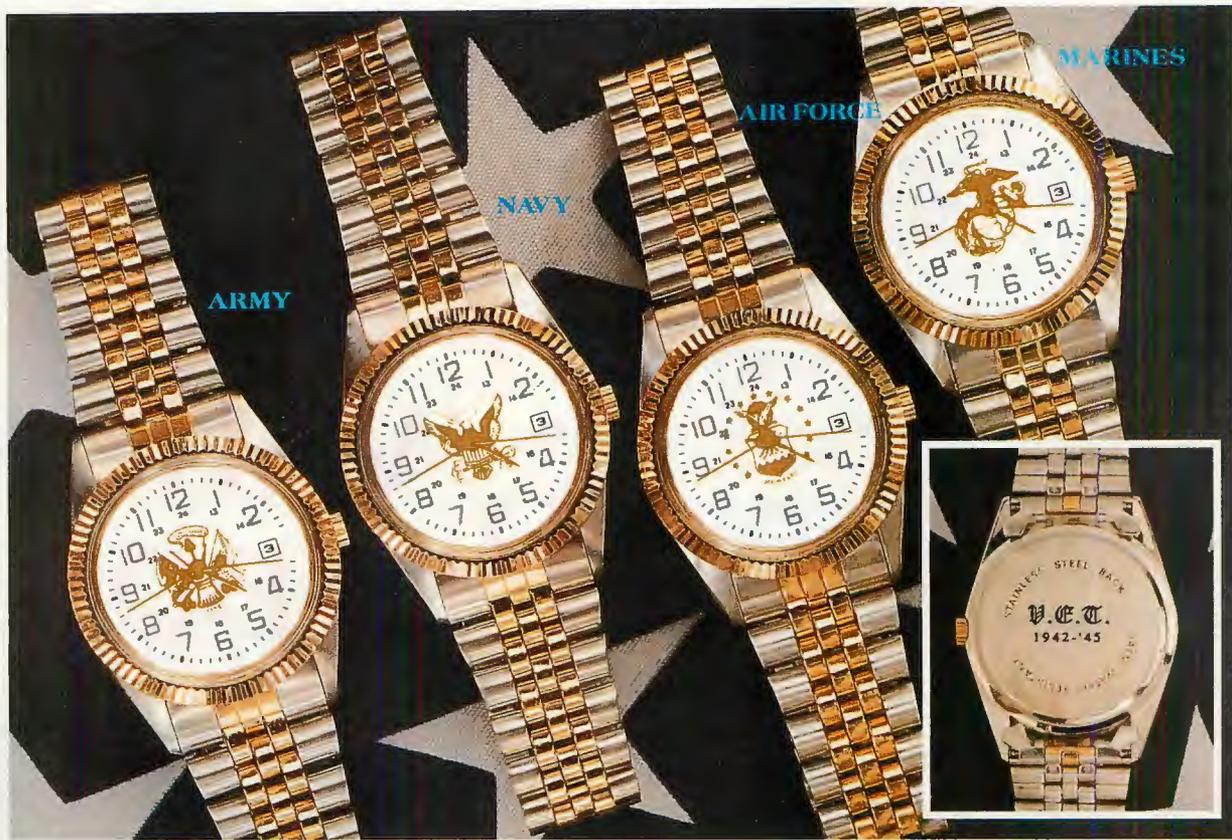
Media deserves our attention for the things they're doing right — and wrong — in their coverage of the war. What's right? CNN, for one. Cable News Network has left everyone else in the dust. Seems that no matter where anything happens, CNN has a crew there to report it back to us. In the first hours, for example, everyone from George Bush to his military commanders to Saddam Hussein and his advisers, tuned in to watch Bernard Shaw, Peter Arnett and John Holliman report



Continued on page 22

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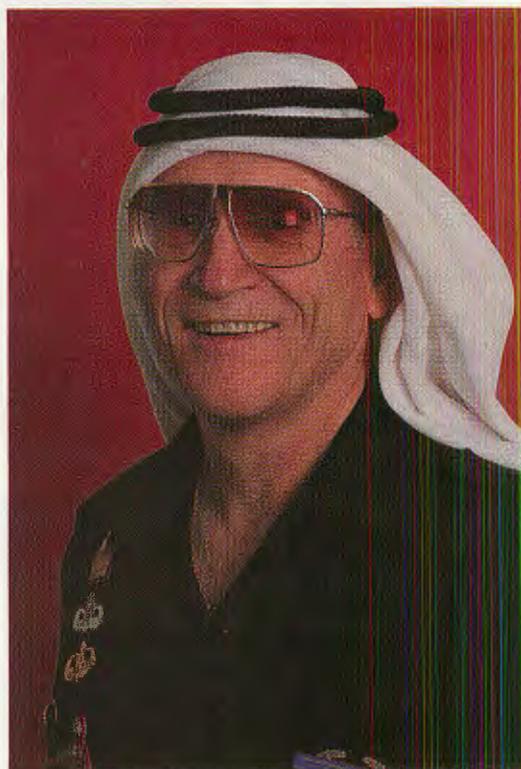
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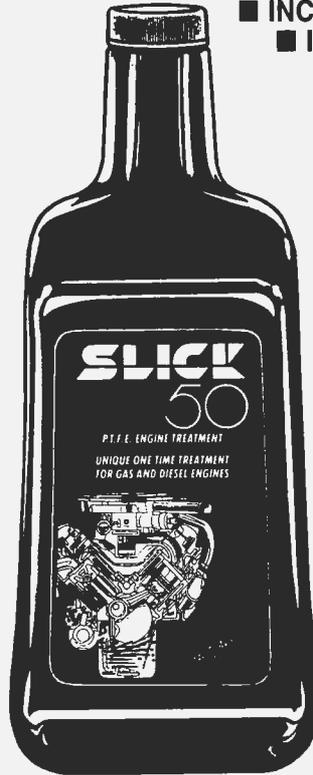
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How is Slick 50 applied?

Slick 50 is easy to use. At your next oil and filter change, simply substitute one quart of Slick 50 for one quart of new oil being added. Drive the car for 30 minutes, and leave Slick 50 in the crankcase. As the engine operates, the oil will carry Slick 50 throughout the engine where it bonds to the porous metal surfaces.

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Does Slick 50 have any effect on automobile warranties?

No. The use of Slick 50 does not in any way affect a car's warranty. Petrolon, the manufacturers of Slick 50, has letters on file from automobile and engine manufacturers to document that fact. Slick 50 carrier oil meets or exceeds all specifications that Detroit applies to products added to an engine. New engines need at least a 3- to 4-thousand mile burnishing-in period. Slick 50 should not be added until the first oil change.

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■ **Consumer's Digest Magazine** in the March/April 1982 issue, stated: "We were somewhat skeptical at first, but it turns out that Slick 50 does exactly what Petrolon, the manufacturer, claims it does. In fact, the more we looked, the more facts stacked up on the product's side. The substance does, in fact, suspend the oil and will adhere to engine parts. The process by which this is accomplished is a closely-guarded secret.... Slick 50 does reduce engine heat and ordinary wear, and our informal tests indicate that it will improve gas mileage by about 2 or 3 miles per gallon."

■ **TUV, the West German equivalent of our Underwriter's Laboratories and foremost automotive testing authority in Europe**, found substantial increases in both gas mileage and horsepower resulting from a reduction in friction.

■ **Nordisk Motor Test Center, Sweden's most advanced motor-testing facility**, reported a 10% to 17% decrease in fuel consumption and attributes to Slick 50, "better sealed engines, performance increases and cleaner exhaust."

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live from their hotel room in Baghdad as the air attacks came in. Gutsy reporting in the best tradition of combat reporters, and we at SOF tip our hats to them. No doubt there'll be others. What else is right? NBC's Fred Francis and CNN's Wolf Blitzer, for their Pentagon reporting.

What's wrong? Correspondents, especially those at the Pentagon, State Department and White House, making major leaps of illogical presumption based on limited fact and rumor (Francis and Blitzer so far excepted). What's wrong? Network and print media "experts," who aren't — especially many of the retired generals who should have stayed that way. What's wrong? We know they have to justify their expense accounts, but reporters at the Saudi Arabia military briefings who ask the same question in 20 different ways — after having been told by a briefer 20 different times that they can't talk about it — should have their tongues clipped. They should also strive to understand what the hell they're talking about before they ask idiotic questions (example: "Ah, general, on those airplanes...do you think they can, uh, see where they're going in the clouds, and, uh, do clouds make it hard for the, uh, pilots to see where they're going?"). Hey, we're flying high-tech machines here, folks. Not bi-planes. And further to those briefings: If the military has nothing to say, and won't answer questions about it anyway, then quit ruining the careers of those officers who are pushed on-stage during the current version of Vietnam's "5 o'clock Follies." Conduct a briefing when there's hard information to pass along, and with someone qualified to answer questions — or forget it.

Notable quote from our beloved Editor/Publisher, Robert K. Brown, reporting from Riyadh, and his reaction to a Scud attack on that city: "When the first siren went off, I got my gas mask and went down into the shelter. When it went off the second time, I said 'F--k it,' turned over and went back to sleep."

Which Hollywood starlet will make her ingenious career move by sitting in the gunner's seat of an Iraqi anti-aircraft system, gloating over the downing of U.S. and allied air crews this time around? Bets?

Finally, the evil spectre of prisoners of war is again raising its ugly head. Will the United States write off those held in Iraq? A harsh question, I know, but our track record in accounting for POWs in other conflicts — World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, to name a few — is less than admirable. Help keep their names and faces in the public — and government — eye. We will. ☒

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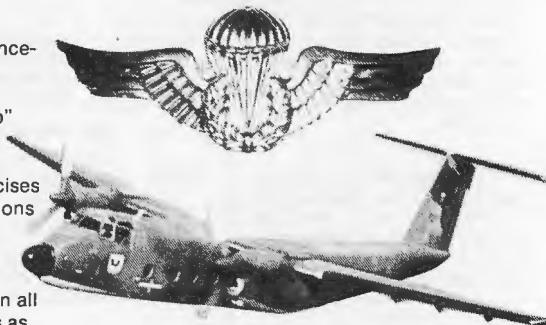
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M9 Slide Failures

By now it's common knowledge that the U.S. Armed Forces have experienced some slide failures with the new M9 (Beretta 92F) service pistol. The problem is one of metallurgy, not design deficiency.

Due to insufficient "fracture toughness" (a qualitative term that cannot be quantified which means resistance to cracking), 13 M9 slides have separated at the juncture of the rear radius of the locking block recess on each side of the slide. Ten of these failures were deliberately induced. Two failures occurred during U.S. Navy SEAL training exercises (January and July 1988) and the third happened at the U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center's Fort Dix test site during ammunition and barrel life tests in February 1988. These three failures occurred at 4,500, 10,000 and 6,000 rounds, respectively. In addition, a Navy-owned commercial Beretta 92F pistol experienced this failure after an excess of 30,000 rounds were fired through it.

As an interim solution, a slot has been cut into the inside rear of the slide and an enlarged hammer pin installed. If the slide should separate, the new hammer pin head will engage the slot and capture the rear half of the slide. Beretta apparently has no plans to introduce this modification on commercial versions of the 92F.

Long-term corrective measures include a re-examination of the heat treatment process to determine if changes can be made to increase fracture toughness. In my opinion, increasing the radius at the rear of the locking block recesses would also substantially decrease the occurrence of slide fractures in this area.

Not publicized, there have been recent failures of the locking block

itself. This doesn't surprise me, as this is the most frequently replaced component on the German P.38 pistol from whence the M9's locking system was derived. However, part life on the M9's locking block exceeds 5,000 rounds — the specified service life of the pistol itself. While some pistols may be fired more than 5,000 rounds per year, the vast majority of service sidearms have less than 150 cartridges pumped through their chambers each year.

All of this must also be placed into the proper historical perspective. No weapon system is born into perfection. From the comparative trials of 1930 until production of the Mk I Bren light machine gun in September 1937, there were numerous problems which included excessive fouling, faulty ejection, too much recoil, popping primers and too high a rate of fire. Yet the Bren lives on as the finest magazine-fed LMG of all time.

In 1960, use of the wrong steel resulted in scores of blown-up M14 receivers and bolts of H&R manufacturer. The M16's serious problems in 1968 are too well-known to require repetition. After the problems were analyzed and solved, both rifles went on to establish more than acceptable service histories.

South African Z88

Furthermore, Lyttelton Engineering Works (LEW) has commenced series production of a new service pistol for the South African Defence Force (SADF). Known as the Z88, it is nothing more than a cosmetically altered clone of the Beretta 92F.

SOF recently examined a specimen of the Z88 and found it different from the M9 in the following details. Most immediately apparent are the addition of tritium night sights which consist of a single crystal on the front sight blade and a crystal on each side of the open square notch at the rear.

The black synthetic grip panels carry the LEW logo as do the magazines, which also feature a larger finger-extension floorplate than the M9. The

Pistol Potpourri

frame anodizing is semi-gloss instead of matte. The barrel and the top of the slide have a high gloss black oxide finish instead of matte. The barrel appears to be somewhat smaller in outside diameter. The trigger is grooved instead of smooth. The dishied-out front of the trigger guard has vertical grooves instead of horizontal serrations. The vertical grooves on the frame's front and back straps are wider than the M9's. The magazine catch/release button is ringed. The pistol is issued with a brown nylon case and a total of five magazines. Trigger pull weights on SOF's test specimen were 8 3/4 pounds at double-action and 5 1/2 pounds when fired single-action.

The South Africans could have chosen any pistol design they felt met their service requirements — licensed to do so or not. That they chose the Beretta design indicates they determined it was the best pistol



available at this time. One would be hard put to fault their decision, as it is drawn from a far more extensive and current battlefield data base than was available to the U.S. Armed Forces prior to the XM9 trials.

Heckler & Koch

New weapons and accessories continue to increase Heckler & Koch's generally superb small arms systems. It has recently been announced that the MP5 submachine gun, which already monopolizes the SMG inventories of military and law enforcement special operations units both in this country and abroad, is now available in a 10mm chambering that

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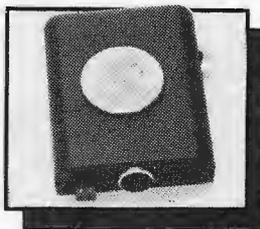
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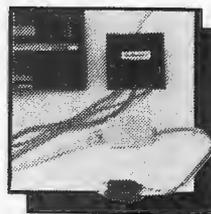
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features a translucent synthetic 30-round magazine and a hold-open device. Another new development is the P7M10 "squeeze-cocker" pistol in .40 S&W.

There are also a number of useful aftermarket accessories available for the H&K product line. Innovative Weaponry, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 337 Eubank NE, Suite 103, Albuquerque, NM 87123; phone 1-800-334-3573) now produces tritium night sights for the HK94/MP5, HK33/93 and HK91/G3 series that are user installable.

Tritium (an isotope of hydrogen) provides the energy source for self-luminous sights of this type. Tritium gas and a phosphor particle are pressurized within a tiny glass capsule. Tritium creates soft beta rays which are converted to visible light when they strike the phosphor particle. The capsules are resistant to oil, water, corrosion and temperature changes.

These P-T (Practical-Tactical) H&K night sights consist of a replacement front sight with a single luminous vertical bar and a U-shaped rear sight assembly with two circular luminous dots. Installation merely requires that you remove the front sight retaining pin (use a 5/32-inch roll-pin punch and drive the pin to the rear of the weapon as the hole is tapered) and replace the standard front sight with the one provided. Use the Phillips-head

screwdriver on the H&K rear sight tool to remove the rear sight's retaining screw and lock washer. Replace the two oval steel flat washers with the single fiber oval washer provided, drop in the P-T rear sight unit and reinstall the retaining screw and washer.

I can recommend these sights without reservation and have installed them on one of my MP5s. Self-luminous night sights should be de rigueur on any handgun, shotgun, SMG or rifle intended for serious social purposes.

No matter how many rounds a weapon's magazine holds, the troops always covet one with a greater capacity. All too often this provides no more than an excuse to waste ammunition and lower hit probability. However, if you are an experienced operator trained to employ proper fire discipline, there are occasions when a magazine that can be stuffed with a bunch — when it functions reliably — can increase the odds in your favor.

Max/Capacity Products, Inc., or MCP (Dept. SOF, 1605 W. Sack Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027; phone 1-800-736-8018) manufactures large-capacity magazines with steel bodies for the H&K series that are robust and function reliably.

Their 30-round, caliber 7.62x51mm NATO, HK91/G3 magazine duplicates a magazine of this capacity that was

assembled about a decade ago in Portugal from stampings made in Germany for an unspecified African contract. No more than 10,000 were manufactured; only 5,000 were delivered. Failure to deliver the remainder by the date called for in the contract resulted in their sale as surplus in the U.S. by Bumble Bee Wholesale, Inc. of California. Large welding seams on each side of the magazine body lend a somewhat crude appearance and the incorrect impression that portions of two 20-round magazines were simply welded together.

MCP's rendition of this odd duck features a chromed steel follower and a redesigned follower spring that permits a 20% increase in stripping pressure without increasing the difficulty of loading the magazine to capacity by hand. When loaded with 30 rounds, this brute adds approximately 2.4 pounds to the weight of the rifle. Fully loaded, it can be seated into the magazine-well only with the bolt in the retracted position. It is about 2 1/2 inches longer than the standard 20-round magazine. Functioning in a semiautomatic-only HK91 was without stoppages of any type.

HK33/93 caliber 5.56x45mm NATO rifles are now issued with a 25-round,

Continued on page 83

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Raid Gauloises route. Winning team of French commandos finished in eight days.

Raiders rafted Rio General, one of Costa Rica's wild rivers, for at least two days. Photo: Chuck Fremont

This is the second part of our coverage of the 1990 Raid Gauloises, a cross between a mountaineering run, the Paris-Dakar rally, and the British SAS selection course. To get the big picture on the Raid, see SOF Associate Editor Tom Sliwski's account in the March issue.

RIO Chirripo Valley, central Costa Rica, 2 December 1990: A Frenchman walking ahead of me shifted his climbing pack on his shoulders, momentarily lost his concentration and vanished.

He slipped over a cliff edge, and was clinging to a tangle of vegetation. Two hundred meters below, the Rio Chirripo churned north toward the Caribbean Sea. I grabbed the haul loop of his pack and pulled him to relative safety on the trail. "Merci beaucoup," he said, balanced his pack, and marched on.

It was slimy going. Bright running tights were splattered with red tropical

THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE

Racing Coast-to-Coast in Costa Rica

by Chuck Fremont



Only native Indians live this deep in Costa Rica's rain forests, an area of perpetual rain and no roads. They were generally wary of the oddly dressed Europeans. Photo: Chuck Fremont

mud and damp cattle dung from the approach march. Sweat darkened their multicolored climbing jerseys, and fatigue shadowed the faces of the competitors as they pushed through the rain forest toward Cerro Chirripo, the highest point in Costa Rica at 12,529 feet.

The Raiders

At the pre-race party in Limon, I met a number of the competitors — Raiders as they were known. Patrick was a New Zealand river guide; Beatrice (each team of five included one woman), a ski instructor, mountain guide, and young mother of two from Chamonix, France; Gilles was a French antiterrorist commando; Bernard a Camel Trophy rally driver. They were fit, intelligent and gregarious in the manner of mountaineers, elite soldiers and adventurers.

"When I first read about last year's Raid in New Zealand, I knew I had to do this," Beatrice told me. "I called Gerard (Gerard Fusil, the French adventurer and journalist who founded the Raid) and told

him I wanted on a team. Then BDDP (a French advertising firm) called and asked if I would be on their team. So I am here." For Bernard, this was a big change from international rallying. "Usually I race with a car. This is a new challenge, very different for me. Our team is very good, though, especially Françoise — she is a physical fitness instructor, very fit. And I think we are about the right ages — two of us are 31, one each 28, 29 and 30."

Patrick's countrymen won last year's Raid, and he wanted to carry on the Kiwi tradition this year even though he was the lone New Zealander on a French team. "We're in good shape. We have a good chance to finish in the top three or four. It's a long race, though, and a lot can happen. For most of the competitors being on a team is different than what they are used to. On a team, you have to do everything together, including making decisions. It will be interesting."

For Gilles, the Raid was a chance to prove the skills of his elite commando unit against an international field of top

outdoor athletes. "We haven't had time for special training because of our duties — but we are always training hard, so we are strong."

I was here as a journalist, but I wanted to find out for myself how tough the Raid was. At bivouac the first night of the Raid, I asked Gerard for permission to run the jungle segment. He agreed.

"But your map" — I only had a 1:250,000 USAF aviator's evasion map — "is not detailed enough," he told me. "And I have no more of the 1:50,000 maps. And since you do not have the rescue beacon and flares, you must stay close to some of the teams, in case there is an emergency. Also, you must carry a survival knife."

Federico, a Tico (as the Costa Ricans call themselves) Raid organizer known as "Snakeman" because of his graduate studies in herpetology, showed me where to start in the morning. "I envy you, running the Chirripo stage," he told me. "You will see some beautiful, wild country. It's not well known even to most Ticos — except for the indigenous Indians." Federico wished me well, and I left to pack.

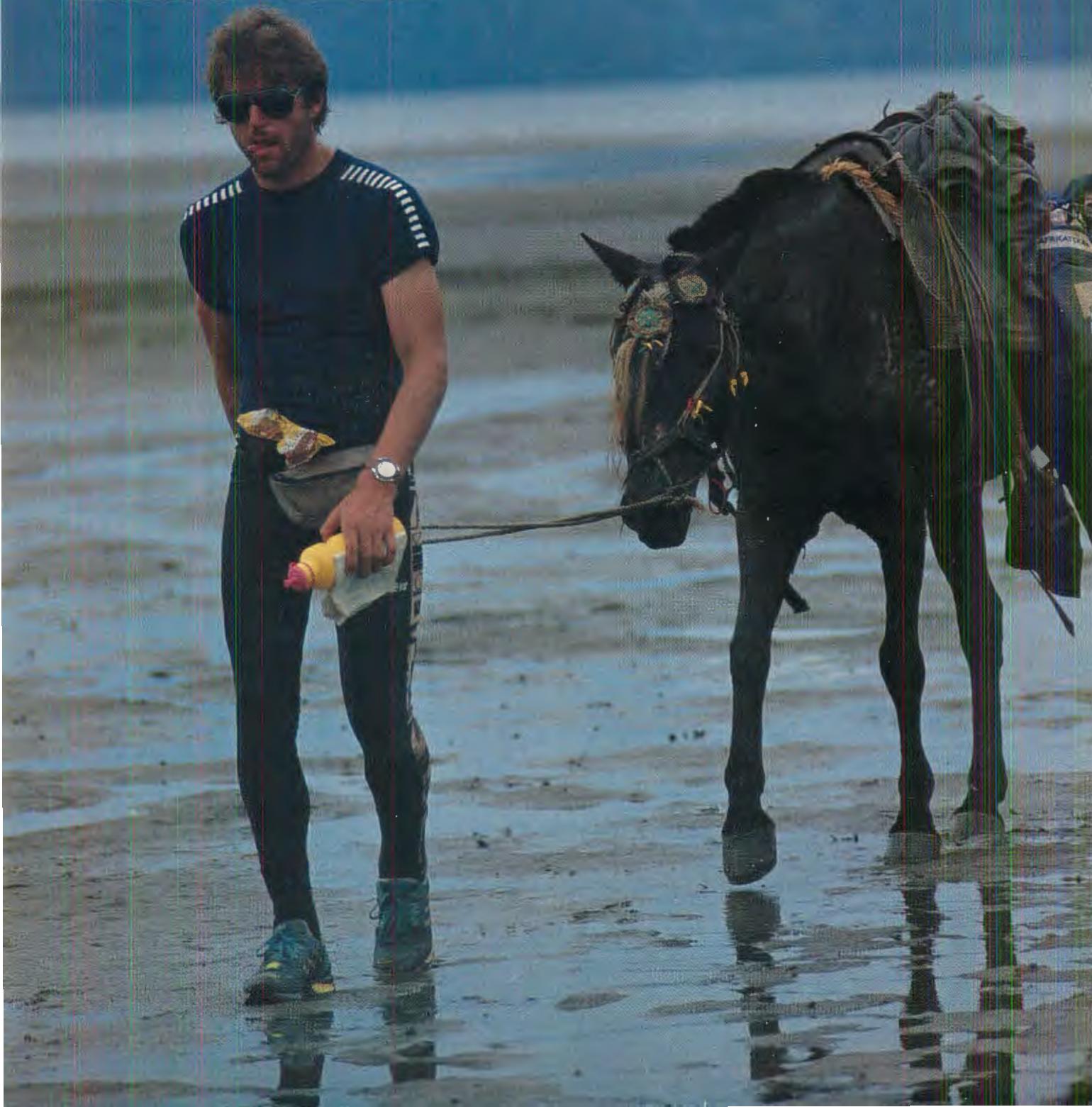
Travel Light, Travel Smart

Nothing in mountaineering is more important than going light. Take what you need to survive. If you get cold, go faster. I believe (within reason) in the Ranger credo: "Travel light, freeze at night." Rather than plan for every possible contingency, I just figure if too much goes wrong I'm finished, and concentrate on making sure things go right.

Gerard expected the two or three fastest teams to make the crossing to San Gerardo in two days, with most teams taking three to four. I planned for three days, but could easily survive four. I would carry no more than 15 or 20 pounds. In the rain forest, 20 pounds feels like 80 in a hurry.

I loaded a summit pack with poncho, "550" parachute cord, a nylon mesh hammock and a polypropylene jersey. The

Raiders emerge from river that empties into Pacific Ocean. During high tide these areas were uncrossable. Photo: Tom Slizewski



food bag contained two LRRP rations, one MRE, and 20 Powerbars. I also packed water purification tablets, Gatorade mix, high-power vitamins, minimal first-aid supplies (Betadine, tape, gauze, moleskin), a light Patagonia vapor-barrier windbreaker, an extra pair of polypro socks, a Tekna flashlight, two one-quart canteens (one full, one empty) and a Swiss army knife. On the hip belt of the pack, I attached two one-pint water bottle holsters, both carrying full bottles, and a Gryphon knife.

Special comment is due the Gryphon knife, since it may not be familiar to most readers. Besides, this is an SOF article. What I want from a belt or harness knife is to forget it's even there; I don't want it to bother me when I'm moving fast. I want that knife to handle heavy cutting, but without looking gaudy or "Hollywood." The good folks at Cutlery Shoppe in Idaho



Raider after three days crossing the Cerro Chirripo mountain range. Photo: Tom Slizewski

recommended the Gryphon to me, and it was perfect — light, carried well. The razor-sharp blade was wet for 10 days, but never stained or rusted.

Other equipment included a Silva wrist compass, a Casio altimeter-barometer watch, boonie hat, and nylon poplin windpants. Footgear was a pair of Nike lightweight mountain running boots, which ended up disintegrating. Back to Adidas and jungle boots for this guy.

Into The Jungle

At 0630, I started up the ranch trail to the start. About 1 klick up, I met Gerard. "I'll see you at Checkpoint 2 — Sitio Hilda — tonight or early tomorrow," he told me. He wished me "*Bon Courage*," and I was on my way. Four or five teams were ahead of me, and a few more waited with Gerard for their start time. Most carried high-tech European climbing packs balanced and designed for moving fast. But some loads looked downright

Raider from Team Delmas crosses mudflat just before finish. Photo: Tom Slizewski

heavy.

The trail deteriorated to a single cattle track as we climbed a ridge that separated us from the valley of the Rio Chirripo. Over the ridge, the cattle track died out. I zigzagged down through the rain forest toward the Chirripo. Walking the river seemed a better bet than bushwhacking. It was the edge of the dry season, but the Chirripo was still flowing fast over a boulder-strewn bed. It wasn't deep, though, and I made good time.

I stopped for a break and filled my water bottles. Patrick's team caught up with me. Dominique, the woman on his team, asked me where my team was, and I explained that I was a journalist. "A journalist, trekking alone. And an American. I think this is the best way to learn about the Raid. But it is very difficult!"

They invited me to accompany them for a while. The French are warm and friendly



Cafe Britt team member Paul Laarman takes a few moments to talk with press after mountain crossing. Photo: Tom Slizewski

people despite their reputation for aloofness, which I think says more about the typical American "industrial tourist" than it does about the French national character.

Patrick was right at home in the river. "For me, it's no problem," he told me. "A river guide is out of the boat a lot, getting it off rocks. I'm used to keeping my footing. But for someone who isn't, it can be treacherous, especially with a current this strong."

We started scouting for another route as the Chirripo began to narrow and deepen. A Frenchman found a narrow track that climbed the muddy side of the gorge toward the clouded forest. We ascended several hundred meters, and the Rio Chirripo was soon a distant white ribbon. We crested the last switchback into a clearing carved from the jungle. A round thatched-roof house stood alone in the center of the clearing, and a very shy young Indian mother and her two children peeked at us from within, wary of the Europeans.

Every little trail leading from the

clearing seemed to dead-end in a tiny cornfield or turn back to the clearing. Everyone studied their maps and momentarily forgot about the competition as they tried to determine the best route. We thought about returning to the river but decided to press on into the forest. The time was about noon.

For the next several hours, we followed narrow jungle tracks that meandered along muddy cliff sides, gradually working our way south. Everyone was caked with mud. It was in this stretch that my Nike boot blew apart. I lashed it back together with 550 cord. It rained off and on all day. I settled into a routine of walking until I came to a stream, then stopped, drank both bottles of water, refilled them and then walked on, dropping iodine tablets in on the march. I ate a Powerbar about every two hours, also while walking.

Night falls in the tropics with the subtlety of a mortar shell — due to the steep trajectory of the sun in lower latitudes. Weary Raiders stopped for camp at dusk, about 1700. Some pitched dome tents in wide spots on the trail, others stretched out bivy sacks. I hoped to reach Sitio Hilda in one day, so kept going. I stopped about 1930 alongside the Rio Chirripo.

The Chirripo was now a fast mountain stream about 10 meters wide. I slung my little hammock between a couple of trees and stretched the GI poncho over it on some 550 cord. It gets cool in the rain forest at night, especially when you're wet, and I pulled on the polypro shirt and windbreaker before sacking out. I awoke about 0500, broke camp and continued south toward Sitio Hilda.

A (Not So) Small Problem

Just past dawn, I broke into a large clearing. A black Gazelle helo was parked in the center. I started running easily, as the tents of the control point were still about a kilometer away. When I reached the control, Gerard welcomed me. "Good, you made it. Only 12 teams have arrived so far. How do you feel?"

"I'm fine. But I have a small problem," I said, indicating the Nike. Gerard looked at the boot.

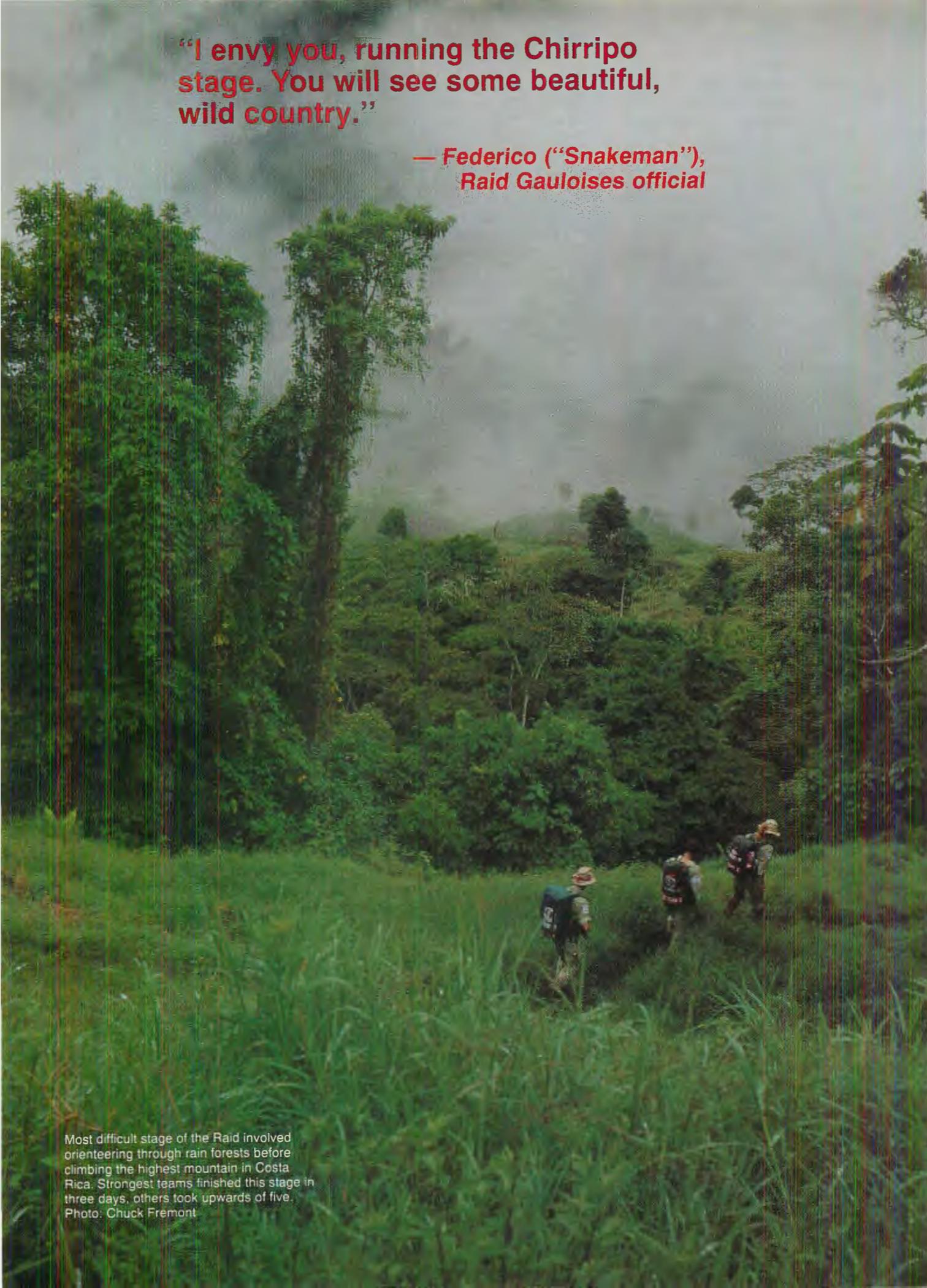
"This is not a small problem. This is a big problem, I think. You cannot continue," he told me. I asked him if the route to Cerro Chirripo was much rougher than the march to Sitio Hilda. "Much more difficult. With this shoe, impossible. You must go out by my helicopter."

Patrick's team soon arrived, checked in with the controllers, then sat down for breakfast and foot care. The constant dampness caused borderline immersion foot problems. There were a lot of blisters; some feet looked like raw hamburger. Teams straggled in throughout the day, resting briefly before the climb to the peak.

Raziz, a French-Saudi Raider, said, "Don't ask me what I'm doing here, an Arab in the jungle! This kind of thing

“I envy you, running the Chirripo stage. You will see some beautiful, wild country.”

**— Federico (“Snakeman”),
Raid Gauloises official**



Most difficult stage of the Raid involved orienteering through rain forests before climbing the highest mountain in Costa Rica. Strongest teams finished this stage in three days, others took upwards of five.
Photo: Chuck Fremont

happens when you hang around with Australians. Personally, I don't like mud." The Aussie on Raziz's team said, "Not me — I love mud. Especially Costa Rican bloody mud!" Beatrice, the lovely mountain guide from Chamonix, said firmly, "This is not fun."

At 1500, I boarded the helo. As we flew north, I spotted two more teams trekking toward Sitio Hilda. They would be lucky to reach the checkpoint by darkness. The terrain was the most rugged I had overflown since eastern Luzon in the Philippines.

Ticos in Front

The course was tougher than Gerard thought. No one finished Stage Two in two days, and it appeared that few would finish in three.

In San Gerardo, Richard Chatham, an expatriate American who was on Team Costa Rica before a parachute injury forced him out, briefed me on his friends. "Our team has trained hard, and they know the country. We are completely self-supported. Nat (Nathaniel Grew) put up the rest of our entry fee or we wouldn't have made it." Richard paused, shifting his weight on his crutches. "Nat has a cattle ranch up north. He's an expat from Connecticut, 53 years old and the number one triathlete in the over-40 class in Costa Rica. Jeri Lynn (Ruhlow) is a river guide from California, working here. She's really fit. Rigoberto and Raphael are mountain guides, and Gilberth is a river guide."

Early in the afternoon, the word spread that a team was approaching: Team Costa Rica. Nat, recovering from knee surgery, was using cross country ski poles to help absorb the shock of the descent. "Cafe Britt (the other Tico team) was ahead of us, but we caught up with them at night," Nat told me. "When they were stopped, we crept around them, quietly." He mimed a slow sneaky movement. "They never even heard us. Then we just kept going as fast as we could."

Cafe Britt arrived soon after, followed closely by the French GIGN-Gore Tex team. This team was composed of three antiterrorist commandos comparable in function and training to our Delta Force troopers, one French marine, and a champion woman cross-country ski racer. They looked very strong. Clearly, they intended to do better than third.

I lost the lead teams for several days as they rafted down the Rio General. We beached our press raft frequently to photograph Raiders shooting the rapids. We again found them in the coffee fields around Sierpe.

Next came a canoe race through the Rio Sierpe estuary, a tangle of tidal channels and minor distributaries. Finding the main channel was a big problem. "We started down a channel, only to have it die out in mud flats, many times," a Raider on the GIGN-Gore Tex team later told me.

Gerard provided tide tables, and by planning carefully so that they moved seaward with the tidal flow, some teams had a relatively easy run down the Sierpe.

No Food, No Sleep, No Rest

At the Pacific, 100km from the finish, the Raiders were on foot again, running the sea cliffs of the Osa Peninsula. The GIGN guys told me later that this was the toughest stretch for them. "We won because on the Osa we didn't eat, didn't sleep, never stopped, just ran."

At Carate on the southern tip of the peninsula, they picked up horses for the final stage, the "Run-and-Ride" along the beach to Puerto Jimenez. Each team of five received three small quarter horses (cow ponies). The idea was to take turns riding and running, or let injured teammates use the horses for the run to the finish.

"No one was the captain — we were all just one team. We decided everything together."

**Gilles Cature,
member of
the winning
GIGN-Gore Tex team**

Tom Slizewski and I bivouacked on the beach about 10km from the finish. GIGN passed us about 0400 on day eight, then Team Costa Rica at 0630. The Ticos looked strong: Jeri Lynn was running, Nat was trotting his horse, grinning from ear to ear. They had lost one teammate to a badly infected foot, so they couldn't win. But they weren't slowing down. "How far ahead are the French?" Nat asked me.

Commandos Swim To Win

High tide blocked GIGN from the finish in Jimenez. At about 1000, they saw Team Costa Rica running toward them, so they decided to swim the channel. They had to finish with the horses to win, so they drove their mounts forward into the muddy Pacific. The Ticos stopped at the water, uncertain.

"Then I decided to do it," Nat told me. "We had come so far, and we were so close. My horse almost drowned; I was holding its head out of the water. But it kept swimming. These were the best horses in Costa Rica! We almost caught the French; we were only two minutes behind them."

Four more weary teams made their way

to Jimenez that day. Some were almost dragging reluctant mounts, but the horses weren't tired. I watched at the finish while one reluctant pony was hauled across the finish by a Raider, only to be mounted by a Tico wrangler who promptly galloped away to the cheers of the crowd. The horses didn't understand French, and a lot of the Raiders didn't speak horse.

GIGN's win proved that a trained and determined elite military team can more than hold its own against other top athletes. The team had to struggle with the French military bureaucracy for permission to run the Raid, and they hustled on their own for sponsorship. Dr. Claude Abidbol, a Tunisian-born physics professor at the French military academy, ramrodded the effort, getting official approval just eight days before the Raid began.

To its credit, the French military classified the Raid as a mission, so the troopers were on duty status. They were also allowed to keep the prize money, over \$40,000 for the team. They received no other financial support from their government. In fairness to the French, just getting permission to do something like this would be difficult in the U.S. military.

Dominique Robert, the lone woman on the GIGN team, was also the oldest at 38, yet she looked like she had just finished a 10km run. "Dominique is very strong, and she is also a mother with two teenage children," Claude told me. Gilles Cature, 33, Philippe Bardelli, 28, and Larent Thomas, 27, were the GIGN troopers. Pascal Patillet, 24, a Marine commando, was their river guide. They didn't discuss rank. "No one was the captain — we were all just one team. We decided everything together," Gilles told me.

They were all lean, fit and compact, Pascal the tallest at about 6 feet. Not big men, but strong — good power-to-weight ratios. As for equipment, they carried modern European mountaineering and running gear, nothing military. GIGN had the advantage military people have of knowing how to function as a team. They were proud that they won, but more with esprit de corps than cockiness.

For many Raiders, it was their first experience with such a long-lasting contest. Going eight to 12 days without a break, orienteering through rain forests, walking and rafting wild mountain rivers, navigating tangled estuaries and interpreting tide tables was new for most of them.

From my own background, I would compare the Raid Gauloises to the final phase of the Special Forces Qualification Course, but run for time against 37 other SF teams. High pressure.

Next year's Raid Gauloises is planned for Africa. I'm putting a team together.

Chuck Fremont is an Army Reserve Special Forces NCO and a frequent contributor to SOF. ✖



Shooting on the move is a hallmark of the Special Response Team course at the DOE's Central Training Academy. Firing bursts of only two rounds each through their H&K MP5 A2 submachine guns, SRT 3 students move across the high desert of Kirtland Air Force Base toward their targets.

NUCLEAR SNAKE EATERS

Inside DOE's Secret Training Academy

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

IT is arguably the finest training facility of its type in the world, staffed by the most highly regarded full-time and adjunct instructors in professional circles, and provides training to some of the most elite SWAT units in this country. It is not open to the public.

Few, outside of the very fast lane in which Special Response Teams (SRT) move, even know of its existence. "It" is the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Central Training Academy (CTA), located in an isolated and desolate area deep within the confines of Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The DOE maintains and provides security for all U.S. nuclear weapons and components in inventory as well as other unspecified national security assets. The CTA's mission is to train the mostly contract personnel who provide security at the 47 DOE sites throughout the country to effectively and efficiently protect vital national security interests. Other municipal, state and federal law enforcement agencies and certain U.S. military units are accommodated at the CTA on a space-available basis. More than 3,000 individuals graduate from the CTA's numerous training cycles each year.

Established in 1984, the CTA provides instruction in the follow-

ing fields: Special Response Team — Weapons and Tactics, Crisis Negotiations and Management, Dignitary Protection, Sniper Observation Team Training, Tactical Leadership, Fire Team Tactics, Explosives Identification, Armorer and Rangemaster Certification, Officer Survival, and Safeguards and Technical Training such as Material Control and Accountability.

Special Response Team training is offered at three levels. SRT 1 covers basic teamwork and covert tactics. SRT 2 includes teamwork, planning and dynamic factors. At this time, the most advanced SWAT course offered is the two-week

SRT 3. SOF recently attended three days of the second week of SRT 3 to observe the training firsthand. There were 24 students in this class, all volunteers and all DOE security inspectors with the exception of

LEFT: Shoulder patch of the Central Training Academy's Special Response Team (consisting of full-time instructor personnel) carries two Latin mottoes, "To the ends of the earth" and "Faithful even after death." The five stars signify the team's first five hostage rescues, while the American eagle rides a lightning bolt to indicate the team's swiftness in response.

BELOW: No photography is permitted inside the fun house where SRT 3 students practice dynamic entries. Here they line up outside the building, MP5s at low ready, about to enter and commence the elaborate choreography involved in sweeping a house full of rooms containing terrorists and hostages.



several police officers from New Mexico law enforcement agencies.

Most of the CTA's SRT full-time instructors are reserve members of the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department SWAT Team. They have served numerous warrants. All of CTA's instructors are certified by the state of New Mexico to train law enforcement agencies throughout the state. The CTA's Special Response Team emblem symbolizes their attitude and history. The five stars shown from the U.S. flag signify the team's first five hostage rescues, while the American eagle rides a lightning bolt to indicate the team's swiftness in response. Translated from Latin, the team's mottoes are: "To the ends of the earth" and "Faithful even after death."

The first week of SRT 3 is devoted to weapons training — three days on the handgun and three days on the Heckler & Koch (H&K) MP5 A2. Although I saw one student carrying a Beretta 92F (M9), the CTA armory is principally stocked with double-action (a DOE requirement) semi-automatic pistols manufactured by either Smith & Wesson (S&W) or SIGARMS, Inc. The following models of S&W handguns are used: M4506 and compact M4516 (both chambered for the .45 ACP cartridge) and the M6906, M3906 and M5906 9mm Parabellum variants. Three models of the SIG/Sauer line are inventoried: the P220 (.45 ACP), and the 9mm P226 and compact 9mm P225.

Throughout SRT 3, great emphasis is placed on shooting on the move. Pistols are fired from the Weaver position. After firing, handguns are decocked and brought to the Weaver ready position. Thus, the first shot is always fired double-action. During the first three days students also practice the draw stroke from their issue web gear and both tactical and speed reloads. At the end of the handgun segment a test score of 70% (210 points out of a possible 300) is required before passing on to the submachine gun phase of the first week.

No doubt about it. More special ops groups and SWAT teams employ the H&K MP5 submachine gun than any other type. No other SMG even comes in close at second place. With good reason.

In addition to its reliability and durability, the MP5's most salient feature is its operation from the closed-bolt position. This permits a degree of semiauto accuracy not possible with open-bolt burp guns whose bolts fly forward upon pressing the trigger to stop violently against the chamber face — inevitably disturbing the operator's aim to some extent depending upon the bolt's mass. If the bolt's mass is reduced to minimize this tendency, then the cyclic rate goes up and we end up with a useless bullet hose like the despicable MAC 10. In its "A2" configuration, the MP5 is equipped with a rigid stock which serves as a stable firing platform that further enhances the system's accuracy

potential. Close-range precision is an all-important attribute in hostage scenarios.

The last three days of the first week are spent with the MP5 and practice in shooting semiauto head shots, two-shot bursts, shooting on the move and transition from the MP5 to the handgun after a stoppage or firing the last shot in close-range applications. Students are taught to use the large aperture only on the rear sight, load only 28 rounds in the magazine (I personally think you can safely stuff 29 in the MP5's 30-round magazine), and to check their magazines after loading to see if the top round has moved over (indicating that a round had been chambered).

To pass into the grueling second week of SRT 3 training, students must achieve a test score of 70% (350 points out of a possible 500) with the MP5. All of the basics learned during these first six days are applied and reinforced during the second week of SRT 3, which stresses dynamic tactics with live fire. Shooting on the move is again emphasized throughout most of the second-week training exercises.

Students practice target discrimination by means of electronically controlled pivoting target frames. Shooting an innocent person in the "fun house" during the last day's final exam is an automatic failure, i.e., you have just blown two weeks of your time. The secret to this phase of the training and on the street is to immediately key on the target's hands — if no weapon is exposed, there is no justification for the use of lethal force. Precise, surgical shooting is the key element in the SRT 3 training cycle. Not only do SWAT teams in U.S. law enforcement circles stress the safety of hostages and innocent bystanders as a basic tenet, but DOE SRTs must operate in the high-anxiety environment of delicate and potentially dangerous nuclear weaponry. Hip shooters need not apply.

The students also fire a highly modified version of the Mexican Defense Course with both the handgun and MP5. Rarely used anymore at International Pistol Shooting Confederation (IPSC) matches, it was acquired by Jeff Cooper years ago at the Pan American Games and subsequently modified by him to include lateral movement. As further developed by the CTA it consists of five stages.

Stages one and three require the shooter to commence with his back to the targets. On command he walks forward from the 7-to the 10-yard line, pivots and engages the targets specified for that stage. No pivot is required in the second stage as the shooter commences at the 13-yard line and walks forward, engaging the targets upon command and on the move. Stages four and five require the shooter to walk parallel to the targets between the 7- and 10-yard lines until reaching a red cone in the center, at which time the command to draw and engage is given.

Together with the dynamic entry exer-

cises held in the fun house and the final exam that all must pass on Friday of the second week, the SWAT obstacle course is a centerpiece of the dynamic tactics training. The obstacle course is run with all tactical gear including ballistic vest, both MP5 and handgun and the basic ammo load. Maximum permissible time is 7 1/2 minutes.

The shooter begins by running up a 40-foot tower (a portion of which involves climbing up a caving ladder), from which he then rappels. From the base of the tower he runs to an 8-foot chainlink fence over which he must vault (after handing his MP5 to an instructor) to reach the first firing position. He must then engage a steel plate at a distance of 45 yards from a total of seven firing positions: unsupported standing, barricade standing, small window, large window, from under an obstacle, sniper hide and from the back of a military vehicle.

After his last shot from the truck, the shooter must leap down and run up to a Stokes litter which has been loaded with 180 pounds of steel weights. The litter must be dragged 20 yards before the shooter can trot down to the Donga course. At this point he transitions to his handgun and maneuvers through an arroyo, using the bends in the stream bed to his tactical advantage and firing two shots each on six camouflaged steel targets along a 50-yard run.

CTA training is as realistic as possible. The training situations I observed closely simulated the stress encountered in fire-fights with opponents that shoot back — to kill. CTA's fun house — with no ceilings and an overhead catwalk for instructors to observe and critique the dynamic entry exercises — approximates the physical and mental environment that SRTs can expect when forced to clear a building containing both hostages and terrorists. The complex and highly orchestrated tactics employed in dynamic entries involve intricate choreography and for obvious reasons cannot be revealed. All we can say is that the geeks who think a properly trained SRT will enter a building like Don Johnson and Phillip Michael Thomas in a *Miami Vice* episode have an abrupt and fatal surprise in store for themselves.

While at this time there is no SRT 4 level course, CTA does offer a one-week Tactical Crisis Resolution course that covers full team movement, day and night vehicle assaults and culminates in a full-blown operation that includes an open air-initiated assault with participation of the Crisis Negotiations class.

The DOE's Central Training Academy is the American response to terrorism. Those fortunate enough to graduate from SRT 3 are the beneficiaries of the most advanced antiterrorist training currently available — anywhere. Purposely low profile and unheralded, CTA-trained SRTs can match acts with any of the world's more highly publicized snake eaters. ❧



SRT 3 students practice target discrimination by means of electronically controlled pivoting target frames, some of which contain targets without weapons. Here the choice was simple as both targets were aggressors with firearms.



First firing position of the SWAT obstacle course is unsupported standing from which the student must engage a steel plate at a distance of 45 yards.



Most students choose to engage their target from the prone position when firing from under an obstacle as shown. However, in this instance, the "rice paddy prone" or squatting position would have been quicker and just as stable with a target distance of only 45 yards.



Transitioning to their handguns, shooters maneuver through the Donga with an instructor. Shooting on the move, they must fire two shots each on six camouflaged steel targets along a 50-yard run.



A 40-foot rappelling tower initiates the SWAT obstacle course. Students must climb the tower, rappel down and run from the base to a chainlink fence. All of this must be done wearing tactical gear including ballistic vest, both MP5 and handgun and basic ammo load.



SRT 3 student prepares to fire his H&K MP5 A2 from the large window position during the SWAT obstacle course.



The final position at the 45-yard line of the SWAT obstacle course involves firing from the back of a military vehicle.



SRT 3 students vault over an 8-foot chainlink fence (after handing their loaded MP5s to an instructor) in order to reach the first firing position of the SWAT obstacle course.



Central Training Academy instructor monitors student firing from the small window position during the SWAT obstacle course.



ABOVE & BELOW: Before trotting down the Donga —where the shooter transitions to his handgun — during the SWAT obstacle course, the students must drag a Stokes litter, loaded with 180 pounds of steel weights, a distance of 20 yards.



STRANDED IN SUDAN

Fear and Loathing in Central Africa

by Frank Noble

SOF sent the author on a Horn of Africa tour to cover the ongoing slaughter in Eritrea (See "Africa's Lost War," February '91). His unplanned sojourn in the Sudan, however, turned out to be a story in itself, especially in light of recent State Department warnings against travel to the Sudan and recommendations that any Americans there should leave.

WHEN I agreed to cover Eritrea for *Soldier of Fortune* I knew that my trip would take me via the Sudan, where I anticipated a stay of five or six days. In reality, I was there for three long weeks.

My journey was supposed to take me from Brisbane through Singapore, Bombay and Nairobi to Khartoum. When I arrived in India, my baggage was intact; by the time I reached the next stop, Nairobi, my camera tripod was missing. I guess I was lucky. An American family on the same flight lost all their baggage.

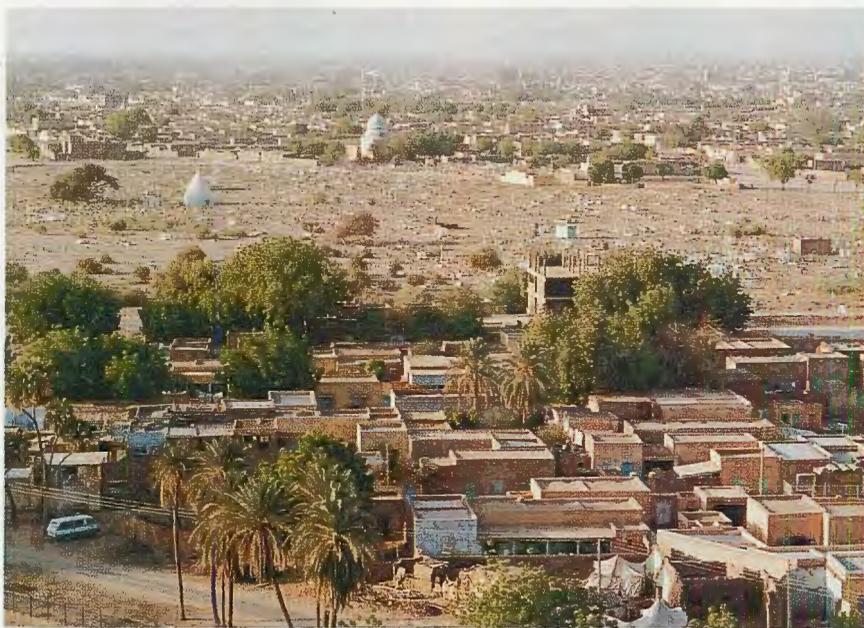
"Probably it went to Saudi Arabia," an airport official helpfully suggested.

When I checked in for my connection to Khartoum, I experienced more of Kenya Airways' efficiency when the person responsible for seat allocation told me that the flight had been rerouted to pick up passengers at Jiddah. While I was figuring out how many more hours this would add to the 40 I had already spent traveling, we were informed that there had been an error with seating arrangements. All 20 or so of us had to line up while an agitated official attempted to sort out the problem. An hour later, we boarded the rather scruffy Boeing 707 to be greeted by a flight attendant's cheerful, "The aircraft is empty! Free seats!"

"What?" We'd just spent the last hour being assigned seats.

"Free seats, free seats! You may sit wherever you please!"

It had been a few years since I was last in Africa. Why, then, did it suddenly feel



Skyline of Khartoum, where author found himself stranded for three long weeks.

Photo: Wide World/Crociani

as though it were only yesterday?

Welcome to Khartoum

We landed at Jiddah long before dawn. At 0600, our nearly empty aircraft began filling with Arabs returning from the Holy City. We took off soon after, and arrived at Khartoum at about 0800. Fortunately, my visa requirements had been arranged through the efficient offices of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), so my passport was soon stamped. After collecting my baggage (still minus the tripod), I joined the long line waiting to clear customs. Although still early in the morning, it was already hot and humid. I waited. And waited. The line did not appear to be moving. I checked my visa — valid for one month — and wondered if

it would still be good by the time I got through customs.

I glanced at my fellow travelers. None seemed to be bothered by the delay. Next to me was a plump woman, wearing a colorful *tob* (a traditional, flowing garment), fussing over her crying child. Curious, I studied the elaborate henna decorations on the woman's hands. At last my turn came to confront the customs officer, who merely glanced at my backpack.

"Whiskey?" he asked, with a smile.

If only, I thought wistfully.

"No," I replied, "no whiskey." I was waved through.

Half an hour later, I was showered and relaxing in my room at the Acropole Hotel in central Khartoum. I went to bed early. Jet lag and two days of travel had taken their toll. I awoke at dawn. It was stiflingly hot. I had a cold shower and headed for a top floor balcony to watch the sun rise over

the Sudanese capital. Dawn cast a pink glow over an otherwise grim view of decrepit buildings lining sandswept streets. A cockerel crowed from somewhere nearby and slowly the city came to life. In the street below, a robed figure appeared. I watched as the Arab pased, squatted and proceeded to defecate in the sand. He wiped himself, using his left hand, before continuing on his way. Obviously, a man who didn't believe in shitting on his own doorstep.

When I was served breakfast a couple of hours later, I couldn't help but wonder about the hands which had prepared my food. Hardly an appetizing thought, but hunger overcame all else. At least I had brought with me an ample supply of Doxycycline, just in case.

Later that morning, I decided to take a walk around Khartoum. I took the advice of the hotel proprietor, who suggested I visit the National Museum, which was situated at the western end of *Sharia Al Niel* (Nile Avenue). The road bordering the blue Nile (actually a muddy brown) must have been a pleasant stroll in colonial times. Today, however, the entire stretch is pot-holed and the sidewalks bordering either side are broken or missing. The stench of human feces is overpowering, making walking a hazardous undertaking.

I finally reached the modern building that was the National Museum and paid a modest entrance fee. Only then did the doorman bother to explain that the Main Hall was closed for renovation. I inquired if there were anything else to see, and was pointed toward the gardens, where I found a few withered shrubs and Egypt's Semna West Temple erected by King Thutmosis III though, one assumes, not at its present location. The ancient walls, covered with hieroglyphics, had been defaced by graffiti dating back to the 19th century. I was unimpressed. Ten minutes later I was back on *Sharia Al Niel*, hoping to make it back to the hotel before I collapsed from dehydration.

In the afternoon, I had a visitor, Rosso, from the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA). I met with Rosso and the local EPLF representative on a number of occasions during the time it took to sort out my travel papers — required by anyone intending to venture beyond the city limits.

I passed most of the time in the hotel lying on my bed, watching the ceiling fan go around, feeling a bit like Martin Sheen at the start of *Apocalypse Now*. The tedium was broken by breakfast, lunch and dinner, all of which by Sudanese standards were pretty good.

One memorable evening, the EPLF invited me to attend a cultural show at the Officer's Club, an open-air amphitheater near the city's international airport. Without much of a clue as to what to expect, I took my seat among thousands of eager Eritreans, and waited for the show to begin.

It lasted for three hours, and was an entertaining spectacle that encompassed traditional Eritrean folk music, dancing and short sketches with actors dressed in colorful costumes. The crowd loved it, the women shrilly ululating their pleasure. Sometimes a patriotic fervor seemed to take hold as these refugees from a war-torn land crowded the stage where they danced, pressing on the musicians hard-earned currency — donations for the EPLF.

Down With the U.S.A.

The morning after the cultural show, I collected my travel permit from the EPLF office. As usual, I chose to walk back to the hotel. What was unusual was the group of school children who confronted me, yelling, "Down, down, U.S.A." The fact that I am not American didn't give me much comfort. I quickened my pace. Minutes later, a carload of men slowed to allow the occupants to hurl abuse at me.

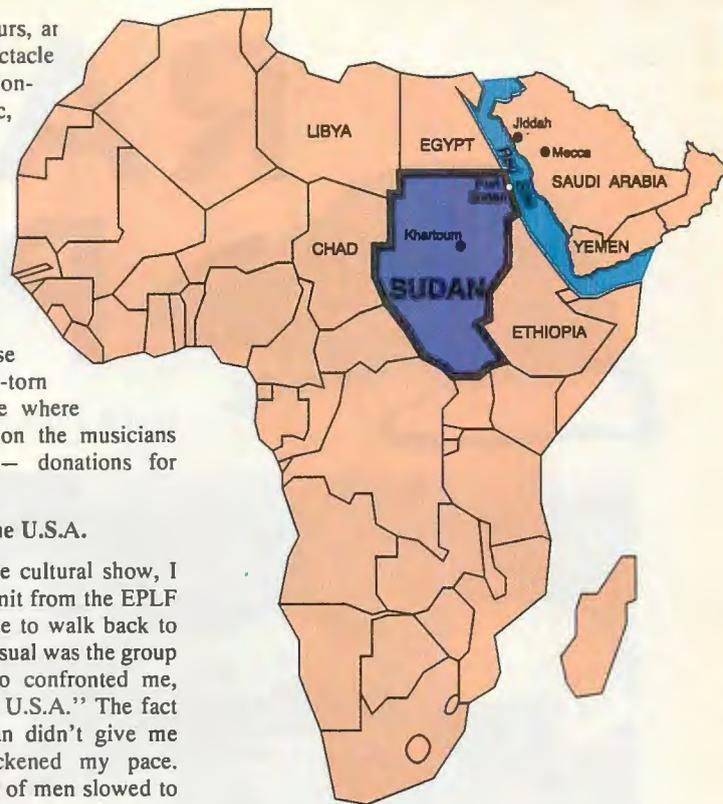
I wondered if, perhaps, the States had nuked Iraq. Bloody hell, that would be great — with me stuck in pro-Iraqi Sudan. When I reached the Acropole, someone finally explained that an anti-American protest had been organized in response to U.S. intervention in the Gulf crisis. Furthermore, in view of the prevailing situation, the U.S. and British Consuls were strongly urging Westerners to stay indoors.

I was rather glad to leave Khartoum early the following morning. Simon, a British engineer who had also been staying at the Acropole, kept me company during the flight to Port Sudan, my jumping off point for Eritrea. We parted at the airport, and I took a cab to the EPLF guesthouse at *Hai El Tranzeit* on the outskirts of Port Sudan.

I spent five days there, while the EPLF rep, Gebrehiwat, daily informed me that my transport for the trip to Eritrea would arrive "tomorrow." The guesthouse was a modest apartment, with a big room set aside for those like myself who were passing through. It was sparsely furnished with a coffee table and five beds. Earlier visitors had stuck on the walls a couple of maps — one of the Horn of Africa, the other of Port Sudan. On the latter, an arrow indicated the guesthouse location. Someone had also scrawled, "You are still here!"

Conversations with Taxi Drivers

There was no food to be had at the guesthouse, so I was obliged to eat at the town's Bashaar Palace Hotel. Already low on funds, I had to limit myself to two meals a day. In the morning before it became too warm, I usually walked the 4



or 5 miles to and from the town center to feast on a tiny omelet, bread rolls and — the ultimate luxury — a pot of coffee. There was little else available.

By the time I arrived back at *Hai El Tranzeit*, I was famished and looking forward to my next meal. I tried to hang on for as long as possible before catching a cab sometime in the afternoon. Dinner was usually fish, spaghetti, or occasionally meat — though I dread to think where the latter originated. There was usually a salad and no shortage of rock-hard rolls which were quite tasteless, but filling. Having dined, I would either stroll back or take a cab. A few taxi drivers spoke English and we had some interesting conversations.

"Let me tell you what I am thinking of Saddam Hussein," said one. "Saddam Hussein, he is a genius. No! More than a genius. He is above genius. And he is full of courage. We need a man like Saddam Hussein. I admire him. I love him. I love him too much ... You tell me, what are you thinking of Saddam Hussein?"

"I think he's mad."

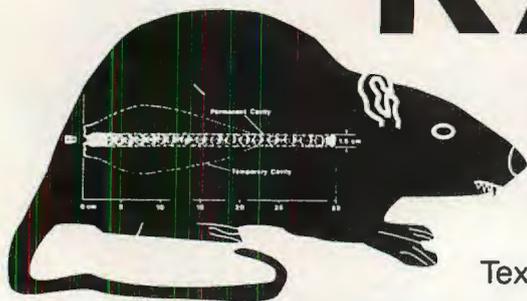
This reply, I quickly discovered, is a good way to start an argument with Sudanese taxi drivers. It also tends to raise the fare.

Sudanese logic is a curious thing. When I went out at night, I always took a mini-maglite. The first taxi driver who saw the torch wanted it. At the end of the journey, I was charged slightly more than was normal. I pointed this out and explained to the driver that if he wanted my torch, he shouldn't try to rip me off.

"Next time," he promised, "I drive you for nothing."

Continued on page 88

RAT PATROL



Text & Photos by Ted Avellone



Rare photo of author on front lines during Rodent Jihad. He's armed with ChiCom EM-45B .177 assault pellet rifle with Mag-Lite for night target acquisition.

IT started late one afternoon a few years ago, when my buddy John and I took a shortcut on our way home and swung behind the local Albertsons supermarket in Hallandale, Florida, a grossly overdeveloped retirement community just north of Miami. We were speeding down an alley in John's Blazer, swerved around a corner and saw "The Dumpster."

"Holy sh--, look at all those rats!"

"F---! They're huge!"

The Blazer jerked to a halt as we gaped in disbelief at the scene before us. Like something out of a B-grade version of *Wild Kingdom*, there they were, crawling all around the huge brown dumpster — Rats from Hell. Big rats. I mean gigantic, ugly, mongo rats with an attitude, brazenly strolling around in front of us in broad daylight.

Over the next few days, we found ourselves inexplicably drawn to the dumpster every time we passed nearby, checking to see if the rats were still there. They always were. We took our friends and family on special tours to see our remarkable discovery. We even forced our girlfriends to view the infamous trophy rats of the Albertsons dumpster, which impressed even them.

Every time we saw the rats, we'd have this strange feeling that there was some purpose to it all, that we had some destiny

to fulfill with regard to these insolent beasts, but we didn't know what it was.

One Friday night it happened. We were sitting around in the kitchen, trying to think of something to do that would satisfy our active sense of adventure, when we got an idea — an idea that would soon develop into a sport, an art, a passion and a civic duty all in one.

"Hey, I wonder if I have any .22 pellets around ... maybe we could go *shoot* the rats behind Albertsons." Before the words were out of my mouth, we both knew. This was it. This was destiny. It suddenly seemed incredible, even impossible, that we had not thought of it until now. As if through a bolt from the sky or a burning bush in the desert, our purpose was revealed: Rodent Jihad.

I had a Feinwerkbau (FWB) 127 .22 pellet rifle, a powerful, finely made German sporting piece. We scrounged up some flat-nosed .22 pellets and made a quick sitrep: We could feasibly drive right up to the dumpster, with the Blazer's headlights illuminating the KZ, make sure there were no people hanging around, then shoot the mangy bastards!

We excitedly ran outside and practiced in the driveway on a rat silhouette magic-marked onto a piece of cardboard at the expected 25-yard range. The image through the Beeman 2.5x scope was dim, and its ultra-fine, non-tritium-illuminated cross hairs, sure didn't help much. But we made do, and managed to score adequate groups from out of the passenger window with the long, awkward rifle.

What's nice about a single cock, spring-piston air gun like the FWB 127, is that it has a very unobtrusive firing signature, unlike the loud-snapping pump-guns such as the 5mm Sheridan — a key tactical consideration when stealth is part of the mission profile.

If any of the senior citizens who lived in the condos around Albertsons noticed us creeping around suspiciously behind the supermarket and realized that we were shooting something out of the window, there was no doubt in my mind that the Hallandale SWAT team would have paid us a visit.

If we got caught, we'd probably end up pissing off a lot of people in blue and at the least, I'd lose my beloved Feinwerkbau. Also, this being Hallandale, I wouldn't be



Rat Patrol assistant assault team leader John Gallagan displays bodies of vanquished foe. Exit wound on right rat indicates ammunition used is over-penetrating.

surprised if the local papers made us out to be some sort of SOF-reading psychoterrorists with assault rifles. The risk of getting caught, of course, only served to magnify the thrill of the whole idea.

Off we went down the street, toward the AO. Fear and excitement sharpened our senses. We were going to hang out the window of my truck and shoot those arrogant rodents from hell. Although this would not allow us to adopt the correct Weaver position, the mission called for maximum secrecy and it was an acceptable compromise. We turned the last corner and slowly approached the familiar brown dumpster. There they were: fat, bloated and ugly. And, as usual, they were walking around in the halogen beams like they owned the place.

Reconnaissance told us there was no

one around. We both looked at each other and smiled in diabolical anticipation. John put the Blazer in park, and I cocked and loaded the rifle. Looking over the top of the weapon, I quickly surveyed my targets of opportunity. Several rats were plainly visible, and one was standing broadside in the main beam of the right headlight. I settled down to as stable a rest as possible, and roughly acquired his form in the scope. Safety off. Find the cross hairs. Centered on chest. Hold breath, squeeze ...

Gun: "Phzzzt!"

Impact: "Slap"

Me: "Hit!"

John: "You got him!"

A rush of joy and satisfaction swept over me as I hit the rat with a flaming kiss of death, saw his demonic little body jerk into the air and land upside down, tail spinning around madly. Then it was a frantic rush to reload, aim and fire at the other rats. As I shot, they began scurrying around in disarray at the new lethal development in their stinking utopia. One of them I nailed was bouncing around a little too much, so I sent two more wadcutters into the twitching form. He stayed put.

In all, I had four definite hits and one possible. As soon as we couldn't see any more easy targets, we decided it would be a good idea to bug out and drop off the guns at home, then return later for some post-strike recce. At home, we grabbed flashlights, a camera and some rubber gloves so we could photograph our trophies and examine their bodies to assess the ballistic effectiveness of the flat-nosed .22 pellets.

Upon returning to the KZ, we were pleased to find there was still no one around. We jumped out to survey the area. The first one I had shot lay in a huge pool of blood, more than I thought could fit inside a rat. Up close in the bright beam of the Mag-Lite we examined the grotesque creatures. We were pleased to see that the wadcutter pellet had torn nice, gaping holes through their chests, ending the miserable lives of these vile beasts.

One dead rat was found slumped on the asphalt next to the cement wall of Albertsons. Next to it, we could see a little silver smear on the wall where the pellet had hit it after cruising through the rat's body. We concluded that a full wadcutter pellet from the FWB may have an over-penetration problem against rats.

Another rat lay in the spot where his brain cavity had been traumatically evacuated by a perfectly placed pellet. Moving on to the body of the last victim, we quickly deduced that this was the one that was hit three times. One of his back legs was aiming the wrong way, part of his nose was gone, and there was a little clump of gray intestine protruding out of a tiny hole in his belly.

Glad that we brought the rubber gloves along, John held up the urban trophies for pictures. Exhilarated by the success of the

whole mission, we lined up the mangled bodies of the vermin in front of the dumpster and stepped back to admire our handiwork. Congratulating each other, we decided to let them lie there for the next morning's garbage detail at Albertsons to discover and wonder at.

From then on, our rat patrols evolved into a science. In the span of a few weeks, we established a well-rehearsed, systematic SOP for rat extermination. We'd insert into a new dumpsterville, do an unarmed recce mission, declare it a free-fire zone, and later sweep the target area with surgical precision. The rat body count increased exponentially. We quickly expanded our theater of operations in the dumpster areas behind other supermarkets, unleashing our naked aggression on the vile rodent foe. Any unexploited centers of rat activity were meat and drink to our newly found appetite for rat destruction.

On the tech side, one weapons-system development that had a devastating impact was the use of a newly acquired ChiCom EM-45B side-lever cock .177 pellet rifle — an addition to our main armament. Although not as deadly as the big FWB 127, its folding stock and pistol grip made it easier to handle inside the truck. And, unlike the FWB's cumbersome tilt-barrel cocking mechanism, its side cocking feature enabled a rigid Mag-Lite mount under the barrel, making a compact, handy rat smasher that could be operated independently from secondary target illumination — a significant force multiplier.

The driver could use it to pick off targets to the sides, while the passenger-doorgunner's AOR (area of responsibility) was the frontal arc of the headlight

beams.

After a month or so of our dumpster sweeps, the local rat population had declined to almost nil. Where ugly rat families once frolicked in the sunshine, now only a few paranoid stragglers remained, nervously peering out from shadows in the piles of trash. Occasionally we'd even glimpse a few pellet-amputee veterans, apparently victims of rushed shots and probing .177 fire.

Where professional exterminators had failed, we had shut down the rats' whole operation using nothing but homegrown ingenuity and initiative. It was as if we had become a spontaneous pest-control "point of light" in our community. Yes, it was quite a proud achievement.

Having lived our days of glory in the stinking back alleys of Hallandale, I am compelled, perhaps as part of my Rodent Jihad destiny, to pass this information on to the next generation of rat fighters so that they may be guided in the ways of continuing the everlasting war of attrition against the rodent infidels. They are out there right now, around the dumpsters of your home town, spreading disease and mocking the ideal of cleanliness.

It's all up to you now. So be careful, go out there, and carry on the Rodent Jihad started that fateful day in Hallandale, Florida.

Allah Akbar.

Ted Avellone, something of a legend among grocery store rats everywhere, is attending college in Florida. An avid SOF reader, he has successfully applied the principles espoused by Peter Kokalis to the back streets of his own home town. ✕

FEINWERKBAU 127 SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber:22 (5.5mm).
Operation:	Hand-powered, manually charged, pneumatic discharge from the locked breach position.
Feed mechanism: ...	Digital. Individual, non-proprietary, finger-guided loading system.
Barrel:	Yes.
Barrel length:	18.3 inches. Ultra-precise 12-groove rifling.
Overall length:	43.5 inches
Weight, empty (or loaded): ...	7.2 pounds.
Sights:	Tunnel foresight with interchangeable inserts. Rear sight with rapid-set slide elevation, click micrometer windage adjustment. Receiver grooved for aperture or scope sight.
Finish:	SOF's test sample was finished, lacking no integral components.
Furniture:	Top-grade walnut, stained beech. Monte Carlo comb, genuine cut checkering, soft buttplate, white trim spacers under grip cap and buttplate. Custom stocks available.
Price:	Less than some comparable models.
Manufacturer:	Beeman/Feinwerkbau.
T&E Summary:	Not heavy, easy to cock, hits hard. Lightweight, caseless ammo and low firing signature with little dieseling makes this an ideal companion on any rodent jihad.

DATELINE: DHAHRAN

BEHIND IRAQI LINES

A Kuwaiti Resistance Fighter's Tale of Torture and Atrocity

by Ross Simpson



HIGH school senior Mohammed Al-Betah was asleep at his grandmother's house in Kuwait City when Iraqi forces invaded on 2 August 1990.

"When I heard the bombs falling in the city, I couldn't believe my ears. We couldn't believe the Iraqis attacked. Saddam promised he wouldn't attack us ... Saddam promised he wouldn't attack us," the young school boy mumbled to me over and over.

Like many of his stunned friends, Mohammed walked around Kuwait City in a daze, looking at bombed-out buildings and burned-out cars and trucks. By 5 August 1990, the Kuwaiti Resistance had gone underground, and so had Mohammed Al-Betah. Sitting on a bed in a luxury hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, he recounted to me how he became a member of the Resistance, and how his sense of duty, honor and country had nearly cost him his life.

Carrying a .357 Magnum Colt revolver and a .22 Beretta autoloading pistol, for the next 22 days Mohammed and his friends staged hit-and-run raids on small bands of Iraqi soldiers. "I don't know how many Iraqis I killed," Mohammed told me. "We didn't hang around long enough to count bodies, because every time we shoot them, they bring cannons and shoot us."

The Iraqis responded to the Resistance with terror tactics. Even after Mohammed and his friends fled, the Iraqis would kick down doors in his neigh-

borhood and drag young boys into the street, torturing them in front of their families.

American women who fled to Jordan from Kuwait told me they saw Iraqi soldiers cut the ears off young boys who refused to tell them about members of the Resistance. A woman from Denver, Colorado, had a Kuwaiti husband who confiscated the passports of their two children, refusing to let them fly to freedom with her. She said she watched through a crack in the curtains of the house where she was hiding while Iraqi soldiers forced a young boy to his knees in front of his mother and sisters, then blew his brains all over them.

Mohammed's role as a guerrilla fighter ended at an Iraqi roadblock on the afternoon of 27 August 1990. "Soldiers found the guns hidden underneath the spare tire in the trunk," he told me.

"The first thing they did when they found the guns was beat me, and put me inside the trunk of my car." It was like an oven in the trunk; desert tempera-



Kuwaiti volunteers line up to sign-up at training base in Saudi Arabia. Photo: Ross Simpson

tures soared to 120 degrees in the hot desert sun, and the heat was amplified inside the closed trunk. Mohammed thought he was going to suffocate. By the time the Iraqis opened the trunk, he was gasping for air, but that would turn out to be one of the better parts of the next 37 days.

"They pulled me out of the trunk and tied me up to a bridge railing," Mohammed said. Then each soldier at the checkpoint waited in turn to use him as a punching bag. "They [Iraqis] rammmed the barrels of their machine guns into my stomach and then in one swift move, smashed my face with the butt of the gun," he said. Eventually, he sagged against the ropes that bound him to the bridge.

"They told me I didn't have long to live. Death would have been a welcome relief from the pain." But Mohammed Al-Betah's life was spared by an Iraqi army lieutenant who apparently wanted information on the Resistance.

"They hauled me to a Kuwaiti police station in the trunk of my car. By the time we arrived, I couldn't see. My eyes had swollen shut; my face was bloodied and bruised." He was dragged into the police station like a sack of potatoes.

This is Mohammed Al-Betah's own account of 37 days of torture and interrogation at the hands of Iraq's finest.

"They told me, 'you don't have a chance, tell us who your friends are and why you have all these guns.'" For hours, the Iraqis questioned Mohammed about his role in the Kuwaiti Resistance, but, "I told them the same story — I found the guns."

But they didn't believe him, and neither did the soldier who said that Al-Betah was the one who had killed his best friend the night before.

Mohammed recalled that the Iraqis had a strange way of asking questions. Garden-variety interrogators ask a question, then hit the subject if they don't like the answer. "In Kuwait, they [Iraqis] hit me first, then asked a question," Mohammed said. He was questioned and

beaten for more than four hours before Iraqi security police stripped him and added electric shock to their interrogative techniques.

"The police stood me in a small tub of water and connected two wires to my toes, then plugged the wires into a nearby socket," causing him to jump up and down until he collapsed. By this time, his tongue was so swollen he could no longer scream. As he regained consciousness, the schoolboy remembers seeing the muscles in his chest jumping wildly, his whole body twitching with electricity.

Kuwaitis who escaped to Saudi Arabia in early December 1990 told of a new form of electrical torture. A subject is blindfolded and shoved into a small room where the floor has been covered with shampoo. Two bare electric wires are in the pool of shampoo, where it's just a matter of time until the Kuwaiti prisoner slips, falls and comes into contact with the wires —

sending a charge of electricity through his body.

After regaining consciousness, suspects like Mohammed Al-Betah are hanged upside down by their feet from the ceiling, then beaten with a steel wire until blood runs into their heads.

When Mohammed stuck to his story, he was taken down and lashed to a chair. "An Iraqi



Lt. Faize Bouriquey, Kuwait army — shot in the head and dumped on his parents' doorstep in Kuwait City by Iraqi soldiers. Photo: courtesy Mohammed Al-Betah

Mohammed Al-Betah with father Yosef when interviewed by SOF in Riyadh hotel. Photo: Ross Simpson



soldier said he would make sure I never fired another shot at his comrades," he said. The trigger finger on his right hand was smashed by the butt of the soldier's revolver.

The soldier stopped smashing Mohammed's finger when blood spurted all over his gun, then pistol-whipped the young Kuwaiti, whose face had already been beaten to a bloody pulp.

Mohammed Al-Betah was beaten from the time he was picked up at about 1500, until he was thrown in a Kuwaiti prison with fellow resistance fighters at 1300 the next day. Al Jahar is the "baddest place," Mohammed said. "You either get out of there, or you die."

As bad as Al Jahar was, Al-Betah was not alone. His best friend, Faize Bourikey, was also there and so far Iraqis didn't know Faize was a newly commissioned lieutenant in the Kuwaiti army.

While Mohammed and Faize were in prison together, they talked of the day they would be liberated by American soldiers. After this happened, they talked of going to Egypt on a vacation to forget about what had happened to them. But the Americans never came. And soon the Iraqis found out that Mohammed's friend Faize was an officer in the Kuwaiti army.

Mohammed's father, a graduate of San Francisco University in California, had been in Saudi Arabia on business when his son was captured.

"When I heard he was in prison, I tried very hard to get him out, but I was told to go home," his father said. "There was nothing that could be done to save my first-born son."

Mohammed's father contacted friends in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), who in turn contacted the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad on his behalf. But it was Mohammed's aunt, who had befriended an Iraqi with a brother in the Secret Police, who finally gained Mohammed's release from prison.

In exchange for his freedom, Mohammed had to sign papers that he would report any Resistance activity. Although he never intended to keep that promise, it worked, and Mohammed was set free.

Bourikey had been picked up when Iraqi soldiers found papers in his car pinpointing Kuwaiti positions. At first, Faize fooled the Iraqis with a false ID card he had made identifying him as a teacher. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the Iraqis to check his story.

At Al Jahar, "One day they came for my friend," Mohammed recalled. "They told him they were going to take him home. They did take my friend home one morning, but they shot him in the head and dumped him on the doorstep of his parents' home before knocking on the door and leaving."

Mohammed misses Faize and has a hard time dealing with his death. "I can't explain why the one of us who got caught with guns lives, and the other who got caught with papers dies," he said.

When in prison, Mohammed was constantly told by guards that he would be the only one in the cell block who would die. "The 30 guys with me were



The early morning skies of 2 August 1990 over Kuwait City were filled with Soviet-built, Iraqi-manned Hip and Hind attack choppers. Photo: Kuwaiti Resistance



This handicapped Kuwaiti escaped the invading Iraqi forces — but not before Iraqi soldiers at the border stole his wooden legs. Kuwaiti officials are working with Saudi medical facilities to replace them. Photo: Ross Simpson



Invading Iraqi army units set up close air defense positions as soon as they arrived in Kuwait City, expecting — as did the Kuwaitis — a quick response from Kuwait's allies. Photo: Kuwaiti Resistance



Sketches produced from accounts of escaping Kuwaitis show the torturous creativity of human minds turned inside out. Sketches: Courtesy Documentation Center for Iraqi Human Rights Violations, via author

told they would live, and I would die." In the end, only Mohammed lived to tell what it was like to spend 37 days in Iraqi captivity.

Saddam Should Die

Mohammed says Saddam Hussein deserves to die for what he's done to Kuwait and her people. "But I don't want him to die quickly," he said. "I want him to die a slow, painful death. A bullet in the head would be too easy for Saddam, too quick." Then he handed me his only picture of Faize.

Yosef Al-Betah, Mohammed's father, is not embarrassed to accept Saudi hospitality. "We are one family, the Saudis and Kuwaitis, and with America's help we shall drive Saddam's army from our land, and go home to live in peace. Kuwaitis want peace, we don't want war. But we are ready to fight and die if necessary," he told me.

I talked with Dr. Abdullah Alshayeji, who holds a doctorate from the University of Texas and taught political science at Kuwait University until Iraq looted his university.

Volunteers in Exile

Alshayeji escaped to Saudi Arabia after 120 days of Iraqi occupation, and estimates there were between 5,000 and 8,000 Kuwaitis studying in the United States, Britain and Egypt at the time of the invasion. Many, he said, are among the 10,500 who have volunteered for service in the regular Kuwaiti army (in exile).

Hundreds of the volunteers have already undergone four weeks of combat training at a desert camp in Saudi Arabia.

A man who dropped his studies as a criminology major at Marshall University when Iraq invaded his homeland and ran to Saudi Arabia to sign up, told me, "There's an old Arabic saying that says if someone takes something from you, you have to be the first one to take it back. That's why my friends and I want to be on the front lines when the U.S.-led multinational force retakes Kuwait."

As Alshayeji observed, "If he [Saddam] goes unpunished, it will send a signal to smaller nations that they too could be gobbled up by a madman like Saddam Hussein. It would be a severe blow to survival of political and economic power in the region if Saddam stays in power." He said conditions in Kuwait are "abysmal" now, and if the country is not liberated soon, "There won't be a Kuwait in six months."

Alshayeji said before he left Kuwait City at the end of November 1990, resistance had been all but crushed, "Because if one Iraqi soldier is killed, five Kuwaitis are killed in retaliation."

No matter how the "standoff with Saddam" ends, life for 18-year-old Mohammed Al-Betah will never be the same after 37 days in Iraqi captivity.

Veteran correspondent Ross Simpson, who also works for NBC Radio, has been SOF's man in the Middle East since November 1990. Over the past few months, he has filed stories for us on everything from Marine snipers to Kuwait's air force-in-exile. ✎

TRIANGLES IN THE SAND

Assaulting Iraqi Strongpoints

Text & Photos by Ross Simpson



IN the distance you could hear the “crump” of 105mm field artillery. Long seconds later you could hear the rounds whistling overhead, eventually smashing into the sand dunes a few hundred yards to

our front. The blasts sent geysers of sand skyward and a blizzard of razor-sharp fragments howling over our heads. Charlie Company and I were hunkered down waiting for the barrage to lift so the ground assault could begin.

For many of the young men near me, this was their first time under artillery fire. One young soldier screamed at the top of his lungs as we ate sand. This live-fire attack wasn’t directed at Saddam Hussein, but against a mock defensive fighting position built on a Saudi Arabian range by engineers from the 82nd Airborne Division.

Measuring 4 meters in depth by 800 meters on the sides, the so-called “Iron Triangle” was similar to strong points used by the Iraqis in their eight-year war with Iran.

Major Michael Furlong, operations officer of 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was charged with “writing the book” on how to defeat this unique trench system.

“There isn’t a lot of data available on how to take out a triangular Iraqi strongpoint,” Furlong said, “and should we be thrown up against a meat grinder like this, we need to know how to deal with it.”

Before the live-fire began, Lieutenant Colonel John Vines, commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, briefed Charlie Company on the objective.

“This is a simulated strongpoint that the Iraqis might use in Kuwait,” Vines said, standing beneath camo netting and pointing to a map with multicolored overlays.



The Iraqis designed the triangular strongpoint with a number of obstacles in front of it.

To reach the triangle, soldiers must fight their way through 1,500 meters of deep tank ditches, triple-strand concertina wire, and a minefield under constant observation by men in outposts.

While division artillery batteries pounded the position with high-explosives, a bulldozer with an armor-plated cab came clanking forward. Soon, it was cutting a swath through the tank ditches large enough for Sheridan armored reconnaissance vehicles to carry mounted infantry to the concertina wire.

As the tanks hosed down the triangular strongpoint with 7.62x51mm and .50 cal. machine gun fire, a three-man team of engineers rushed the wire carrying a bangalore torpedo. Infantry dismounted the Sheridans and began to provide covering fire as engineers set the charge and hauled ass for cover.

An ear-splitting blast made a path through the concertina wire big enough to drive a Mack truck through. It was through this breach that Charlie Company charged the simulated Iraqi strongpoint.

According to Lt. Col. Vines, the triangle is defended by a 156-man infantry company augmented by a tank platoon. The

82nd AB Division troopers practice mounted assault techniques in Saudi Arabia.

infantry company is broken down into three platoons to man each corner of the triangle. Each platoon is split into three squads to form even smaller triangles. Mortars are placed in the middle with a tactical operations center. Iraqi tanks are stationed at the perimeter.

“The beauty of this,” according to Maj. Furlong, who spent the fall of 1990 observing assaults on the Iraqi strongpoint, “is that in a flat desert, it’s almost impossible to find a piece of terrain high enough to shoot at anything not protected by the berm.

“Firing from behind a mound of sand, tanks can come out of their hiding positions and mow down troops caught in the open in front of the fort. Even if Americans attack in armored vehicles, the Iraqis can shoot at them with relative impunity from behind the berms.”

Vines pointed out that the key to success is in synchronizing efforts. “Timing is crucial. I want to pound the enemy with artillery while my men are exposed,” he said, not wanting anybody in Charlie Company to get caught out in the open. We climbed aboard his command vehicle and

headed for the range.

We could barely see where we were going as four Sheridans roared past, kicking up a cloud of dust. The Sheridan, an aging warrior from Vietnam, has been given a new set of "night eyes," thermal sights originally designed for the M60A3 battle tank which the M-1 Abrams began replacing in the early 1980s.

Sheridan crews, some of whom fought in Panama in Operation Just Cause, are like kids with a new toy when they talk about the night vision capability. "It's not high tech that counts," one tanker said. "Experience and training are what's important, and the Army has had more than 30 years to work the bugs out of the Sheridan."

Although it looks like a tank, and sounds like a tank, the Army lists the Sheridan as an Armored Reconnaissance/Airborne Assault Vehicle, and calls most of the crew members cavalry scouts, not tankers.

Though the Sheridan rolled off the assembly lines in the late 1950s when fuzzy dice and '57 Chevys were the rage, its new eyes give the 82nd Airborne Division an added dimension in night fighting capability. Unlike old sights, the thermal sights installed on Sheridans can see through smoke and fog.

The 17.5-ton Sheridan may be old, but it's still the weapon of choice among commanders of the 82nd Airborne Division. Unlike its big brother, the 65-ton M1A1, the Sheridan is "air dropable." Sheridans can be dropped either by conventional cargo parachutes or by the low-altitude parachute extraction system (LAPES).

As we moved out behind a screen of Sheridans, smoke was beginning to obliterate the battlefield. Off to the right and left flanks we could see .50 caliber "Ma Deuces" mounted atop High-Mobility Multipurpose Vehicles (HUMVEEs) open up. Long, orange tongues of flame came from each of the air-cooled barrels. The steady chatter of

fast as we can and close with the enemy so he can't bring his guns to bear on us for fear of hitting his own men," Vines said. "But we're not going to feed men into the meat grinder, just to say we crossed the sand in record time."

How similar is the Iraqi strongpoint to ones used in the eight-year Iran-Iraq war? "I couldn't really speculate on that," Vines said. "But we obviously used some templates of a typical enemy position."

If he had his druthers, Vines would prefer assaulting such a position under the cover of darkness. "The farther the enemy can see you, the better he can kill you," he said. That's why Vines likes to attack at night; his battalion has night fighting capabilities, and the Iraqis don't.

As in Panama, Vines and his battalion don't know what they're going to encounter if called upon to drive Saddam's army out of Kuwait. "This could be pretty tough," he said, as we watched a Dragon antitank team prepare to fire at a target downrange.

As soon as the round cleared the tube, the wire which guides the high-explosive round to the target became snarled like 25-pound-test line on an open-face fishing reel and snapped. What we had was a missile out of control, fish-tailing as it zoomed downrange, exploding about 150 yards away from a group of reporters.

Live-fires like the one I observed give un-

proven soldiers a chance to fill their lungs with smoke. Some of the youngsters hunkered down behind a sand dune with me as shrapnel flew overhead, chattering like chipmunks after the exercise ended.

None of the young troopers were eager to attack Iraqi troops in Kuwait, but Private Francoise Brown from Queens, New York, said, "We have to do what we have to do." Brown said it was a real "rush" for him to spring through the concertina wire, M16 firing away on full auto.

Private First Class Richard Devine from New Baden, Illinois, said it would be a great honor for him to defend his country. If it was up to Devine and his buddies in Charlie Company, they would have already kicked Saddam out. "The longer we wait," Devine said, "the stronger he gets. So we should go up there as soon as we can."

Like Brown, Devine believed being a soldier has its "goods" and "bads." Bullets flying back at you is the bad part of soldiering, Devine said.

As Specialist Brian Scott of Portsmouth, Ohio, gasped for air, he commented

this was probably the best live-fire his outfit had ever experienced. "Outstanding," said the young soldier, still pumped-up even after the shooting had stopped. Usually, elements of the 82nd train independently, but this time Scott said he and his friends got to see the whole show.

Private First Class Narcyz Piasecki, a naturalized citizen from Poland, said he and his buddies were ready to see Baghdad. Sergeant David Steward from Louisville, Kentucky, said his men were as ready as they could be. Second Lieutenant Mike Fisher, however, 3rd Platoon leader from Wheaton, Illinois, summed up the feeling of many officers in Charlie Company when he explained, "We'll never know until we do it."

Even if Saddam Hussein pulls out of Kuwait, Charlie Company still wants to kick his ass. ✕

M60 machine guns also added a sense of realism as Charlie Company swept over and assaulted a network of trenches inside the triangular fort.

"The idea is to cross the open ground as



DESERT

TANKS

COALITION

500 M1 Abrams
 300 M1A1 Abrams
 800 M60s
 180 Challengers
 270 T-62s
 550 misc. light armor

IRAQ

2,500 Soviet T-54/-55/M-77s
 1,500 Chinese T-59/-69s
 1,000 Soviet T-62s
 500 Soviet T-72s
 100+ Soviet PT-76 and misc.
 light armor

NOTE: Though Iraq has more than twice as many tanks as the Coalition, only the Soviet-made T-72s can hold their own against first-line Western armor (M1s, Challengers and M60s with reactive armor). About 4,000 Iraqi tanks are assumed to be actively engaged in the defense of Kuwait.



M1 Abrams



Soviet T-55

INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLES AND ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS (APCs)

COALITION

3,500. Primarily M2/3 Bradleys, M113 APCs and Marine LAVs, but also BMP-1/-2s from Kuwaiti, Egyptian and Syrian forces, Spartan APCs from British and AMX-10s from French, Saudi and Gulf forces.

IRAQ

8,000 of various types. Mostly Soviet BTR-50/-60/-152s. At least 1,000 Soviet BMPs armed with 73mm gun

NOTE: About 50% are assumed to be actively engaged in the defense of Kuwait. The remainder could be called upon if needed from units stationed along the Iraq-Iran or Iraq-Turkey border.

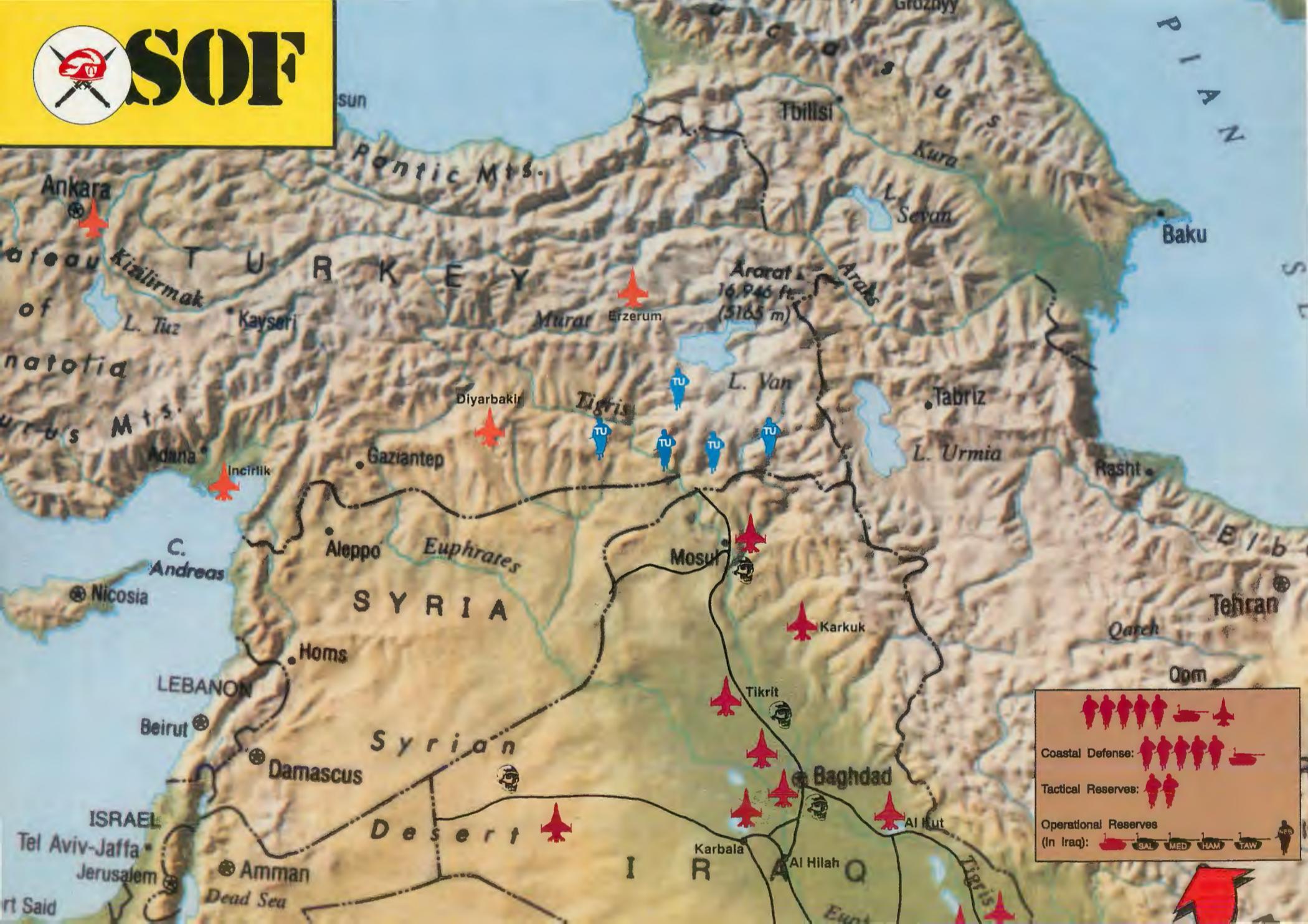


M2 Bradley



Soviet BMP-2

STORM



Coastal Defense:

Tactical Reserves:

Operational Reserves (In Iraq):





ALLIED SHIPS

U.S.: Over 100	Canada: 3
Britain: At least 15	Netherlands: 3
France: 14	Argentina: 2
Italy: 10	Turkey: 2
Belgium: 6	Denmark: 1
Germany (Minesweepers): 5	Greece: 1
Spain: 4	Norway: 1
U.S.S.R.: 4	Portugal: 1
Australia: 3	Gulf: 36

<p>Deployed Divisions (approx. 15,000 men each):</p> <p>MAR: Marines GU: Gulf Forces & U.N. allies EGY: Egyptian SA: Saudi Arabian TU: Turkish US: United States FR: French BR: British SYR: Syrian</p>	<p>Carriers:</p> <p>AMR: America (CV 66) MID: Midway (CV 41) SAR: Saratoga (CV 60) ROS: T. Roosevelt (CVN 71) RGR: Ranger (CV 61) JFK: J.F. Kennedy (CV 67)</p>	<p>Republican Guards Div.:</p> <p>AF: Al Faw AD: Adnan NEB: Nebuchadnezzar SAL: Saladin MED: Medina HAM: Hammurabi TAW: Tawakalna</p>
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	= Armor/Mech
	= Infantry
	= Critical Installations
	= Airfield

HEAVY ARTILLERY

COALITION

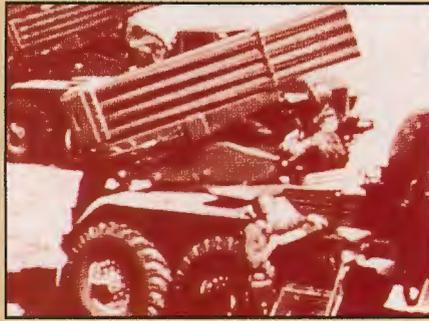
1,100 pieces. In calibers from 105mm to 240mm.



U.S. 155mm Howitzer

IRAQ

3,100 pieces. In calibers from 105mm to 155mm.



BM-21 MRL

NOTE: Both sides' artillery is capable of firing chemical munitions, though only Iraq has shown a willingness to do so. The vast majority of Iraqi artillery is towed, making it particularly vulnerable to an opponent who has air superiority. The majority of Coalition artillery is self-propelled, allowing it to rapidly follow and assist friendly advances.

FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT



A-10 Thunderbolt II

COALITION BOMBERS

26 B-52G
156 F-111
104 F-15E
106 A-6

AIR-SUPERIORITY FIGHTERS

88 F-15C/D
140 F-14
20 Mirage F1 (Kuwait)
56 F-15C (Saudi Arabia)
24 Tornado ADV (Saudi Arabia)
10 Mirage 2000 (France)

ATTACK AND DUAL-ROLE AIRCRAFT

150 AV-8B Harrier
44 F-117A
120 A-10
152 F/A-18
320 F-16C/D
48 A-7E
36 F-4G Wild Weasel
12 Jaguar (Britain)
78 Tornado (Britain)
24 CF-18 (Canada)
54 Tornado (Saudi Arabia)
8 Mirage F1-CR (France)
14 F3 Jaguar (France)

Plus at least 1,000 non-state-of-the-art aircraft including F-104 Starfighters, A-4 Skyhawks, F-5 Tiger IIs and Mirage 5s.



MiG-29 Fulcrum

IRAQ BOMBERS

8 Tu-22 (Soviet)
4 Tu-16 (Soviet)
4 H-6D (Chinese Tu-16)

AIR-SUPERIORITY FIGHTERS

70 MiG-29 (Soviet)
135 MiG-21/25 (Soviet)
30 Mirage F-1EQ (French)
40 CAC J-7B (Chinese MiG-21)

ATTACK AND DUAL-ROLE AIRCRAFT

30 J-6 (Chinese MiG-19)
90 MiG-23 (Soviet)
64 Mirage 5EQ (French)
30 Su-7 (Soviet)
70 Su-20 (Soviet)
16 Su-24 (Soviet)
60 Su-25 (Soviet)

NOTE: Iraq possesses only roughly 100 state-of-the-art warplanes (MiG-29 Fulcrums, Mirage F-1s and to a lesser extent MiG-25s). The remainder, while not obsolete, stand little chance of carrying out successful missions in air space patrolled by modern American aircraft and pilots.

ATTACK HELICOPTERS

COALITION



AH-64 Apache

1,200. A wide array of U.S. AH-64 Apaches and AH-1 Cobras, firing Hellfire antitank missiles. Syrian forces fly Mi-24 Hinds and Aerospatiale Gazelles. France, Kuwait and Gulf forces use Gazelles armed with HOT antitank missiles. British forces fly Lynx choppers armed with TOWs.

IRAQ

80. Various makes, with approximately 40 Soviet Mi-24 Hind-Ds.



Mi-24 Hind-D

NOTE: Air assault is among the most difficult operations to pull off successfully. The U.S. is the most experienced army in the world in air assault operations. The Iraqis have not shown that they possess expertise in this area. Though such ops were reportedly carried out during the Iran-Iraq War, it was not to any significant extent. That the Iraqis do not have much use for choppers is shown by the fact that they haven't acquired many.

PATRIOT GAMES



by Ross Simpson

GIVE praise to the Patriot, the centerpiece of air defense in the Persian Gulf.

In its first combat test on 19 January, the Patriot did what it was designed to do: knock down what the enemy put up. The intruder was an Iraqi Scud missile fired at Dhahran, the big U.S. staging area in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

Ever since American troops deployed to Saudi Arabia in early August 1990, they had been told to expect missile attacks from Iraq. Everyone, including my colleagues at the Dhahran International Hotel, knew it was just a matter of time until sirens wailed and they were forced to run downstairs to a bomb shelter in the basement.

They only hoped the Patriot would perform. When the first Scud was fired in their direction, they weren't disappointed. It was the first time a Patriot antimissile missile had been fired in anger, and the result was a spectacular fireworks display for thousands of American troops, crouched in their sandbagged bunkers waiting for an imminent attack.

"We didn't expect it at that moment," Lieutenant Colonel Leeroy Neal, 42, of Houston, said. Neal was the commander of the Patriot battery that earned the handle, "Scudbusters." His men had been glued to greenish screens in dark vans for two



Built by Raytheon and Martin Marietta, the Patriot's fast reaction capability and ability to operate in a severe electronic countermeasure environment are features that set it apart from systems it is replacing. Photo: U.S. Army/Frank Trevino

Ohio, said.

When McMurtrey hit the alarm, the public address system sounded a siren and a soldier announced, "Condition red! Don your gas mask." Although Scuds fired at Saudi Arabia and Israel have been tipped with high explosives, there's always the fear that one of them will contain chemical agents.

While McMurtrey and his assistant, Sergeant Joe Oblinger, 26, from South Bend, Indiana, watched the Scud scream toward them, Spangler and the rest of the battery in their chemical warfare gear knelt down behind sandbags outside the engagement control station (ECS).

At 0428, the Patriot launcher came to life. As the antimissile missile left the canister, it showered confetti-like debris over the battery as it arced upward and

days, waiting to see the telltale track of an incoming Scud from southern Iraq.

When the parabola appeared on the screen, Neal's men knew what to do. "I knew right away what it was," First Lieutenant Charles McMurtrey said. McMurtrey, 27, from Montgomery, Alabama, was the duty officer on watch when the Scud crossed the Iraqi border a few minutes after 0400. "We alerted the command post and the battalion immediately," Captain Jim Spangler, 27, of Dayton,

found its target.

Lieutenant Colonel Neal was standing outside his tent about 2 miles away, but saw the explosion. Inside the ECS, Oblinger was making sure of the kill while McMurtrey was looking for more Scuds.

Neither soldier had time to congratulate the other at the time; they were still too busy. Later, however, there were plenty of "high-fives" as the battery celebrated the first Scud kill of the war. There was also time to reflect upon the Army's ugly duckling that had suddenly become the



Each Patriot station has four missiles and a trailer (under camouflage netting) housing radar equipment. Photo: DoD

"darling of the battlefield."

The centerpiece of the Patriot is a phased-array radar, an advanced type of radar with a face of some 5,000 individual antenna elements designed to detect and

Continued on page 93

M14: EXTRA FIREPOWER FOR DESERT WAR



S*SOLDIER of Fortune* first heard rumors about M14 rifles in the Middle East in September 1990. The Fleet Marine Amphibious Force deployed in the Persian Gulf had allegedly requested M14s, and the Army, still debugging the new M24 sniper rifle, was trying to get more M21s (the sniper version with Jim Leatherwood's ART-2 scope system).

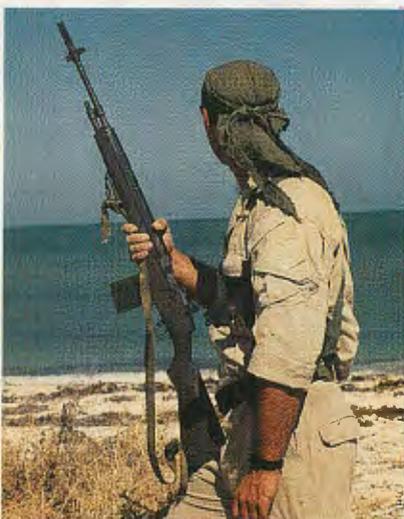
We checked these rumors out with highly placed government sources. The Army emphatically denied the story. "There is absolutely no truth to any rumors of M14s being sent to the Middle East. The issue weapons are working just fine. No problems," we were told by Army officials at the Pentagon.

Reliable officials with excellent USMC connections gave us a slightly different story. "No request has been received by the commandant for issue of M14s, but if they are needed, it can be handled. The Corps has plenty of M14s, and if the Fleet Marines want them, we'll send them," a Marine general told our source, adding that he thought it wouldn't be a bad idea. SOF sources think that the Fleet Marines did ask for M14s, but that a mid-level logistics officer saw too many problems and derailed the request before it got to the commandant.

We sat on the story until now because we had no hard information. Now we have proof that at least one fighting force, the U.S. Navy SEALs, are carrying M14s in the Desert Storm area of operations. SOF correspondent Ross Simpson was walking along the beach in northern Saudi Arabia recently, when he noticed some guys landing in Zodiac boats. Their weapon: the M14.

They identified themselves as Navy SEALs and asked that he not photograph their faces. Simpson asked them about their M14s. One told him that it was their "weapon of choice" in this environment. The SEALs like reliability and ruggedness in a weapon, and the M14 has a well-deserved reputation for both. The greater range of the M14 is also an advantage for the SEALs, who don't have the support from Naval gunnery and tactical airpower that Marines and Army troops count on.

The SEALs I've worked with impressed



U.S. Navy SEAL with M14 on beach landing site near Kuwait. SEALs told SOF that M14 is their "weapon of choice" in the harsh desert environment. Note the sling rigged from 1-inch tubular nylon webbing — simple and strong, like the M14. Photo: Ross Simpson

me with their intelligent and practical approach to equipping themselves. Perhaps because they belong to a service that doesn't emphasize land warfare, they have more freedom in choosing weapons than Army Spec Ops troops generally have. "We like the M14 because it always works. Drag it through salt water, sand, mud: no problem," a SEAL instructor at the NAVSPECWAR school at Coronado told me.

SOF Technical Editor Peter Kokalis states that the M14's 7.62x51mm NATO round produces more lethal wounds beyond 200 meters than the 5.56x45mm M855 round of the M16A2. Peter also notes that the 7.62 round is less susceptible to wind drift than the 5.56 round, a concern in the desert.

Engineers at the U.S. Army's Close Combat Arms Support Center at Picatinny Arsenal agree. They also feel the M14 is more reliable in the desert than the M16. "But the Army has decided that wars are won with fragments, not bullets, so don't hold your breath waiting for M14s to be issued," one engineer told SOF.

The M14 rifle weighs 10.1 pounds with cleaning kit and a 20-round magazine, somewhat lighter with fiberglass stock. This is about one pound more than the heavy-barreled M16A2 with a 30-round magazine. The 7.62 NATO ammo weighs about twice as much as 5.56, which is the main reason the M16 has replaced the M14 as the standard U.S. service rifle. The M16 is easier to shoot for females and soldiers of smaller stature, and with fewer U.S.

by Chuck Fremont

troops coming from a shooting background, there are training advantages to a light-recoil rifle.

The action of the M14 is more open than that of the M16, making it either easier to clean or more open to dirt, depending on your point of view. Operating parts are more exposed to cooling air. Field stripping is simple, but the weapon can be cleaned pretty well without disassembly.

The Desert Fire Team

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps are concerned now with fighting a tank war. But effective infantry is important in keeping tanks alive, as the Israelis learned the hard way in the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

So should M14s be issued to Army and Marine infantry in Desert Storm? I'm going to hedge on this and suggest that what is really needed is a mix of weapons. Equip one skilled rifleman on each fire team with an M14 or M21 and that team should significantly increase its odds of survival in open desert terrain. The superior penetration of the 7.62 round might also help in urban warfare, especially if barricaded snipers are a problem.

Since the rest of those on the team would still carry M16A2 and M203 weapons, they would not be encumbered with the heavier 7.62 ammo. One man from each team would need training on the M14 or M21, but anyone who has been through the "Target Interdiction" (sniper) course should be familiar with this weapon. Also, most Army SF NCOs are familiar with the M14 and M21, and could be used as training cadre.

The M16A2 is a fine weapon, but it's probably not the right weapon for some of the conditions facing our forces in Desert Storm. The addition of an M14 or M21 to the infantry fire team would increase the fighting power of that team without the logistic and training nightmares involved in replacing all individual weapons.

If you're going to fight, fight smart. How about it, Army?

Chuck Fremont is a member of U.S. Special Forces Reserve. ✕

LAYIN' TRACK TOWARDS IRAQ

Copyright © 1991 by [the other] Don McLean
(to the tune of I'm a Movin' On)

Editor's Note: We didn't realize it when we hired him, but it turns out that SOF Senior Editor Don McLean is, among many other things (some of which will forever remain unspoken) a talented-but-closet lyricist. At first we thought he was kidding when he mentioned under his breath that he'd come up with a song dedicated to the men and women serving in Operation Desert Storm, "just something for them to sing as they roared through the Gulf in pursuit of Saddam Hussein," as he put it. We took a look, did a double-take, then looked again. It was good. Good enough, we felt, to give it a page in the magazine. You can sing it to just about any tune, as our woefully off-key staff demonstrated to each other, but it's definitely got that Country/Western-kickin'-Saddam's-butt beat. For those of you out there who have your own Smokin' Saddam song/verse/poem/sonnet/or whatever — DON'T send it to us. We're only printing Don's song under duress — he threatened to leave SOF for Nashville if we didn't.

24th Mech roaring through the sand,
Playin' the Big Bore Boogie in Kuwait land
We're a movin' on,
He'll soon be gone...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq,
They'll soon be gone...

Air Force, Navy and Gyrenes flew
To blast Bag-dad from outta the blue.
Still bombin' on,
A lot of it's gone...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
I'm proud, ain't you...

With Tomahawks, BUFs and smart bombs, too
We won't let up 'till Saddam's through...
We're a movin' on,
He'll soon be gone...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
We'll bust a few...

To hit Saddam and hit him hard,
Ol' George even called up the National Guard.
They're doing grand,
in the Saudi sand...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq,
Oh, times is hard...

We think Kuwait is better free —
We'll stay and fight until we see
Saddam's last stand
in the Kuwait sand...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
They'll have to flee...

The Brits and French, they joined the fight.
Don't worry Emir, we'll set things right.
We'll send you home
back to your throne.

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
With all our might...

Italians, Saudis, Egyptians too...
Saddam don't know just what to do...
The world's all mad
at you, Bag-dad

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
We'll see you soon...

His army took off, he's hiding out
His holy war has become a rout...
It's time he flew,
tried sumptin' new

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
You'll soon be out...

Our Japanese buddies couldn't join the bash
So did what they could by promising cash.
Many thanks, Nippon...
It'll soon be gone...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
They'll soon be gone...

If you don't have a yen for a high-tech fight,
Send Yen when you can, we can use it, all right.
It'll soon be gone...
before this song...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq
They'll soon be gone...

The Saudi civilian and innocent Jew
Were fair Scud targets in Saddam's view.
Damn Russian Scuds...
But a lot were duds,

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
'though missiles flew...

Ron's Patriot SAMs let darn few through
Which tickled me pink, didn't it you, too?
They all went thud...
— just fell in the mud...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
and Saddam, too...

Saddam wouldn't stand and fight like a man —
He hid in a hole, sent his planes to Iran.
Poor little Saddam's
afraid of our bombs...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
You bet we can...

Wal, you hide here and hide planes there,
We'll find you both, no matter where
You'll soon be gone...
maybe 'fore this song...

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
You'll soon be gone...

Somethin' most folks had known all along
Was that, Saddam, there's Right and Wrong,
So hear this song,
'cause fore too long

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
And you'll be gone.

We're stopping this planet and kickin' you off
And we don't care if you b'lieve or scoff...
You was WRONG, WRONG, WRONG,
you'll soon be gone!

We're a layin' track
To-wards Iraq...
You'll soon be gone!



IRAQ'S ARSENAL

by Don McLean



A few weeks after the invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi militiamen wave weapons in support of Saddam Hussein. Most appear to be Romanian AKMs. Visible in center of photo is muzzle of Iraqi-made copy of Soviet Dragunov sniper rifle. Although a customer for heavy weapons, Iraq was in production of numerous small arms. Photo: Black Star/David Turnley

GUNS FOR SALE

A military machine has three functional components: a command structure, the men it commands, and the weapons those men use.

Because ships of state that chart the course Iraq has chosen intermittently find themselves alone in international waters either becalmed with no funds, or far from a friendly harbor for their procurement desires, they must purchase what they can, when they can, where they can.

This led to Saddam Hussein's assembling an extremely diverse collection of vessels, aircraft, armor, guns, missiles,

individual weapons and support equipment. The logistical nightmare of supporting such a collection during times of embargo with a weak indigenous industrial base is something only people like Saddam Hussein deserve.

Iraq's wellspring of weapons supply had in recent times been the Soviet Union, and Soviet weapons systems were probably the most common when Iraq invaded Kuwait. But they were by no means universal.

Reviewing a list of the nations who have sold weapons to Iraq is to review a list of all nations who produce weaponry of any kind for export. Almost typical was the ironic and convoluted Iraqi purchase from

Egypt of multiple rocket launchers, armored vehicles, tanks, combat and training aircraft, arms/ammunition/spares, Western technology, and even 18,000 troops — that Saddam paid for with money ear-marked from Kuwaiti financial assistance.

Some purchases were made from governments (e.g., USSR), while others were from commercial sources with government approval (e.g., France). In many cases, goods or services were bartered for oil.

Air Force Purchases

These countries have sold Iraq's air force materiel as follows: ARGENTINA

(multirole/tactical support fighters); BRAZIL & EGYPT (training packages); PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (interceptors, multirole/tactical support fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, bombers); USA (transport/liason helicopters); FRANCE (interceptors, multirole/tactical support fighters, electronic surveillance equipment, training packages, attack helicopters, transport/liason helicopters); UK (reconnaissance aircraft, training packages); ITALY (transport/liason helicopters); WEST GERMANY/SPAIN (attack helicopters, transport/liason helicopters); WEST GERMANY/JAPAN (transport/liason helicopters); WEST GERMANY/SWITZERLAND (training packages); CZECHOSLOVAKIA (training packages); USSR (interceptors, multirole/tactical support aircraft, bombers, transport aircraft, in-flight tankers, training packages, attack helicopters, transport/liason helicopters).

Iraqi Naval Purchases

These countries have sold Iraq vessels and craft as follows: DENMARK (amphibious and miscellaneous vessels); FINLAND (utility craft); FRANCE (ASW helicopters); UK (utility vessels); ITALY (frigates, corvettes, utility vessels, ASW helicopters); NETHERLANDS (utility craft); POLAND (amphibious vessels); USSR (missile-launching patrol boats, miscellaneous patrol craft, utility craft); YUGOSLAVIA (utility craft).

Army and Air Defense Purchases

The Iraqi army and air defense forces are by far the largest contingent of the Iraqi military establishment. As noted elsewhere, Iraq has in part supplied its army with Iraqi-made pistols, rifles, light machine guns, AT rocket launchers, towed guns and howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, surface-to-surface missile launchers and commo systems.

In addition, the following extensive purchases have been made on the world arms market: SOUTH AFRICA (towed guns/howitzers); AUSTRIA (towed guns/howitzers); BELGIUM (pistols, rifles, heavy machine guns); BRAZIL (multiple rocket launchers, tracked APC/ICVs [armored personnel carriers, infantry combat vehicles], wheeled APC/ICVs, LATVs [light armored tracked vehicles], trucks); PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (towed guns/howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, portable surface-to-air missiles, tanks); EGYPT (multiple rocket launchers); SPAIN (recoilless guns, LATVs); USA (heavy mortars, towed guns/howitzers); FRANCE (AT rocket launchers, ATGW [antitank ground weapons], heavy mortars, SP guns/howitzers, surface-to-air missiles and launchers, wheeled APC/ICVs, communications systems, ground surveillance systems, air defense radars, engineering equipment); UK (pistols,

submachine guns, rifles, light machine guns, towed guns/howitzers, LATVs, trucks, engineering equipment); HUNGARY (wheeled APC/ICVs); INDIA (communications systems); JAPAN (trucks); POLAND (tanks); WEST GERMANY (light machine guns, trucks, tank carriers); ROMANIA (trucks); SWEDEN (trucks); CZECHOSLOVAKIA (tracked APC/ICVs, wheeled APC/ICVs); USSR (pistols, submachine guns, rifles, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, AT rocket launchers, recoilless guns, ATGWs, light/medium mortars, heavy mortars, towed guns/howitzers, SP guns/howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, AA guns, surface-to-air missile launchers, tanks, tracked APC/ICVs, wheeled APC/ICVs, LATVs, trucks, communications systems, air defense radars, C² - C³ systems, ECM [electronic countermeasure] systems, and engineering equipment).

IRAQ'S OWN ARMS INDUSTRY

During certain years in the Iran-Iraq War, more than half of Iraq's gross national product (GNP) was spent on its military machine and the war effort. That's not half of her government budget — *that's over half of her gross national product.*

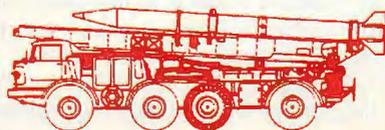
That such an outlay would strain the budget of a Third World country goes without saying, and being a world client for arms dictated not only that Iraq's national wealth be expended on the military, but that the bulk of it must leave the country to do so. Even with her petroleum reserves — oil constitutes a hard currency — and the largess of her Arabian neighbors, Iraq faced an exchange imbalance that had to be addressed.



Mi-24 "Hind-D" Helicopter Gunship

Consequently, in March of 1988, the Ministries of Industry and Mineral Resources and the Military Industries Corps (MIC) were brought together as the Ministry of Industry and Armament. Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Brigadier General Hussein Kamel Hassan, was appointed as its head. The MIC had been assembled the preceding March, under Brig. Gen. Hassan.

This ministry was commissioned to ensure the supply of military materiel and



SS-1C (Scud-B)

develop a local arms industry. Its surplus capacity — if any — supposedly would go to manufacture civil necessities such as trucks, busses, construction vehicles, steel buildings and so forth.



155mm G5 Howitzer

According to Iraqi sources in 1988, the 11 state-owned companies that comprise MIC provided 70-80% of the army's needs, and saved \$77.4 million in foreign exchange. The latter figure may be accepted at face, but the first figure is ludicrous in view of known figures for Iraqi GNP, foreign debt expansion and foreign arms purchases for that time frame. It is significant, however, that by 1988, Iraq was in a production mode that enabled commitments for arms exports to such countries as Sudan.



M1939/Type 55 37mm AA Gun

No matter what the exact production capacity was, the fact that Iraq emphasized development of an indigenous arms industry is important, knowing they took advantage of their peace with Iran to manufacture and/or stockpile weapons of every sort. The following weapons were known to be in production when they invaded Kuwait:

Land Weapons and Ammunition

The MIC produced licensed copies of the 7.65 ("Tariq Type 951"), and 9mm ("Tariq Type 70") Beretta pistols; a copy of the AKM/AKMS chambered for 5.56x45mm NATO caliber with either wood or folding metal stock ("Tabouk"); they license-built the Yugoslavian developments of the Soviet RPK in

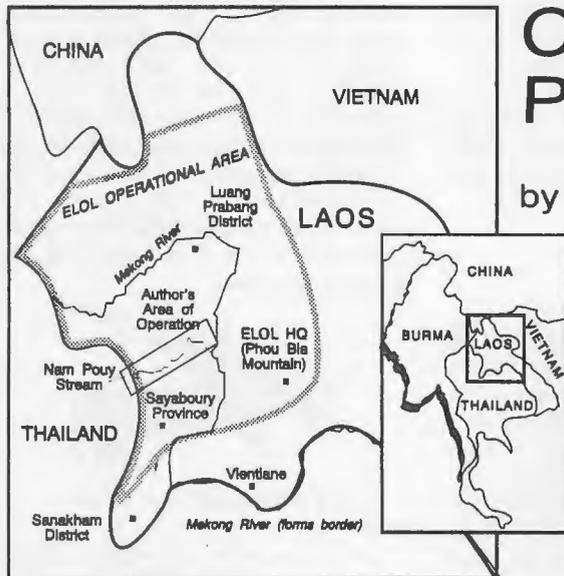


T-72 Tank

7.62x39mm ("M-70B1 Tabouk" with wooden stock, "M-70B2 Tabouk" with folding metal stock), in addition to a version designated the "M-72B1 Al Quods" in like caliber, but for which no other details are available; a copy of the Soviet Dragunov sniper rifle designated the "Al Qadissiya" that mounts a Swiss Wild Heerbrug scope; a copy of the Soviet

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MEKONG RIVER MAYHEM



Chao Fah Ambushes Pathet Lao

by Tom Peterson

At the end of his story on the Chao Fah freedom fighters in our August '90 issue, Tom Peterson said it would be interesting to see how the situation in Laos developed over the coming dry season. Well, the dry season has just ended, and the country's little-known civil war continues to drag on. In this story, join Peterson and the Chao Fah ("Lords of the Sky") fighters in an ambush near the Thai border.

AS with all operations in the Chao Fah Army (CFA), the Ethnic Liberation Organization of Laos' (ELOL) fighting force, the ambush patrol started off with prayers and offerings to the spirits. Then, a H'mong spiritual leader put little bits of rice and pork on a spoon and began chanting.

Afterwards, Yang Teng, the ELOL secretary general, and Colonel Thao Yang, the CFA chief of staff, gave a final talk to members of the patrol. Passing under the CFA battle standard, they headed north with 18 men.

More than two weeks earlier, photographer Max Weale and I had returned to the Nam Pouy area to cover intensified Lao People's Army (LPA) attacks on the CFA base area, located in northern Sayaboury Province in Laos.

Major General Bijou, commander of the CFA, reported that it was People's Army

of Vietnam (PAVN) troops who were actually spearheading the LPA attacks, and that many wore LPA uniforms. He said the Vietnamese could be identified by their appearance and actions — they were usually older, more experienced, more aggressive and better-equipped. Also, PAVN soldiers could be heard shouting orders to each other in Vietnamese during a contact.

The PAVN withdrew as soon as positions were secured, according to CFA officers. Undoubtedly, the hard-charging Vietnamese were pulled out as soon as possible to avoid any problems with their operating so close to the Thai border. Besides, it wouldn't look good for Hanoi or Vientiane if PAVN regulars were found still fighting in Laos — from where they were supposedly withdrawn in 1988.

Through all of this, the CFA had done the primary thing guerrillas are supposed to do when attacked by a larger force — survive to fight another day. Not only



From their camp near the Nam Pouy Stream, Chao Fah troops prepare for a patrol. Most fighters are in their late teens. Photo: Max Weale

that, they hit back and made their enemies pay for the ground they had gained. Due to the hit-and-run nature of their attacks, they suffered minimal casualties and their units remained intact.

Bijou was leading a force out of Nam Pouy, bound for the Laotian interior. The objective of the operation was to establish new guerrilla zones deeper in Sayaboury Province and begin hitting targets there. The force was also to begin organizing resistance networks among the people of these areas.

Most of the CFA fighters wore complete sets of new Chinese uniforms with Chinese rucksacks and AKs. If they were spotted by informers or enemy troops, the uniforms might be confusing enough to give the CFA a little time to evade or get

off the first shots. With Bijou in the lead, the men wound their way into the hills. Each man stopped to salute ELOL president Pa Kao Her and the CFA colors as they filed past. I stood watching until the last of the men were out of sight.

A couple of days later, we received a report from Bijou's men. One part of their force had raided and destroyed the LPA post at Ban Na Long, about 20km southwest of the district town of Muang Piang. Bijou radioed that the LPA were so surprised by the attack they simply fled. No bodies were left behind. Also, the CFA raiders captured more than 1,000 rounds of AK ammo, 51 PG-7 rounds and several mines (including Soviet dish-type claymores).

On the same day, another part of the CFA force sprung an ambush on a nearby trail. Seven LPA were reported killed. Hearing of this action from Bijou's men made Max Weale and me even more anxious to get out in the field.

As with everyone in ELOL, including President Pa Kao Her, we lived on a sparse diet which we referred to as "boiled grass and rice." With little nutritional intake, we were rapidly losing weight and tired easily from physical activity. We also referred to our meals as the "MIA" and "SAS survival diet." At least we retained our

sense of humor.

Happy Warriors Head North

Our day to leave finally arrived, and we set off down the track like a bunch of happy warriors. After traveling a short distance from the main village, Col. Thao Yang kept us largely off of trails to avoid ambushes and mines. Legless men in the villages reminded us of the latter threat. The troops kept their weapons at the ready, and any necessary conversation was conducted in a low voice. Orders were passed back with hand signals.

Our basic plan was to move north along the border, then hook down to the southeast behind the LPA posts. We would receive several trails and set an ambush on the one with the most traffic. At the same time, other CFA troops would harass LPA positions with small arms and 60mm mortar fire. Nothing more than this limited effort could be mounted for the time being.

Most of our patrol members were in their late teens or early 20s. Instead of the main force guerrillas who usually performed such missions, nearly half of our patrol were from village-defense troops. Not everyone was in the best of health, either. Colonel Thao Yang was running a fever, the patrol leader had a painful hernia, and his second-in-command was

coming down with a bad case of diarrhea. But they put one foot in front of the other and drove on.

The almost vertical terrain coupled with dense vegetation made for a very hard hump. Most of our route took us through rotting jungle with walls of bamboo, wait-a-bit vines, dead trees and thorny plants. Walking upright became a luxury; we spent most of our time crouching or crawling through the green foliage.

Of course, the smaller H'mong troops could slip through the jungle with fewer problems than Max and I. Being taller, we seemed to get caught in and stumble over every branch, vine and tree root. By the time we settled into our first laying-up place (LUP) that night, we had walked approximately 4km in seven hours.

Later the next day, we left the tall grass and headed east, back into the bush. We were now approaching the area where the LPA usually operated and based themselves. We cautiously moved toward the

The Chao Fah's most consistent source of weapons are those left scattered by the enemy after an ambush. Photo: Fred Caristo.

INSET: MGen. Bijou leads his men down leech-infested trail under Chao Fah colors. Photo: Max Weale



danger zone, then stopped to send forward a three-man recce patrol. Barely 20 minutes later, a four-round burst of AK fire rang out from where the recce had gone.

Everyone immediately put their rucks on and waited anxiously for some word on what had happened. Finally, a message came over the radio saying that one of the recce patrol members had fired accidentally. It was a troubling development, as the LPA would now know we were in the area. Our move to the ambush sites was no longer a total surprise.

Later, the man who fired the AK explained he had put his weapon on full auto and was leading the other two men through dense vegetation when his trigger got wrapped in his sling and was pulled back by a branch. The second-in-command of the patrol looked like he was ready to beat him over the head with the rifle.

At 0845 the next morning, we heard a muffled explosion from where the LPA were patrolling. "I think they just stepped on one of their own mines," Thao Yang said with a satisfied grin. Strangely, the LPA reacted to this by firing two 82mm mortar rounds across the border into Thailand. Thao Yang told us that this seemed to be the way the LPA often used their support weapons whenever their troops got into trouble. He said it wasn't unusual for the LPA to blindly shell ambush and contact sites without a forward observer, even though it often put their own troops in danger.

Be Careful, Little Brothers

The patrol leader was finding it too painful to continue walking with his hernia, so the second-in-command would be taking over the mission. We would go down with eight men, while the colonel would remain with the rest of the patrol. For quicker movement, Max and I distributed the contents of our rucks among other men and wore only our webbing. This would help us to keep up with the others if we had to make a run for it.

After the final briefing by the new patrol leader, we prepared for our move. Just then, at about 1100, we heard three explosions far to the east, deeper inside Laos. "Maybe it's General Bijou," Thao Yang said. As we left, he shook our hands, gave us each a block of homemade candy, and bid us good luck.

"Be careful, little brothers," he said to us. "I want you to see what we're doing here, but I won't feel better until you're both back." There was an expression of concern on his face even before we departed. In a guerrilla situation, all territory can be considered hostile, but as we descended a ridgeline into the steaming jungle below, I felt like we were entering doubly bad bush. As if to signal this, we found most of our route crawling with bloodsucking leeches.

We had moved for only about an hour before another problem presented itself.

No one, including the patrol leader, had a very clear idea of which way we were supposed to go. Most of the men were H'mong from deeper inside Laos who seldom or never operated in this border country.

There were only one or two military topographical maps available of the Nam Pouy area, along with an equally rare number of Chinese compasses. Navigation was conducted simply by relying on memory. The problem was that no one had any memory of this area. Those who had were either in the interior with Bijou or elsewhere at the moment.

Later in the afternoon, we heard the approaching sound of an Mi-8 helicopter through the jungle canopy. It sounded like it was landing at one of the LPA posts. While the Mi-8 was landing, the patrol leader sent forward two men to look for one of the trails we might ambush. They came back when it was almost dark without finding the track.

That evening, Thao Yang radioed that up to 20 LPA had patrolled to our last LUP. Two CFA men sent back to fetch more supplies saw numerous tracks left by the enemy patrol. The main concern now was that the LPA would try to block us off and track us down.

But he also had good news. Major General Bijou had mined the road to Ban Na Van and possibly bagged himself a Soviet-made GAZ 66 truck. Perhaps the explosions to the east had been Bijou's work after all. Now he was moving south with his men to operate in the hill country near the Mekong River.

The next afternoon, ELOL Secretary General Yang Teng and Colonel Thao Yang rendezvoused with us and said the patrol would be reorganized with a new leader. Our former patrol leader was earnest enough, but he simply didn't know the terrain. Also, his diarrhea had been getting worse.

Apparently, the discovery of our old LUP by the LPA had an unanticipated effect. Instead of coming after us, the LPA shut themselves up in their positions, fearing ambush and attack. Now the problem was that they weren't going to come out for the CFA to kill them.

"But don't worry, we're sure to find something for you and for us," Thao Yang reassured us in his usual good-humored fashion. We also met our new patrol leader that day. He had the Thai name of Prakorb and was originally a H'mong from Thailand. His moon face and short, stocky build made him look Mongolian.

Prakorb had an interesting background. He was a former guerrilla with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) who had given himself up to Thai authorities in the early 1980s after becoming disillusioned with the party. He told us he had literally been born into the CPT, since his mother gave birth to him while she was a CPT member.

After leaving the CPT, Prakorb was



asked by his Laotian H'mong relatives in ELOL to join their struggle. So he went back into the jungle, except this time to fight communists for a purely H'mong cause.

Still in his 20s, Prakorb had a reputation for courage in battle. Just a month earlier, 10 LPA troops approached the village where he was living with his wife. As the only CFA soldier around, Prakorb grabbed an AK and went down to pull a one-man ambush. The LPA troops were so startled they fled. Prakorb reported back with four PG-7 rounds they had dropped in their



TOP: Prakorb (with canteen), once a guerrilla with the Communist Party of Thailand, after springing an ambush on the LPA. Photo: Max Weale

BOTTOM: Along with the usual pep talks, Chao Fah patrols always begin with ceremonial prayers and offerings to the spirits. Photo: Fred Caristo



TOP: Prakorb shows off Hungarian AK dropped by LPA after ambush. Photo: Max Weale

BOTTOM: Chao Fah fighter immediately after shooting LPA soldier during ambush at Nam Pouy Stream. Photo: Max Weale

hasty retreat.

With fire booming to the south, we returned to our last LUP with Thao Yang, Prakorb and some new patrol members. In addition to his AK, Prakorb also carried an old M72 with the front cover gone and the paint nearly worn off.

Ambush At Nam Pouy Stream

Final orders were given at the LUP. Three men, one with an M14, were tasked with harassing one LPA post while the mortar team would drop more rounds on another position. We would go in with an eight-man team to ambush one of two trails. The first we would approach would be the trail linking two LPA posts. If there were no traffic on that route, we would go for the main trail along the Nam Pouy stream.

Before we moved out, Prakorb gathered us together for a final talk. Due to his long years with the CPT, he forgot himself from time to time and referred to us as "comrades." He would then quickly correct himself and use the word "friends" instead. He also used old Maoist jargon he had learned since childhood to stress various important points, such as, "Our hearts must be like diamonds." But Prakorb meant business, and I sensed that the men trusted him.

"We all look after each other. No one gets left behind. Anyone who abandons his friends will answer to me. If somebody's too badly hurt to run, then we'll just sit down and fight it out," he said in conclusion. And with that, we moved out.

For quicker movement, Prakorb took us onto a wild elephant trail. Easier movement meant the risk of mines and ambush, but Prakorb felt we had already lost too much time. If we encountered an elephant, there would be another problem. A CFA patrol was attacked by a wild elephant a year earlier, with one man killed in the incident.

The main problem for us, however, was the mass of leeches inhabiting the trail. They were soon making their way up our legs and getting under our uniforms. At every stop we had to check ourselves for the creatures. We felt a whole lot better when Prakorb finally got us off the trail. As darkness came, we set up in a LUP about 1 to 2km from the first trail. As usual, it began raining.

The next morning, the second-in-charge and another man went forward to receive the trail. They found it devoid of traffic, so Prakorb decided to go for the main Nam Pouy trail. At one point, when Prakorb wasn't sure of the way to the trail, he went up a small tree with the second-in-command to have a look. The patrol members were greatly amused when the flimsy tree nearly toppled over with the two men still clinging to the branches.

By noon we had found our trail. We LUP'd about 500 meters west of the route while Prakorb went up with another man to take a look. He came back and told us it



Setting up an ambush, Chao Fah fighters cut down trees for cover and to clear lanes of fire. Photo: Fred Caristo

showed quite a bit of recent traffic.

At about 1415 the 60mm mortar team began shelling the LPA post on the border to our southwest. The team with the M14 had radioed that they hit one LPA soldier at another post to the north when he peered from his trench to look at the shelling. Again the LPA fired back with small arms, mortars and recoilless rifles. Again they failed to hit anything.

At 0500 the next day, we got up in a drizzle, cached our rucks and moved up to the ambush site. Two security teams of two men each were deployed 30 meters left and 100 meters right of the killing zone. Prakorb told us to stay back while he went down to the trail with three men to set up three claymores. He aimed the center claymore straight at the trail. The other two were angled left and right down the track.

The killing group was situated on a small hill which sloped gradually down to the trail. To get a good look at the trail, however, you had to stand up. The three men facing the kill zone located about 20 meters below were, along with me and Max, strung out behind a fallen tree. We were on the left, followed by Prakorb, a young soldier named Li, and another man. The second-in-command covered our rear.

In front of us was a thin screen of bamboo through which the killing group could observe the trail. The stream was opposite us on the other side of the track. By 0615 we were all set to spring the ambush. We waited silently as the hours went by. Lying under the warm sun got so comfortable that after a while, I had to constantly fight the urge to nod off.

Then everything happened quickly. Without any warning, the soldier next to



us, Li, detonated his claymore. Since we were lying down, we couldn't see anything on the trail. All we could see was the dirt flying up through the bamboo. To my right I could see Prakorb standing up to get a better view of the trail.

Li then ran to our side and told us that Prakorb wanted us out of there immediately. He also yelled for the left flank security team to pull back. As we ran back, Prakorb and the man on his right blew their claymores. Someone was firing an AK on semi on the left flank of the ambush.

My first thought was that something had gone terribly wrong with the ambush. When we arrived at the rendezvous point, Li's eyes were just about bugging out of

his head as he talked. He kept repeating that there were many men, too many, coming up the trail.

I thought maybe we had hit the point element of a platoon or maybe even a company. But if that were the case, then why was there no return fire? The only sounds now were from the frags being lobbed into the killing zone by Prakorb and the two men who stayed behind. It quickly became apparent that Li had panicked, robbing us of a chance to record an ambush. He didn't want to run by himself, so he took us along with him.

Soon, all was quiet, and the left flank security team returned with the killing group and the right flank security team close behind. Prakorb brought back a Hungarian AK, a small satchel of personal items and a bloodstained LPA cap.

Max and I were in a pretty dejected mood, but there wasn't much we could do about it. The men recovered their rucks and we quickly moved out of the area. Along the way, Prakorb put down another

Two Chao Fah ambush patrol leaders use rare maps of their area to plan an upcoming ambush. Maps, compasses, ammunition, nutritious food and just about everything else the Chao Fah need to fight for their freedom are in short supply. Photo: Fred Caristo

M14 mine on our route in case we picked up some pursuit. LPA transmissions started breaking in on Prakorb's hand-held radio.

There was no LPA harassment or interdiction fire, as often happened after a clash, and no enemy came in pursuit of us. By dark, we had linked up with the three-man team with the M14 and were out of the danger zone where the LPA usually

operated. That night, we camped out where we had recently rendezvoused with Yang Teng and Thao Yang.

Ambush Analysis

When Prakorb told us about how the ambush went down, we became even angrier over the lost opportunity. It had been quite an easy kill. Four LPA came walking down the trail from the left (from the direction of Ban Na Van toward the border) at intervals of 10 to 15 meters between each man. Only the lead man carried a field pack.

Three of them had entered the kill zone when the first claymore was detonated. It killed the third man outright and blew him into the stream. The first two were standing on the trail when the other two claymores were blown. The second man caught the full blast and was also blown into the stream.

The first man had only been knocked over, and was still on the trail. He fired three rounds from his Hungarian AK, which went high, before it jammed from a rust-caked magazine. A few fragmentation grenades promptly blew him into the stream to join his friends. The last LPA soldier, who was in front of the left flank security team when the ambush was sprung, immediately ran across the stream. The two men in the security team could hear his AK clanging on the rocks when he dropped it in his rush to escape.

But instead of making good his escape, he crouched on the opposite stream bank and called to his (now dead) friends, "What is it? What is it?" He was promptly shot by one of the CFA soldiers in the security team. Then, incredibly, he got back up to look around and was shot again.

The security team was going to pick up the AK the LPA soldier had dropped into the stream when they heard Li shouting for them to pull back. So they left the weapon and ran back to the rendezvous point. Prakorb wanted to go down and make a thorough search of the killing zone, but this would have been risky. Left flank security was no longer in place to make sure no more LPA were coming down the trail.

All Prakorb and the man next to him could do was throw more frags into the stream to make sure the LPA were really dead. Then he grabbed the Hungarian AK, the hat and the satchel (containing a flashlight, soap and other toiletries), and ran back up the slope. Before pulling back, he buried two M14 mines on the ambush position. He confirmed that he never gave orders for us to pull out, since he was too busy dealing with the ambush at the time.

On reflection, it had been a generally well-planned ambush. Although its execution was not totally successful in terms of searching bodies and taking weapons (not to mention nearly being ruined by the panicked reactions of one man), we observed that most of the troops conducted themselves in a professional

THE H'MONG STRUGGLE

Shortly after 2 December 1975, the new government of Laos, the Pathet Lao, set about transforming the country into a "socialist state." As in virtually all other experiments with socialism and communism around the world, the Pathet Lao began implementing a broad series of "security measures" for its citizens. This meant citizens could welcome a new, "secure" way of life with even more oppression and servitude than they enjoyed before.

After seizing control of the country's media, Pathet Lao promptly threw anyone associated with the former government into concentration camps to be "reeducated." Thousands were incarcerated; many were tortured beyond recognition. People's Thugs then attempted to bring Laos' many ethnic groups under their rule. The H'mong ethnic group, wanting to have nothing to do with the new Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR), told them to take a hike.

This didn't go over well in Vientiane. In cooperation with Vietnamese forces, the Lao People's Army (LPA) began launching military assaults on the H'mong. Since 1975, thousands of H'mong have been forcibly resettled into lowland areas, while thousands of others have fled to Thailand as refugees. Worse, young H'mong freedom fighters are regularly shot down in a war all but completely ignored by American media.

As Saddam Hussein has used chemical weapons on his own people, the Kurds, the Pathet Lao have waged chemical warfare on their own people, the H'mong. Against the H'mong, however, this was not an isolated attack; chemical agents have been used on them for more than 14 years. Again, Americans (SOF readers excluded) know little or nothing about this.

Fred Caristo, presently working with the H'mong ethnic preservation struggle, said this is a war of both genocide and attrition. "The Lao draft the H'mong into the LPA, then put them in units where they know they're going to get killed," he said. "Then they take the lowest class of lowland Lao men and marry them off to H'mong women. The result? The H'mong race is bled into extinction."

Even Pathet Lao officials have admitted to the genocide; one of their common responses to the struggle is, "The war will end when the H'mong are gone." Barring dramatic, unlikely change in Laos, Caristo sees no way for them to survive. "They're getting beat up," he said. "In five years, there won't be anything left unless we go help them. The only chance for the H'mong is if the United States provides assistance, and puts pressure on the Lao government to lay off."

— John Kreiger

manner.

Also, the killing group and security teams had been positioned well. The ambush employed claymores and grenades to maximum effect while conserving small arms ammo. There was no panicked full auto firing, and the only CFA soldier who fired his weapon was the one in the left flank security team. He expended only two shots to achieve his kill.

Early the next morning, with his knowledge of the terrain, Prakorb got us back to the main village in only four hours, where it had taken us two days coming out. President Pa Kao Her and Thao Yang were there to welcome us back. They were relieved to see us return safely, but were just as disappointed as Max and I that we hadn't been able to record and photograph the ambush.

Thao Yang explained that Li, who panicked in the ambush, was once a very brave soldier. He was badly wounded, however, and hadn't been the same since. He asked repeatedly to be taken off our ambush patrol, but the lack of men made this impossible. The man had simply reached his breaking point. As the Israelis sometimes say, "Courage is like money in a wallet. Sometimes you reach down for it and there's none left."

Before leaving the Nam Pouy base area that day, I gave Prakorb my compass as a token of our appreciation for his looking after us. "Next time we blow up a truck," he promised as we shook hands before leaving.

After we departed, increasingly heavy rainfall brought operations by both sides to a virtual standstill. According to reports, the LPA had ceased their attacks in northern Laos and had pulled their forces back from all ELOL base areas except those in Nam Pouy and one in the Luang Prabang area.

For the first time in years, the government of Laos has been expressing concern about resistance activity, even admitting that four small LPA posts were overrun in the Sanakham district, about 100km west of Vientiane. The LPA reaction to the attacks was to move troops to the Thai border and temporarily close the frontier in areas where the attacks had taken place. According to ELOL, however, the raiding force came from base areas inside Laos and not from across the border in Thailand.

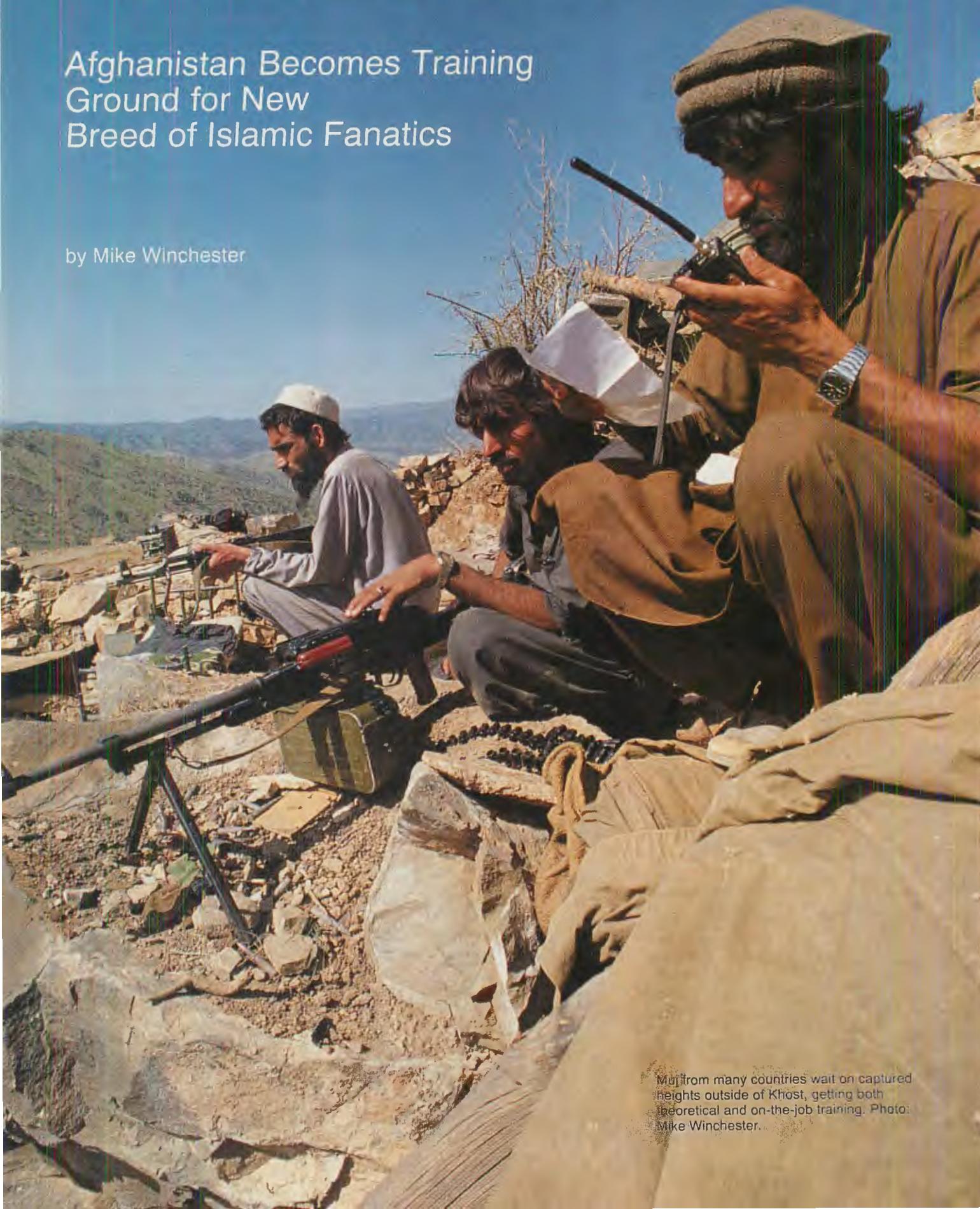
"The Kaysone government in Vientiane is always looking for external enemies," an ELOL official commented, "but the real threat to the regime will always be from the people within Laos itself, who can no longer stand living under communist rule."

Tom Peterson has traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia covering that region's forgotten wars for SOF. For more on the Chao Fah and the evolution of ELOL, see his story "Lords of the Sky," August '90.

TERRORIST "U"

Afghanistan Becomes Training Ground for New Breed of Islamic Fanatics

by Mike Winchester



Muj from many countries wait on captured heights outside of Khost, getting both theoretical and on-the-job training. Photo: Mike Winchester.

"There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And the wind is blowing toward the Indian border. Whence comes that wind, think you?" — World War I British Intelligence Chief Sir Walter Blenkiron in John Buchan's novel, Greenmantle.

It was an encounter all of us would have preferred to avoid, one the Afghans had made a point of telling us to avoid — with wide grins and forefingers drawn knowingly across the throat. The message needed no translation: don't mess with the Palestinians.

Our undoing was attracting the attention of a bunch of bored Afghan army gunners with time on their hands and ordnance to spare. I was returning with three other photographers from the front lines around the besieged town of Khost in southeastern Afghanistan. From the rough system of trenches and bunkers the mujahideen had built on the plains around the perimeter defenses, we cut back across country toward the hills ringing the settlement.

The muj manning the forward positions casually assured us that the walk back would be no problem. This is a part of the world where you believe the words "no problem" at your own risk. Looking back, the general reluctance to accompany us should have roused a few suspicions. But cut off from resupply by land since early 1988, Khost's defenders were admittedly low on ammunition.

The guerrillas in our sector had been pumping out rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms fire at regime forward positions for several hours, taking only a few AK rounds in return. Besides, the front lines were undermanned, we were in a hurry and it was only a half-hour walk. So we set off into the setting sun toward the welcoming line of mountains and vehicle transport.

Churchill Was Wrong

We'd covered about half the distance when the shelling began. A whistle-crump in a very short time span defined the bad guys as a 76mm field gun crew, firing probably from 2 to 3 clicks away, somewhere on the edge of the perimeter. It was immediately clear that we were not victims of casual harassment and interdiction fire. This was more or less open country, and we were attractively illuminated by the sun's last rays.

The incoming was intended exclusively for us. Winston Churchill once wrote there is nothing more exhilarating than being under fire and being missed. Take it from me: Churchill was never on the wrong end of an artillery barrage intended all for him.

The first round landed about 50 meters away which, over a range of 2,000-3,000 meters, was disconcertingly close. As fortune would have it, between us and the incoming was a large hole in the ground fashioned by a 500kg bomb. Into this three of us dived at once, arms and cameras

flailing. The fourth man, *Time* lensman Bob Nickelsberg, was already flat on his face under a bush. More rounds followed, marching smartly along the track in front of us, then bracketing our general position. Short of a hole-in-one, we were reasonably safe provided we stayed put in the crater. And this, with a certain amount of ill grace, we did.

The incoming tapered off. Around 15 minutes later it was a fairly safe bet they'd had their fun. Shaken but unscathed, we emerged from the hole and moved off. But by now the light was going fast, and before long we were thoroughly lost. Some 10 minutes later, in a dried up water course, flanked on one side by a low cliff into which caves had been dug, we came across a large group of muj. There must have been close to 100 of them, seated in rows over their evening meal.

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner

It first dawned on me that all was not what it should have been when my greeting in Afghan Farsi was not returned. The reason for that became entirely clear when I identified the low muttering from the guys nearest us as Arabic. Here were the Palestinians the Afghans had advised us emphatically to avoid. And here we were just in time for dinner.

In Afghanistan, Arab mujahideen have established a solid reputation for their dislike — correction — visceral loathing, of Westerners. Much of this animosity goes back to the Crusades which for a lot of these characters might have happened last week. The rest owes more than a little to an area on the map called Israel. The sum is bad news.

My own introduction to this particular psychosis had been in March 1989 during a chaotic mujahideen retreat, hurried along by airstrikes, from the perimeter of Jalalabad airport. It was still fresh in my mind, as near misses often are.

Exactly where the lads in question came from was unclear and, anyway, irrelevant. Suffice to say they were Arab and, having detained me at gunpoint, made it very clear in passable English they did not like representatives of the "Zionist press" — least of all those watching them and several hundred Afghan "brothers" getting spread all over the countryside.

Having questions like "Who are you?" "What are you doing here?" and "Why aren't you a Moslem?" thrown at you by wild-eyed crazies pointing Kalashnikovs — fingers on triggers, selectors on auto — in the middle of a battle with bombs exploding in the immediate vicinity, the air alive with small arms fire, dead and wounded being dragged past, is a spot

unnerving. Another body here or there makes no difference to anyone. "Western journalist killed in Afghan air raid" — one paragraph, bottom of page three.

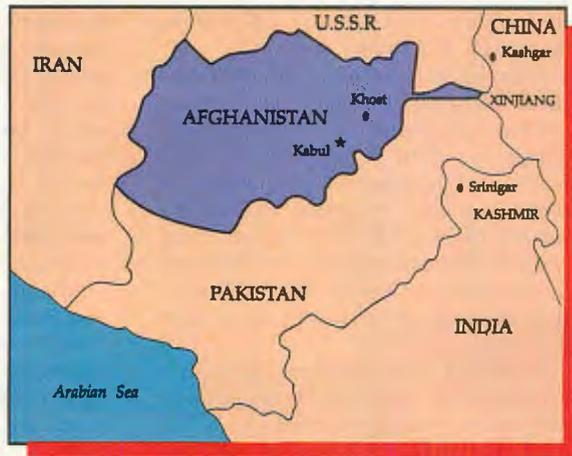
So, as we strolled casually straight into a dinner party of some 100 gentlemen fired by the same prejudices, my immediate reaction was: oh, shhhiiiiit; next reaction was: keep them talking, at all costs keep them talking.

Hospitality being a tradition as hallowed in the Arab world as Afghanistan, it was clearly time to break bread with our new found friends and brothers in the anticommunist struggle. Especially as God-fearing Christians — thus also "People of the Book" — we had so much in common in terms of religion ... Yes, I'd love some coffee...What excellent bread you make here ... Zap any commies today?

We were now taking some very hard stares and the muttering was growing in volume. At this delicate juncture, two men in our group promptly concluded that between the artillery and the Arabs, events were conspiring against us in a terminally unfriendly manner. Powered by an almost audible flow of adrenaline, they took off into the gathering darkness. It was not a diplomatic move. It halved our numbers and left me and photographer Patrick O'Donnell to sustain what promised to be uphill conversation.

It could have been worse. The unit commander was indeed a Palestinian. But a large portion of the unit were French-speaking North Africans from Algeria and Tunisia. O'Donnell — a born-again Christian of some 120 seconds with wide experience of both Afghanistan and the full range of unIslamic beverages available at the bar of the Peshawar's American Club — spoke good French. The Palestinian commander spoke excellent English, as did his second-in-command, a Syrian exile who had just received word that his wife in Saudi Arabia had given birth to a boy two days before. Well,

Moslems in areas near Afghanistan such as Kashmir, Xinjiang and parts of the Soviet Union have used the siege of Khost as a training ground.



congratulations, brother ... What splendid news ... Another little Fighter for the Faith...

After several minutes of this, three things became clear. First, the coffee was damn good. Second, our chances of living to enjoy a second cup were improving. And third, the unit looked like they knew more than a thing or two about the business of war. They hailed from most countries in the Arab world, as well as a few beyond, and in stark contrast to many Afghan muj, these characters were well-equipped.

Most were kitted-out in cammies and new boots, with enough weaponry for a battalion. The place was stacked with 14.5mm heavy machine guns, mortars, recoilless rifles and much else. After the meal and evening prayers, as O'Donnell and I chatted with the commander and his 2IC, some of the lads were putting on the war paint for a night op against a fire base behind government lines. It obviously wasn't their first such foray.

We remained with them for several more cups of sweet coffee and were about to suggest joining them for the op, when we were abruptly "rescued" by a colleague and some badly worried Afghans. We left with many handshakes and invitations (a) to return and (b) to get serious and convert to Islam.

As an encounter, it had its lighter side. But it drove home one message bluntly: situated at the epicenter of one of the world's most unstable regions, Afghanistan today is attracting a startlingly wide range of Islamic militants. They were not there to admire the mosques. And they are no longer exclusively Arab.

Magnet for Moslem Militants

When in 1982 and 1983 the first of the Islamic international brigade showed up at the front, they numbered only a few score, all Arab. Today, best estimates are that there may be anywhere between 2,000 and 3,000 foreign muj in-country at any given time, with a considerable turnover rate. Alongside the Arab hard-core are Kashmiris, Pakistanis, Sudanese, Chadians, West Africans, Bangladeshis, Turks, odd Yugoslav Moslems, Indonesians, Filipino Moslems, Malaysians and Thais.

Also sighted have been a few American Black Muslims. Iranians and Pakistani Shi'ites are found in Afghan Shi'ite groups, especially in the Central Hazara Jat region. Where once you might have run across a couple of earnest and slightly nervous Arabs in a band of Afghans, today you can find company-size multinational foreign units who know most of what there is to know about survival on the Afghan battlefield.

According to one Western "specialist" I discussed the issue with, at last count 44 different nationalities had been identified as having fought in Afghanistan, making it

one of history's most international conflicts. The Sovs brought a few of their erstwhile allies to lend a hand, but the overwhelming majority of those nationalities have been Islamic militants from around the globe. As one colleague put it, tongue only slightly in cheek, "Dis, man, is de age of jet-about jihad."

The foreigners have gravitated to those muj parties most beholden to Arab purse strings. In the eastern Kunar province, this has meant the Wahhabis. This Sunni group, with roots in Arabia, espouses a purist version of Islam that has the potential to look on those whose authority comes from traditional, national or tribal roots, such as most of the mainstream Peshawar parties, as dangerous backsliders from the Faith. Needless to say, the reception accorded to the infidel Western press, Zionist or otherwise, has been less than enthusiastic.

In the south and southeast of the country, the international brigade has found a warm welcome from the two fundamentalist Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) factions of Younis Khales and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. And, in particular, from one of Khales' best known commanders, Maulewi Jalaluddin Haqqani.

Afghanistan's John Wayne

Haqqani's relationship to the Afghan jihad is something like John Wayne's to the Hollywood Western — perhaps not the fastest draw, certainly not the quickest onto his horse, but a patriarch of unchallenged stature. Haqqani's fame is inseparable from that of the government-held town of Khost, around which his forces have been camped for over a decade.

He himself has been more mobile. Now in his fifties, an elder of the Jadrani tribe of the Pathans and an imposing figure in an Old Testament manner, Haqqani has been a frequent visitor to Saudi Arabia. These trips have been primarily intended to recharge his spiritual batteries at the holy places of Islam. It must also be said that contacts cultivated with munificent Saudi patrons have not done any harm to his bank balance, either.

Arab funds and short lines of communication to Pakistan have enabled Haqqani to build up an impressive base complex in the border hills of Paktia province at a spot called Zhyawar, where caves housing storerooms, arsenals, barracks, even a war museum, have been hacked out of rock cliffs. Two hours' ride over the border in Miranshah, Haqqani also maintains a second home where his wives and audio-visual kit are housed, videos of recent operations are screened, and the food is a big improvement.

In the minds of the cynical, Haqqani's establishment in Paktia and the lavish Arab funds that flow to maintain it have raised certain questions. Foremost among them: If, hypothetically speaking, Khost

were to be captured, where would that leave Haqqani as a recipient of Islamic munificence? Or, more bluntly: Do Haqqani's muj have any real interest in taking the place if that means a drastic loss of income and prestige?

While you are not likely to hear issues like this voiced around Khost, the fact remains that in a decade of war — during most of which the small garrison town has been cut off — the besiegers have made surprisingly limited progress. This, despite the fact that the airstrip could be brought under fire at will through 1990 and is littered with the wreckage of knocked-out transport aircraft, and Haqqani operates at the end of embarrassingly short lines of supply from Pakistan.

Haqqani's force's firing position on the ridges overlooking the airstrip could with more forceful leadership shut it down as effectively as the Viet Minh shut down Dien Bien Phu in 1954. To move munitions up to the front at Khost, you are not looking at a two week hike across the Hindu Kush. This is air-conditioned Land-Cruiser country. Turn up the stereo, Abdul.

Guerrilla University

But for the foreign Moslems enjoying Haqqani's hospitality, the ultimate fate of Khost — or Kabul, for that matter — is of secondary interest. The siege of this town, as with many others around the country, provides Islam's international brigade with excellent training facilities, both theoretical and on-the-job. As one Westerner who specializes in keeping tabs on those developments put it: "In effect, Afghanistan has become an open university for guerrilla warfare and the politics of jihad."

So just who is doing the learning? And for what?

As word gets around in mosques and Islamic *madrassahs* (colleges) across the Islamic world, a very wide range of young Moslems are flocking to the Afghan battlefield. Many are what might be termed category "B" — relatively unsophisticated youths from God-fearing homes eager for a few months of adventure travel with substantial religious kudos thrown in. Some come from university campuses in the Gulf and North Africa, and there are even a few Afghans from the U.S. These are students on vacation checking out a good Islamic war and chalking up credits in the Big Register in the Sky.

But there are others whose motives in coming to Afghanistan are decidedly more focused. These people are category "A" — their primary objective being the prosecution of radical Islamic revolution back home. And for that, Afghanistan offers opportunities for very specific training in small arms, support weapons and demolition skills, even the odd Stinger. As one hard-eyed category "A" Saudi I met in the bazaar of Peshawar's Old City put it: "Afghanistan is a big



One of Shi'ites who planned to kill Brown and company. Photo: Robert K. Brown

CLOSE CALL

In 1988 SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown, Paul Fanshaw and Mike Williams had a frightening experience reminiscent of that described here by author Mike Winchester (see "Omega Jihad," October '88). RKB and friends had been in a small Afghan village called Jara for several days, waiting for an oft-promised attack on a Russian fort.

One day they were approached by an unfriendly young man speaking perfect English who asked if they were Americans and what they were doing in Afghanistan. Shortly afterwards they were warned by one of their muj guides that the young man was one of several "Khomeini people" from the village. The muj had overheard the Khomeini people say that as soon as the attack on the fort started, they would shoot the Americans. This precipitated an armed retreat from Jara. Brown and his companions had to lock and load before they were allowed to leave the village.

At the time, Managing Editor Jim Graves wrote that SOF had been hearing rumors for more than a year about Moslems from various areas of the world (especially the Persian Gulf) showing up in Afghanistan to serve a tour with muj forces in their holy war. He speculated that the group SOF had come into contact with were Shi'ite Moslems, possibly from Iran.

Brown's experience in Jara seems to have been a preview of the current situation in Afghanistan. In 1988 we predicted that after the Soviets pulled out and factional fighting became more common among the Afghans jockeying for power, Afghanistan would become increasingly dangerous for Western reporters. As this article shows, not only reporters, but all Westerners should be aware that post-Soviet Afghanistan is becoming a school for Islamic warriors. Considering our current situation in the Persian Gulf, the most disturbing question is: Who exactly are these Islamic brothers training to war against?

— S. Max

school for us. We have learned many things." Finally, there are those who start off in category "B" but wind up two hard years down the road in category "A" — long prayerful tours in Afghanistan are not conducive to disco and Chivas Regal at the Cairo Hilton.

The most organized radicals are from the Arab heartland: Egyptians, Jordanians, Syrians and Palestinians. This is a region where conflict with Israel is a part of the landscape, and where there is a strong tradition of underground radicalism.

Islamic Brotherhood

In Egypt, the Islamic Brotherhood, Turkish fighters strip and clean Chinese Kalashnikovs. Photo: Mike Winchester



founded in 1928, long posed a serious challenge to the secular nationalist regimes of Nasser and Sadat. Today, the Brotherhood has a huge following among ordinary Egyptians, representatives in parliament and a big stake in an alternative "Islamic economy." But radical and violent offshoots, like *Takfir wa al-Hijra* and the Islamic Liberation Movement operate underground. These are the gentlemen who terminated the career of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and have men training in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Brotherhood, or *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen* in Arabic, is also powerful in Jordan where it has gained significant electoral backing and assists a steady flow of men to train in Afghanistan. But it is the Syrian branch of the Islamic Brotherhood which is most acclimatized to armed struggle and which historically has posed the most serious challenge to state power.

The 1982 Syrian strongman Hafez al-Assad, himself from the minority Alawite sect, crushed an Islamic Brotherhood uprising in the town of Hama, using airstrikes and artillery to level parts of the city. Amid carnage that left well over 10,000 (mostly civilians) dead, the military wing of the Syrian Brotherhood,

Talia al-Mukatila (Fighting Vanguard) was broken. Many survivors sought refuge in Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, where they found political and financial backing from regimes or individuals opposed to Damascus. Today, many of the Syrians fighting in Afghanistan are the same men who fought and lost at Hama. They have unfinished business to settle with Mr. Assad.

The Palestinians have also emerged as an important segment of the militant Islamic Brigade in Afghanistan. As the anti-Israeli *Intifada* has lost steam on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the prestige of Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization has declined. Into the vacuum have moved the Islamic fundamentalists.



Assorted foreign muj gather for evening prayers at Khost. Photo: Mike Winchester

The largest organization is *Hamas* (Resistance), led by Sheik Ahmed Yasin and financed partly by the Jordanian branch of the Moslem Brotherhood. There are also smaller, shadowier and far more radical factions such as "Holy Place" and "Islamic Jihad Brigade." The Israelis are worried about all of these organizations, and for good reason: they are well-organized, highly committed and have followers operating in Afghanistan. They are not there to improve their stone-throwing techniques.

But the full impact of the Afghan school

Continued on page 84

ARMS BOUTIQUE

U.S. Customs Busts Honolulu's Vietnamese Connection

Text & Photos by Tom Marks



Goodies left behind in Vietnam and ready to be sold by Ms. George include 14 UH1Hs.

MOSCOW has cashed in its chips. The Warsaw Pact has stood down. The Western Allies and the U.S. Congress are falling all over themselves in their rush to dismantle their defenses. You'd think it would be a grim time in the weapons business. Hardly! Survey the globe for but a moment:

U.S. sources have publicly confirmed what U.S. intelligence has been telling the politicians for years: Pakistan has built the big one — nuclear weapons. Simultaneously, it continues to upgrade its armed forces, which are locked in an undeclared war with the Indians all along their heavily fortified, mutual border.

Meanwhile, enamored with the "threat" posed by Pakistan, a state with one-eighth its population, India's strategists — the same brilliant minds who gave us the disastrous invasion of Sri Lanka — continue to cheerfully pour still more of

their scarce national treasure into conventional weapons of dubious value. (For those who find such behavior puzzling, simply consider the "commissions" from a deal to re-equip India's million-man army with new howitzers ...) One can only hope they don't decide that chemical weapons will ultimately not only make Mother India safe, but also help solve her population problem.

From Adolph to Saddam

Chemical weapons, of course, remain in the news thanks to events in the Middle East. Far from home, in the sands of Saudi Arabia, American troops have a go at it with Saddam Hussein's nasties. And in Europe, the German government belatedly discovers that for nearly a decade its boys who gave you Zyklon-B (the chemical used to gas the Jewish population of Europe), have been preparing new

concoctions for the Butcher of Baghdad. Not only that, they've been helping him make biological weapons (ever fancy catching anthrax?), long range ballistic missiles, and the bomb. Still, they've been helping Libya do the same for even longer, and no one has said much about it.

In any case, the Germans can justly claim they're in good company. The Brazilians, for instance, needing a new frontier to conquer after denuding the Amazon and slaughtering their Indians, have apparently concluded that it is in their interest to offer their nuclear expertise to the Iraqis. But let us be fair: the Brazilian government claims the team at work in Iraq is not official; it is composed of private citizens.

It also claims that its own massive program to build the bomb has only just been "discovered" by the government and has been a rogue operation all along. It makes you wonder if any of these folks



Ms. George, shown here in Vietnam, says all deals were contingent on changes in U.S. law.

have ever heard of the National Security Agency (NSA) and its capabilities. It's amazing what you can learn by reading other people's mail.

Far away, in Beijing, the Chinese are still convinced that their own mail is safely concealed by their language. Tokyo, history buffs will recall, thought the same during World War II. Thus it is that

China's denials of back door arms dealings with Iraq draw snickers in Washington corridors. Beijing, though, with an economy on the ropes, wants to appear respectable, and hence is somewhat responsive to international pressure. Not so Pyongyang, North Korea, where Kim Il Sung continues to dream of liberating the South before he goes. His economy, too, is on the ropes, but North Korea really has nothing to offer save weapons and terror, so his minions have already put in their sales bid with Saddam.

North Korea has reportedly done the same with the hit men of the communist New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines. The NPA, stalled even in the face of the Aquino government's incompetence (which should not be equated with military incompetence), is shopping for heavier weapons, hoping to regain its lost momentum. The NPA, at least, needs a source such as North Korea, as well might Iraq. No one else, it seems, does.

Increasingly isolated as its former mentors Moscow and Beijing look to Seoul and Tokyo for economic ties, Pyongyang isn't sure where to turn. It has tried to straddle the fence, while simultaneously waging clandestine warfare. The centerpiece of its effort has been openly fostering "reunification" while stepping up intelligence activity and covert ops. In early October, for instance, even as the prime ministers of the North and South prepared to meet in their first face-to-face powwow ever, Pyongyang's agents planted a bomb in the rental car of high-ranking South Koreans on an official visit to Hawaii. The device failed to go off and was discovered by the car rental agency's cleaning crew when they serviced the engine. It didn't make the news, but amidst the law and order establishment, it caused quite an uproar — not an everyday happening in quiet Honolulu.

Trouble in Paradise

More public in Aloha Land have been the efforts of U.S. Customs to place two Hawaii residents, Samuel P. Pyun, 68, of Maui, and Dep Huynh George, 42, of Honolulu, in the slammer for allegedly conspiring to sell half a billion dollars worth of military hardware from communist Vietnam. Announced with much fanfare by the Feds after court papers were filed on 17 September 1990, the case is based, first, on the fact that doing business with Vietnam remains illegal and, second, upon evidence developed in a sting operation conducted using informants.

By all accounts, Mr. Pyun is small change, a middleman who talked too much about things of which he clearly knew little. At the center of the storm is Ms. George, an entrepreneur alleged to have access to all the goodies we left in Vietnam and more. The Feds claim to have

caught her red-handed attempting to peddle her wares. She admitted to having access to everything pictured in numerous photographs displayed by U.S. Customs. But, she also says she made clear to her prospective buyers that she was a U.S. citizen and that all deals were contingent upon changes in U.S. law. Those, she continued, appeared imminent.

What she wanted, she insists, was to be ready when relations with Vietnam finally were re-established. Predictably, none of this appears in the "criminal complaint" lodged in the U.S. District Court.

What does emerge is a total lack of recognition concerning normal, everyday activities within the Vietnamese community in the United States. Leaving aside for a moment the Dep George business — and let me state up front that I think the Feds have blown this one — commercial intercourse between the



two former enemies, the U.S. and Vietnam, is a daily reality.

Literally thousands of businesses import various goods simply by certifying that they come from other Southeast Asian countries. All ceramic elephants, to use but one illustration, look pretty much alike. Periodically, our government decides to make an issue of the reality by busting someone, such as a tour operator who actually advertises trips to Vietnam for veterans, or by sending FBI agents around to warn small-time Vietnamese engaged in trade that they risk being prosecuted.

Enemy List

No one really seems to know why the U.S. keeps Vietnam on its list of enemies. Washington mouths all sorts of hackneyed phrases: about Hanoi's having invaded Cambodia (but that ended the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge); about its having kept troops there in Cambodian uniforms after they were ostensibly all gone (but that keeps the Khmer Rouge from regaining power); and about the warehouses where Vietnam War remains are occasionally dribbled out to us. Yet in reality, the comic opera which serves as an excuse for U.S. foreign policy seems based

on little more than spite.

It is not just that they "won." There is something more subtle at work, a question of power. Unable, during the conflict itself, to prevent radical spokesmen from consorting with the enemy (lest we forget "Hanoi Jane"), Washington now seems determined to demonstrate who really runs the show. To do this, it can't pick on the real lawbreakers — they would probably resist — so it has to go after those in the compliant middle class. They actually take laws seriously and, therefore, can be bullied.

The George case fits neatly into this scenario. Dep has no wealth, but she is American middle class; and Vietnam, under the communist victors, has become one of the poorest countries on earth. That makes her "rich" over there. She has been going back and forth for years in a pattern duplicated by a myriad of others. Goods

Vietnamese clearance sale includes 50 assorted aircraft.

and currency scammed through Vietnam's corrupt customs setup support a substantial extended family. Indeed, if there weren't thousands of others like her, the level of human misery among the Vietnamese would be far worse than it is already.

In the process, as judged by interviews and records of correspondence examined by SOF, it is apparent that George attempted to position herself for the anticipated breakthrough in U.S.-Vietnamese relations. And she does indeed have amazing contacts (among them Vo Nguyen Giap himself). But an "arms merchant" she clearly is not; though just as clearly she would have been more than happy to roll in the dough once the U.S. decided to stop pissing on its own boot.

Why not just warn her off, as the Feds have done with others? How could they? Her case had all the dramatic elements the Feds needed to make a name for themselves: arms, mind-boggling dollar figures, intrigue. They couldn't resist the temptation of the big score.

Even the arbitrary half-billion dollar



U.S. Customs photos show hundreds of armored vehicles, including 200 M113 APCs and hundreds of tanks.

figure was obviously chosen for dramatic impact. Unfortunately, the papers reported it as "\$500 million," so much of its sex appeal was lost. For some reason the press has a distinct lack of curiosity about the whole affair, despite the fact that a thorough journalistic investigation of the whole affair is clearly called for.

Such, apparently, is not to be. No one even seems curious as to how the Feds could, as they have claimed, discuss technical subjects (weapons and munitions, for example) with George in English, when it is quite apparent that she must revert to Vietnamese for proper clarification of any complicated passage. Yet, to be fair, most of what "George said" is, according to the indictment, actually what Pyun says George said, hearsay once-removed by the time it's laid out by the government.

Vietnamese Loot

One wonders what the Vietnamese government thinks of all this. George or no George, they want to get rid of their loot.

Estimates of just how much hardware

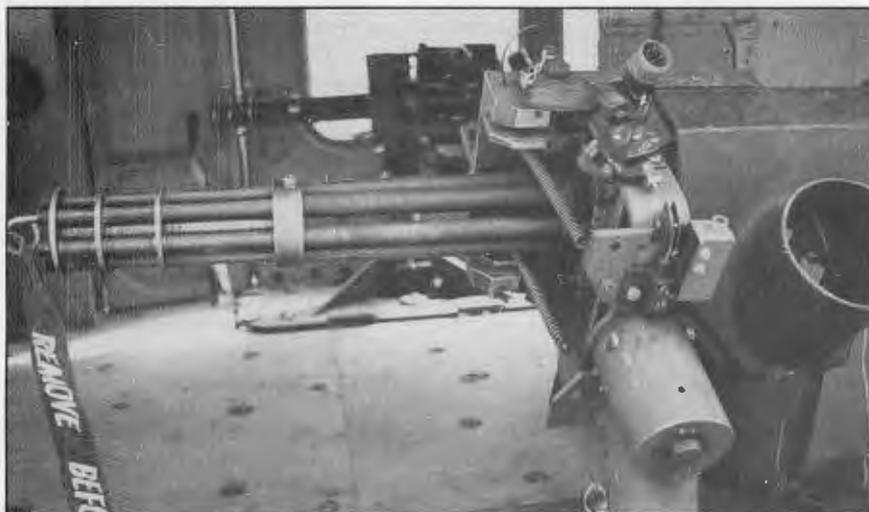
remains in Vietnam vary, but it clearly is substantial. For years, Hanoi has been discretely unloading small lots. (M16s, for instance, were intercepted being sent via Nicaragua to the guerrillas in El Salvador.) The most desirable items (several Boeing 707s) went early. Yet it has never really been able to do big business, despite the fact that the trade embargo by the West leaks like a sieve (as might be expected, the major violators are the Japanese).

From my own investigations in-country, I would judge this to be, in the main, due to a well-nigh complete lack of understanding as to how the international arms trade works. Vietnamese officialdom simply does not have the contacts and the wherewithal to take care of end user certificates, financing and shipping. Quite literally, they expect a buyer to show up, check out the goods, plunk down a wad of cash, and take all the toys off their hands.

But the toys they have! While traveling here and there, visits of several sites produced a list that reliable sources described as "one-tenth" of what the Vietnamese had available. It included:

- 200 M113 armored personnel carriers

A .30 cal. minigun mounted in helicopter for sale by Vietnamese.



- 75 M48A3 tanks and 75 M41 tanks — all in near mint condition with ammo
- 200 155mm towed M1A2 howitzers with sights
- 50 175mm self-propelled howitzers (which someone had ordered driven from Cam Ranh Bay to Hanoi, which meant their condition was less than perfect)
- 50 assorted aircraft including seven C130As, 11 A37 "Dragonflies" with 30-cal. miniguns, 14 UH1Hs with two 30-cal. miniguns, 15 F5A/B/E models with avionics and two 20mm cannons
- Approximately 400 engines of all types in sealed containers (never opened; all those spot-checked were in mint condition)
- Substantial numbers of small arms

Multiply this by something like 10 and you've got a whole heap of steel, which is what it remains as long as the Vietnamese can't sell it. With their economy teetering on the brink of self-destruction, they want more than ever to cut a deal.

For a time, Iran and Thailand looked like good possibilities. Iran, however, decided to declare peace, and Thailand began buying from the Chinese (it has since decided that even friendship prices can't turn sows' ears into silk purses and will reportedly re-enter the U.S. arms pipeline). Even the small arms have been proving a tough sell, as guerrilla groups find themselves cut off from Soviet Bloc funding. It's a cruel world.

It may become more so if people such as Saddam Hussein and his crypto-Nazi friends have their way. Their plans call for arms acquisitions which will place them in the big leagues.

This only highlights the disparity in implications between the George case and those being pursued in Germany. The first, as is usually the case in America these days, lacks substance and is a virtual paper chase. It involves what are now peashooters. Germany, in contrast, has uncovered the tip of a very large, ugly iceberg, a reality so startling that it has changed the terms of references for the ongoing Middle East crisis. We no longer face only the matter of liberating Kuwait, but also of "what to do" about Iraq. Clearly, Saddam Hussein cannot be left to his own individual arms proliferation path.

Perhaps we should learn from the British. Faced with the bravery of peoples such as the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, materially poor yet good fighters, the Brits simply incorporated them into their forces as mercenaries. We could do the same with the Vietnamese and turn them loose on Iraq. It would solve all manner of problems — to include those of the misguided Feds in Honolulu.

Tom Marks, a West Point graduate and SOF's chief foreign correspondent, lives and teaches in Hawaii when he's not on assignment for SOF. ✕

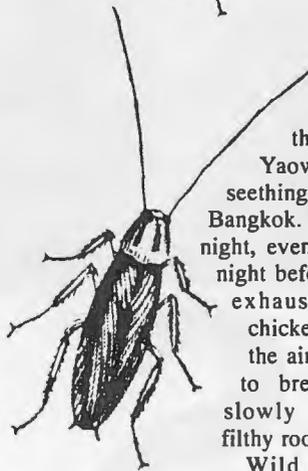


ROACH



HOTEL

by John Kreiger



I WAS moving swiftly through the guts of Yaowarat, a nasty, seething ghetto of central Bangkok. It was hot that night, even hotter than the night before. Fumes from exhaust and rotting chicken flesh jammed the air, making it hard to breathe. Humidity slowly dripped from filthy rooftops.

Wild activity was everywhere, and everyone was in the streets. A group of ancient Thai men wearing only shorts were dragging a blaring TV outside onto a crumbling sidewalk; a tough-looking woman was scrubbing pots in a gutter of black water; unidentified objects hung in streetside food carts.

I turned a corner, went up some stairs and was home — a dark, musty room overlooking nonstop traffic jams in a place called the New Empire Hotel. A bare light bulb hung over a noisy fan, a wobbly chair, a three-legged desk and what may have been a decent bed in the 1960s. Pieces of linoleum covered most of the floor.

It had been a tough day looking for work in Bangkok, and I was ready to relax. I put my feet up on the desk and opened a family-size bottle of Singha beer. Sipping on the warm brew, I was listening to Thai children scream from my open window when it happened ... I guess I heard it more than I saw it, but I knew that it was big. Glancing at the dark corner of the room, I downed another glass of beer, wondering what to do.

I got up and moved slowly to the corner, ready for what had to be a rat. I stomped my foot on the floor. Nothing happened. I

edged closer, crouching low to get a better look ... And then I saw him, almost face-to-face: It was The Cockroach from Hell, The Cockroach that Time Forgot and The Cockroach that Ate Bangkok all rolled into one — in the flesh, and wondering what my problem was.

“Jesus!” I yelled, making it back to the desk in a single leap. This had to be the biggest, baddest, ugliest bug that ever lived. I drank another glass of beer, wadded some papers lying on the desk, and began missiling them into the corner. I didn’t see him go anywhere, but after firing everything I had, decided to go take a look.

Cockroachus Gorillum was still there. He hadn’t moved at all. Not only that, he was flexing his wings, as if there were simply nothing better to do. He looked bored. “OK, that does it,” I said. I stepped back and glared at him. I was pissed. He was easily 4 inches long, but I thought that I could take him.

I crept into the bathroom and grabbed a towel. Next, I made it to the desk and grabbed my lighter. Weapons in hand, I jumped up on the bed and hit the wall hard with the towel. A bit to my surprise, the beast came forward, toward the bed. He was definitely not afraid. With the music of Led Zeppelin blasting from a nearby nightclub, I set my phaser to kill (adjusted the flame on my lighter to maximum).

Pouncing down from the bed, I smacked the towel on the floor where he had been a second earlier, a 3-inch flame shooting

from my lighter. I began jabbing him with the flame. Nothing. He would jump out of the way, sort of, but he wasn’t going anywhere. Surprised this didn’t faze him, I moved back a little. He followed. I went another direction, toward the fan — here he came. The chase was on!

In what might be described as panic, I jumped onto the desk to regroup, which promptly came apart and crashed to the floor in an explosion of wood, glass and beer. OK, Cockroach 1, Kreiger 0. I picked myself up and made it to the bed, bleeding from my elbow.

This guy was something else. The towel turning red with blood, Zeppelin still pounding through the window, I dared to look around. There he was, fooling around in a puddle of beer — unharmed and apparently having a pretty good time tonight. This was too much. He had taken over. Looking back at my dripping blood, a single thought came to mind: This is war . . . The Roach from Hell is going down.

I tied the towel around my wound and stood on the bed. Now moving to a piece of pineapple I had brought home for dinner, Pit Bull Roach was paying no attention to me at all. No problem, I thought, picking up the brick-hard pillow from my bed.

Probably risking further injury, I sprang at the enemy pillow-first, hoping to knock him senseless. Didn’t work. By the time I made it to the floor he was 6 feet away, laughing loudly in the language of cockroaches.

I sat there looking at him, my options for attack coming to an end. I wasn’t going to capture him bare-handed; he would escape or (briefly) fly away. He was agile enough to evade flying furniture, if I chose to throw it. Fire had proven ineffective. Quicker than I was, I couldn’t strike him with something in my hand. On top of all this, he was smart — smarter than your average bug.

I could picture myself emptying an UZI into the sucker, only to find him playing under my bed sheets afterwards. Short of nuking the New Empire Hotel, which could cause other problems, there seemed no way to win.

To hell with it, I thought. Battling The Roach from Hell had been fun, but I was growing tired of it. I got back to my feet and threw the pillow on the bed. With nothing else going on that night, I walked over and asked if he wanted to go out for a beer.

At the time, it seemed the only thing left to do. ✕



Home, home of the roach.



TRIBES

Factional Violence in South Africa

by Robert MacKenzie

ONE of the most significant misperceptions of the American public regarding the situation in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) concerns "The Blacks."

Nearly always, that term is used to describe South Africa's majority racial group as if it were a homogeneous mass, united in its desire to live under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) and Nelson Mandela. To talk of "The Blacks" in that sense has as little validity as using the term "The Russians" to refer to all the people of the Soviet Union, who actually are Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and scores of other ethnic groups.

Blacks in the RSA, numbering some 26 million, actually belong to nine different tribal groups, each with its own language,

customs, traditions, allegiances and leaders. Are Apaches the same as Seminoles? They probably would say they are not, but both are part of "The Indians" (or Native Americans). Similarly, a Sotho is not the same as a Venda, nor is a Zulu the same as a Xhosa. And, like many of our own native people, African tribes only stopped fighting each other when a dominant white society enforced its own ideas of civilization.

Until a few years ago, order in South Africa's black residential areas was enforced by policemen, and black-on-black killing resulted mainly from criminal activity. Now, as we regularly see on TV, thousands of murders are being committed for other reasons — the networks have even used the long-suppressed term "tribalism" to explain the mounting death

toll. The same networks, however, continue to talk about "The Blacks" as if there were no such thing as tribal difference.

How does one explain this apparent contradiction? People like Bishop Tutu, Ted Kennedy and Nelson Mandela usually assert that the violence is all the fault of the South African government. They say this has nothing to do with the fact that tribes in Africa have been slaughtering each other since long before the advent of white explorers and settlers. Caught in a Catch-22, President De Klerk's government is hysterically charged with "repression of the masses" if it deploys strong forces to curb violence, and with "collusion" or "instigation" if it does not send in the army to stop factional fighting.

A rational explanation can be found if

Crudely armed Zulu Inkatha supporters do mock battle as they march toward "peace rally" where they were addressed by leader Mangosuthu Buthelez, last December. Clashes between ANC members and Zulus had claimed at least 83 lives in the preceding five days. The violence continues unabated. Photo: AP/Wide World

racial issues are put in their proper perspective, and the nature of the current combatants is examined. On one side are members of the ANC, while the other are mostly from the Inkatha Freedom Party. Inkatha members perceive the ANC as being a tribal organization for their enemies of several centuries, the Xhosas. Inkatha, in turn, is a Zulu organization with overlapping political and trade union wings. Already, just by composition of the two groups, there is plenty of scope for conflict.

Exacerbating the tribal rivalry are major political differences. The ANC has long espoused "armed struggle" as the way to achieve dominance, while Inkatha's leader, a traditional chief named Gatsha Buthelezi, is an advocate of negotiation and power-sharing. Therefore, Zulus who are moderate to right-wing confront radical Xhosas, many of whose leaders are also members of the South African Communist Party.

The ANC leaders, to date, have refused to register their organization as a political party, claiming that such a move would legitimize the current government. Instead, they proudly proclaim to be a "Revolutionary Movement." They maintain their own army of some 12,000 to 15,000 trained cadres, and receive training, weapons, base facilities and organizational assistance from communist regimes worldwide. (Our own U.S. State Department is about to give them \$10 million of your taxes to pay for cars, FAX machines, office space and probably entertainment expenses.)

A political party called the United Democratic Front (UDF) is widely regarded as a proxy for the ANC. The ANC/UDF have spent years politicizing urban blacks, deliberately and successfully removing respect for authority and cultural norms from hundreds of thousands of young men and women.

Horrendous practices such as the use of the "necklace" have become commonplace with the enthusiastic, public endorsement of such people as Nelson Mandela's wife, Winnie. Maintaining the family tradition, his daughter Cassie, boastfully describing the new order in RSA's black residential areas, said:

"Life in townships is no longer like it was before. Here collaborators and informers [ANC opponents] live in fear of petrol, either petrol bombs hurled at their home and reducing them to rack and ruin, or petrol dousing their treacherous bodies which are set alight and burned to a charred and despicable mess ... Lucrative it still is to sell out, but it carries the

immediate hazard of having one's flesh and bones being reduced to unidentifiable ashes." (ANC newsletter SECHABA, Nov. '85).

Having created a climate of violence among South African black youth, ANC leaders are now watching the birth of their own Frankenstein. They removed traditional values, allegiances and respect for human life from children, and are now losing their own control over them. Younger members of the ANC no longer obey their former mentors and in recent meetings have even accused Oliver Tambo (leader of the ANC) of being a sell-out. I wonder if Nelson Mandela is someday going to wear the necklace that his wife and daughter have advocated for other South Africans?

More than 4,000 politically inspired murders took place last year alone, spreading from urban to rural areas. At least half of the dead were ANC/UDF supporters, as



Zulu Inkatha supporter burns alive after being beaten, stoned and stabbed by rival African National Congress (ANC) supporters in Soweto last September. ANC youth in background gets in one last lick with club as small boy runs from scene. Photo: AP/Wide World

formerly moderate Zulus, tired of watching a perceived Xhosa takeover, have begun to retaliate. Numbering some eight million, Zulus are by far the largest ethnic group in South Africa. Next largest is the Xhosa tribe, with six million. Then there are approximately five million white people, themselves divided into English- or Afrikaans-speaking groups.

After that are smaller tribes, people of mixed race, and Indian/Pakistani groups. A patently ridiculous argument is sometimes made that urban blacks belong to no tribe at all. Does that mean that urban Hispanics or Asian-Americans have also lost their cultural and ethnic backgrounds? Clearly not. If one-man, one-vote were instituted tomorrow, Zulus would be the new rulers of South Africa, and woe betide the Xhosas.

So far, virtually all political murders have involved either Xhosas or Zulus, although more and more policemen of all races are being gunned down — usually with AK-47s. The AK, by the way, is the

weapon of choice of the ANC, and lately policemen seem to have become the targets of choice. The political situation has the potential for becoming even more explosive. A thug named Chris Hani, who is the commander of the ANC military wing, has lately taken up residence in Transkei, a Xhosa tribal homeland run by another thug in the guise of a military dictator.

Hani is reported to be accompanied by hundreds of his Russian- and Angolan-trained "soldiers" who could use Transkei as a refuge between sorties into RSA. Soweto is only a five-hour drive from Transkei, and Kwa-Zulu only two, through an extremely porous border. The fight for political dominance in South Africa could easily escalate, with strong men dueling for ascendancy, not compromise and cooperation. The grim television images of black bodies strewn in black townships, murdered by other blacks, may well be

with us for a while.

To believe that all blacks in South Africa are united is to ensure that no understanding of present problems will ever be achieved. Most people in South Africa would like to live a peaceful life as fully participating members in a prosperous society. The majority of them still bear a large measure of goodwill toward their fellows. It is the callous manipulation of emotional issues by power-hungry politicians, black or white, Xhosa, Afrikaner, or Boston Irish, that has created today's climate of violence in South Africa.

Until all those politicians start thinking more of their constituents' welfare and less of their own offices, murders will continue. Ethnic and tribal differences are a reality all over the world, and must be recognized before they can be dealt with.

Major Robert MacKenzie is SOF's Contributing Editor for Unconventional Operations. He filed this report from South Africa.

LEADVILLE TO LHASA

CIA Trains Tibetan Freedom Fighters in Colorado's Mining Country

by Steve McNallen

THE tube of cyanide was small — shorter than a child's finger, and only half as thick — but it felt like a .50 caliber cartridge in Bhusang's mouth.

They had been on the run almost from the day they parachuted into eastern Tibet, and for the last eight days had fought a series of running, reeling firefights with pursuing Chinese troops. Like crippled birds dodging the paws of a Himalayan snow leopard, they had been chased across plain and crag and forest. Now, starving and surrounded, they had only two options left: give up, or die. The soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had been calling for their surrender over loudspeakers, but giving up wasn't necessarily a better choice than death.

Only five of the CIA-trained warriors were left. The final battle had been sputtering along since about 0900 that morning. It was now mid-afternoon. Only a short time before they had decided that suicide was their best alternative, even though it was forbidden by their Buddhist belief. At the last moment, their leader would give the signal and each man would crush the deadly vial in his teeth. Until then, they would fight.

Once again, the communist troops came at them through the trees. Weapons cracked, men shouted, smoke fouled the clear mountain air. It was easy for a signal to be missed in such a tumult, especially when a man is on the far flank as Bhusang was — and miss it he did. When darkness

came crashing on him, it was not from cyanide, but from a rifle butt to the back of his head. True, he was alive and his companions were dead, but only time would tell whether poison or prison was to prove more bitter.

Bhusang Survived

Twenty-nine years later, Bhusang sat in his modest room in the northern Indian town of Dharamsala and told me his story. I had heard five similar chronicles — tales of patriots smuggled out through India under great secrecy, flown to America, and trained high in the Colorado Rockies to return and fight for their beloved Tibet. In Bhusang's case, his patriotism cost him two decades of horror and degradation in a Chinese prison.

For the other 500 or so freedom fighters who went through this experience, it meant other things: victories against a powerful enemy, frustration, or death. The drama was to center around an obscure, largely forgotten Army installation in the Rockies named Camp Hale. It was here they learned their trade, and here they met the CIA advisers who were to change their lives. Not many of the volunteers survived the ordeal, but I managed to track some of them down in the foothills of the Himalayas.

In The Beginning

The tales I heard in hotel rooms and humble apartments began in another world

— Tibet before the Chinese invasion of 1949. The natives of this mountainous Shangri-la were a simple folk who had followed the peaceful ways of the Buddha since the 8th century. Their religious fervor was legendary; a quarter of the male population were monks. Most of the rest were farmers or herdsmen.

This is not to imply the Tibetans were passive or lifeless. The nomadic Khampa of eastern Tibet were a tough, barbarian breed worthy of a Conan set. They were a fierce folk known for hard drinking, enthusiastic gambling, and uncompromising independence. Their most treasured possessions were their freedom, their guns and their horses, in approximately that order. Predictably, the Khampa were the tinderbox where sparks of resistance against the tyrants would first be struck.

The weight of Chinese rule wasn't too heavy at first, while the communist giant was consolidating its gains. Eventually, though, obedience to the Maoist line was demanded at the point of a gun. The overlords tried to "reform" the Tibetans by putting them on collective farms and limiting their freedom of worship. To make things worse, they tried to disarm the Khampa (anti-gun politicians take note!). The result was rebellion that stampeded across the eastern provinces like a runaway Khampa pony. Its thundering could be heard as far away as Peking — and Washington.

The rebellious Khampa shot and hacked



their way to spectacular battlefield victories. By early 1955, survivors of regular PLA units were being sent home with their noses cut off. Chieftains with more than 100,000 families behind them were on the warpath. Eastern Tibet was no longer a part of Chinese domain, and these tough, rebellious tribesmen were soon riding to other provinces to spread the rebellion.

With success on this scale, friendly eyes couldn't help but notice that something very significant was happening north of the snow-capped mountains that separated Tibet from India. By 1955 at the latest, the CIA was deeply involved in a plan to raise hell with the communists in their newly acquired Tibetan back yard.

Feeding Discontent

U.S. support began with supply drops in

risky future. One by one the likeliest candidates were selected, recruited and made part of one of the most daring and productive covert operations ever run by the CIA.

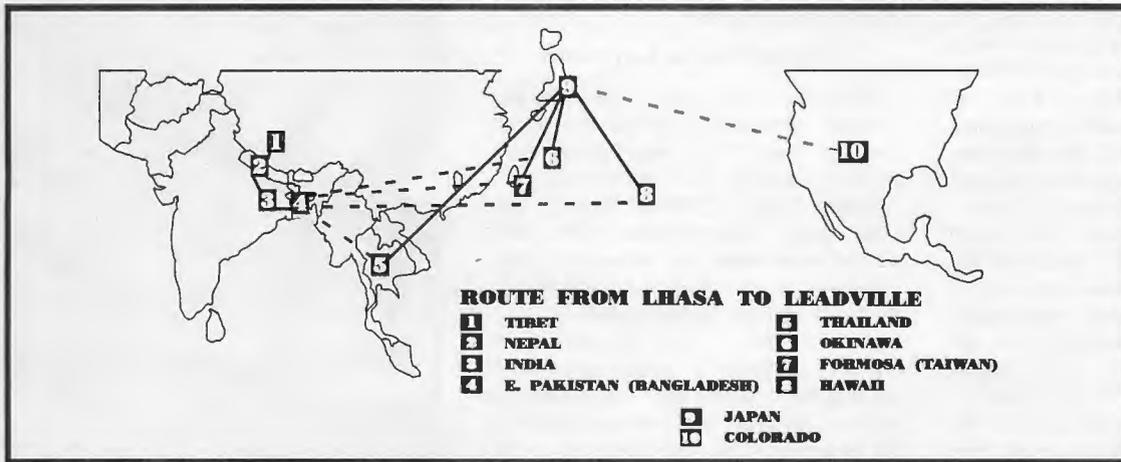
Wangchen was living in a camp set up to house some 500 guerrillas who had sought sanctuary in India. He was getting some schooling while building roads for two rupees a day (about 35 cents at today's rate). For reasons Wangchen still doesn't know, he and three others were chosen by recruiters for the Camp Hale project. They were told only that they had the chance to travel to the West and "further their education." Naturally, he was impressed and eager to take part in something that promised advancement and adventure. The recruits were picked up by members of the resistance and transported to the nearby hill town of Darjeeling by jeep.

and his group contacted friendly police who hustled them into trucks and took them to the train station. The railroad took them to within a short ride of the airport. It wasn't until their arrival there that they were told that their "educational opportunities" would consist of a course in guerrilla warfare, after which they would see combat against the communists. When darkness fell, the covert warriors silently boarded an airplane with masked windows and took off on the first leg of their trip to a new home in the Colorado Rockies.

Over The Sea "Like A Thief"

The flight to the United States is still fresh in the memories of the Tibetans who were flown first to Japan. Bhusang's group spent 10 days there, learning map reading, weapons, and basic mathematics. Other men, on different planes, had routed through Okinawa, Formosa (Taiwan) and Hawaii.

Because of the effective secrecy that kept the Tibetans from knowing very much about what was happening to them, the newcomers had no idea where they were (one recruit had been told they were landing near New York). Since they needed a name for their surroundings, they called it "Tumra,"



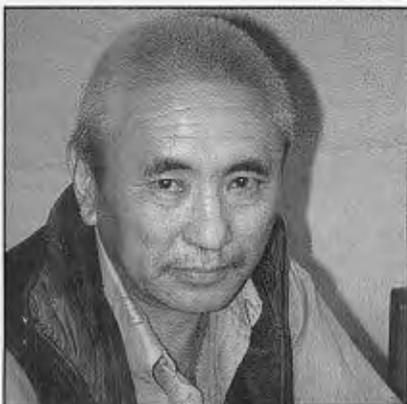
1956, but a crisis point was reached in early 1959. The revolt had stirred the Chinese to massive counteractions. The Dalai Lama, the Tibetans' spiritual and temporal leader, was forced to flee to India to avoid imprisonment.

Pressure on the guerrillas became more intense as the Chinese fought to regain control of insurgent areas, and a mixed bag of refugees fled southward. Some were fighters in the resistance movement. Others were monks, doctors, traders or herdsmen trying to escape the repression and violence in their homeland. Whatever their past, willing Western hands were ready to lead some of them into a new and

Darjeeling was home to agents of every political faction in that part of Asia. Smugglers, spies, and soldiers of fortune jockeyed for a share in the local action. Little went unseen and gossip was plentiful. Utmost discretion was needed to keep prying eyes from noticing that Tibetans were being shipped out of the country for some destination in the West.

Around dusk, Wangchen and about 15 other freedom fighters were driven to Siliguri, near the border of what was then East Pakistan and is now Bangladesh. From there the trek became more arduous as they began a long infiltration by foot across the border into the neighboring nation. He remembers this part of the trip vividly — walking through muddy fields all night, wary of discovery, knowing that capture would result in at least temporary imprisonment and, at best, a return to the life they were leaving behind.

Once safely in East Pakistan, Wangchen



Author interviewed a number of surviving alumni from CIA's guerrilla school in Rocky Mountains. Although events conspired to roll over the Tibetans' fight for freedom, fighters fondly remember the help they got from the Americans. Pictured are (L-R) Wangchen, Bhusang (who spent 20 years in a ChiCom prison), "David," and "Angelo." Photos: Steve McNallen

which is Tibetan for "the garden." Unlike these new occupants, the thousands of GIs who had trained there over the years at least knew they were at Camp Hale, near the little mining town of Leadville, Colorado, high in the Rocky mountains.

While it wasn't exactly the garden spot suggested by the Tibetan name, it did have appealing aspects. Like the legions of elite mountain soldiers and ski troopers who had once trained there, the transplanted Asians found it a place of beauty. The forests were snowy in winter and fragrant in summer, and in springtime the wildflowers added their own kaleidoscope of color to the glistening green pine trees and the striking blue sky. Game was plentiful. On at least one occasion the band of warriors-in-training used their survival skills to stalk and kill deer near the camp.

It was isolated, of course, but they could see a railroad down in the valley and from time to time, skiers appeared in the distance, only to vanish downhill again, unaware that they had skirted a place where history was being made. It was close enough to outsiders that the Army felt it should have a fence around it, but as "Lee" told me, this was readily climbed. Tibetans may be a cooperative bunch, but they can no more resist a chance to break the rules than the rest of us.

A typical training day started with reveille at 0600, with breakfast served immediately after. Clean up, chow down, then often a formation called by the insistent whistle of "Mr. Bruce" (each of the American instructors used a nom de guerre). Then the trainers would pick up their students. Maybe the day would be spent learning demolitions, small arms, or the organization of underground cells — the lesson plans varied as the war against the Chinese changed, and as U.S. policy makers adjusted their priorities to keep pace. Sometimes the training day stopped at 1800 hours, but two or three times a week night operations kept men in the field until much later.

Building Guerrillas

The theme of the training differed from one batch of men to the next. Some, like Wangchen, were schooled in almost everything. Others concentrated on preparing to parachute into denied territory and develop local resistance forces. Lekchey's class was divided in half, one part becoming radio experts, the other learning guerrilla warfare. Radio operators were given the basics of demolitions and small arms training as a matter of course.

Overall, the subject matter was pretty typical fare for guerrillas. "Map reading, hiding things to be found, espionage, martial arts ... everything was taught there," Wangchen remembered as we sat overlooking a broad, cloud-veiled Himalayan valley almost 30 years later.

Survival skills were important — "We were taught how to eat grass to stay alive if necessary," Wangchen recalled. Considering that some of the secret soldiers almost died from eating poison mushrooms, this instruction seems to have been a wise choice. On extended field problems, though, the Tibetans usually carried *tsampa*, their nutritious and compact (though, to Western palates, hardly appealing) staple made from barley. Specialized instruction included Tibetan history, political science, and the mathematics essential to their mission.

Naturally, firearms were a focus of life in "the garden." Men who had shot only primitive muskets or, at best, ancient rifles cast off by the losers of various early 20th century conflicts, were suddenly exposed to the world of modern weaponry.

I interviewed one gray-haired warrior, code named "Angelo," who could remember it all despite the years and the fact they spoke different languages. The M1 Garand was basic, but the Tibetans learned to use a much wider variety of ordnance, including the British Enfield and U.S. Springfield rifles, the Thompson and Sten, the Bren, and the Browning .30 machine gun. Pistols and revolvers got their share of attention, as did 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles. The 60mm and 81mm mortars were included, to give the freedom fighters some indirect fire capability.

Since the original mission concept included parachuting the guerrillas into their home country, airborne training was a requisite. Not surprisingly, the Colorado jump school was neither as complete nor as polished as its counterpart at Fort Benning, but it was adequate for the job.

It doesn't take a lot of fancy simulators to practice falling and rolling, and a suspended harness isn't difficult to rig. Only three jumps were made per student, rather than the five required to win the Army's jump wings. All drops were in the daytime, despite the fact that the mission profiles called for insertion at night.

Jump school was not on every Tibetan's training schedule, and soon it was to be done away with altogether. The reason had nothing to do with strategy, nor with the willingness of men to throw themselves out of perfectly good aircraft — but we shall see that it had everything to do with politics and diplomacy.

The Men With No Last Names

Who were the men who plucked Tibetans from the roof of Asia and trained them in war? They were ghosts with unlikely names of "Mister Zeke," "Mister Tom," "Mister Terry," and "Mr. Tony," among others. While their names were made for anonymity, they earned a sort of soldier's immortality in the hearts of their former students.

"Mister Terry" was an expert on Tibetan history, espionage and intelligence. "Mister Bill" was a guerrilla warfare instructor, and introduced them to the pleasures of blowing things up on the demolitions range. "Mister Roy" also taught them the ways of the guerrilla. Notorious for his reckless driving, he was young and tough and had no hesitation when it came to kicking them in the tail to emphasize a point. After they graduated from Camp Hale, they heard his habits had involved him in a car wreck.

"Mister Tony" became a bit of a legend. Action oriented, short and possessing a gregarious nature, he made an impression wherever he went. Tony was later to win renown on the battlefields of Southeast Asia, where he worked with Air America, wed a Laotian princess, received numerous wounds, and generally did more than his share to keep that region of the world from falling into the hands of the communists.

Once a year, the instructors would put some of the men in civilian clothes and take them sightseeing. "Lee" was a Tibetan more or less permanently stationed at Camp Hale, so he was able to visit a number of cities including Denver, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The Americans rented a car once and took them to the San Francisco Zoo. The Tibetan associates were introduced as "visiting Koreans" if anyone asked who they were.

The warmth the Tibetans felt for their American friends shone through in every interview I conducted. They were seen as



competent, dedicated, sincere men. If there's anyone to blame for Tibet's slave status today, it's not this band of professional cadre.

The details of the operation so far — the cover story of "civilian education" in the United States, the cautious screening of recruits, the careful exfiltrations and emphasis on darkness, the aircraft with windows covered — all these are evidence of a sound program of operational security. The curtain of secrecy had one crack, however, which almost closed down the Tibet project.

Compromise in Colorado

A near disaster occurred when a group of trained Tibetans were being flown back to Asia. Airport employees at Peterson Field near Colorado Springs had noticed a mysterious C-124 and Army guards detained a large group of bystanders, pointed guns at them, and told them it would be a federal offense to speak about what they had seen. Of course, they did and the story was page one in the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. Only an urgent phone call from Secretary of Defense McNamara kept it from getting a larger audience



through *The New York Times*.

Debacles like this were rare exceptions in a program which obviously planned for, and got, a profile well below the visibility of the press and public.

From the perspective of a quarter century later, we can look at the Tibetan project and see an enterprise that featured exceptional operational security, close cooperation and mutual respect between the CIA and its clients, and a professional training program that adapted to serve changes in the mission. It was a textbook example of how a covert operation should be run. So why didn't they win?

One major obstacle arose when a crisis in diplomacy ended aerial resupply and infiltration. When the Soviets shot down Gary Powers' U-2 on 1 May 1960, President Eisenhower forbade all American overflights of communist nations. Sending supplies and cadre to the Tibetan rebels immediately became a lot tougher. Overland insertions meant reduced capabilities, and missions had to adjust to meet the new realities.

Hitting the Chinese

One problem was that of actually

getting at the Chinese and doing them damage. Bhusang, who we met at the beginning of this article, jumped into Tibet and at least had a chance to engage in his mission. In his case the rewards were limited — all they managed to do was harass Chinese troops for a few days while their small band was being pursued and cornered. He and his compatriots caused one hell of a disturbance and sent quite a few Chinese soldiers to wherever good dialectical materialists go, but at the price of prison for himself and death for the rest.

Some men did not get that far. Lekchey controlled a small team sent in to organize resistance and gather intelligence. The plan was for his men to penetrate Tibet, while Lekchey served as the link on the friendly side of the border. Traders were able to cross the border without arousing a lot of suspicion, so team members assumed the role of servants attached to a merchant who was actually an Indian agent. They made it some distance into Tibet, but the authorities got wind of the scheme and friends warned them that their cover had been blown. Fleeing back to India, they reorganized, refitted, and tried getting through another pass. This time

The climate, topography, altitude and remoteness of Camp Hale, largely vacant since its mission in World War II, made it ideally suited as a site for the CIA to train Tibetan freedom fighters. Photo: Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

they developed medical problems and once again turned back. On the way, they were captured by an Indian army patrol which marched them off as prisoners to a local jail. Lekchey learned of their plight a few days later and convinced the authorities to let them go.

Ultimately, Lekchey's team never saw action. It was allowed to languish in the base area for a while, until eventually word came that it was released from service.

The difficulty of eluding Chinese patrols while infiltrating came up more than once as my interviews unfolded. With the air route denied them, chances for successful operations dropped dramatically.

Wangchen was one of those who made it. When the snow melted enough to allow them to hump their rucks over the pass, they were driven within a short distance of the border. After two days in a staging area

the guerrillas were sent across. Over the months to come they killed their share of Chinese, and made the occupation of Tibet a much costlier deal than the invaders had expected.

Small groups of two to five men conducted these operations, slipping into the area of operations to organize cells, train resistance fighters, and radio back information. Some of these warriors stayed in-country indefinitely, while others rotated out after several months.

Heroism alone, though, was not enough to beat the forces they faced. As "David" pointed out, the Cultural Revolution was sweeping China. An already tight society became even more regimented, more locked into the authoritarian system of block spies, political paranoia, and control over people's lives. Combine this with the diplomatically mandated cessation of air drops and the deployment of unlimited Chinese soldiers to patrol passes leading into Tibet, not even the superb training at "the garden" could prevail. It was simply a very poor time to try a guerrilla war against the Chinese.

So away they drifted. Some went to join the CIA effort run out of an obscure pocket of Nepal called Mustang. Others gravitated to jobs with the Indian government or the Dalai Lama's organization in Dharamsala. Lekchey left the service to work with Tibetan refugee school children. Wangchen labored on a potato farm — and Bhusang was just beginning his long term in a communist prison.

In Retrospect

How do they feel about this episode in their lives, after all these years? Are they bitter? Who do they blame for the failure of the program?

They don't blame the United States. American high policy may have helped derail their freedom train, but it's the dedicated and competent CIA men the Tibetans remember. The cold warriors with the funny, phony names saved this country's reputation. Most of

the former soldiers I spoke to didn't know who was at fault. The others, rather realistically, point to the Chinese. "The problem was just too big," as Lekchey put it.

Would they do it again? Was the closing of the Tibet operation really an end — or was it only a forerunner of events that might someday overshadow it?

More than half of those I interviewed asked if journalism wasn't just my cover for setting up an operation like that at "the garden." Not that they have any illusions about what they, as individuals, might do. Lekchey spoke for most of them when he said, "Life is running out for me. I can't do much for the future of Tibet." But they haven't given up, and they're more than willing to advise and encourage a younger generation of freedom fighters.

Like all Tibetans, they revere — practically worship — the



PLA trucks carrying troops and supplies toward front lines in Tibet in 1950. Such convoys were targets for the guerrillas that the CIA trained in the mountains of Colorado. Photo: UPI/Bettmann

Dalai Lama, and place great hopes on his efforts to win justice for Tibet by nonviolent methods. Many felt that things will have to change in Tibet, sooner or later. Does this include the use of violence, so abhorred by Buddhists? Wangchen summed it up by saying, "Nonviolent methods are important, but the pressure of more forceful means is good, too. We have been talking peace for many years, but the situation is still the same." Ultimately, as present-day resistance leader Lhasang Tsering told me over tea, it is the people inside Tibet who must decide whether their freedom will be won by persuasion or by force.

The Chinese comprise a quarter of the world's population, and they have lots of friends. The United States is one of these. American-made choppers lifted Chinese troops into Lhasa a

couple of years back to put down rioting Tibetans, and a recent newspaper article casually revealed that AT&T is selling communications equipment to the Chinese army. While none of this bodes well for the struggle that will someday come, surely time has taught us that victory is not just the product of numbers and technology. The confrontation in Tiananmen Square changed the whole equation, and the spirit born there won't be buried as easily as the bodies of students executed for "subversion" or "counterrevolutionary actions."

Don't rest too easily, tyrants. Wangchen, now in his 50s, told me something I heard more than

once from his fellow Camp Hale alumni, something defiant Chinese students might well echo: "Everyone has to die sometime, and it's better to die doing something important."

The spirit of Camp Hale is alive and well.

An Airborne Ranger who now serves with the California National Guard, Steve McNallen has written for several military publications and papers, including SOF. He is a science and math teacher by profession. ✕



Contemporary photo shows invading Red Chinese forces building a bridge over Tibetan river while other troops move jeep and supplies across on an improvised ferry. Early invaders met little resistance, as Tibet had essentially no ability to fight back — but that was soon to change. Photo: UPI/Bettmann



BEIJING BARGAIN BLASTER

PRC's "Para" SKS Invades America

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



Compact and reliable, the "Para" SKS carbine provides an attractive envelope for the popular 7.62x39mm cartridge.

WHILE literally millions were manufactured, its lifespan as an item of standard issue was brief. Designed by Sergei Gavrilovich Simonov, the Soviet SKS-45 (Ssamosarjadnyi Karabin Simonov — Self-loading Carbine Simonov, 1945) was within a few short years overshadowed by Kalashnikov's AK-47.

The first production series rifle chambered for the 7.62x39mm (M43) cartridge, the SKS is nothing more than a scaled-down version of Simonov's World War II PTRS 14.5mm antitank rifle. Soviet production ceased during the mid-1950s, but the SKS was manufactured well after that time in East Germany, Yugoslavia (M56 with integral grenade launcher), North Korea, North Vietnam and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Known as the Type 56 Carbine in the PRC, it was one of the first Soviet weapons systems produced in mainland China. Their total production

likely exceeded that of all other countries combined.

A new "commercial" version of the SKS is now imported from the PRC by Navy Arms Company (Dept. SOF, 689 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield, NJ 07657; phone 210-945-2500). Called the SKS Type 56 "Para" Carbine, its most salient feature is a barrel shortened from the standard 20.4 inches to 16.5 inches. In addition, the underbarrel cleaning rod and cruciform-type bayonet have been shortened to accommodate the reduced barrel length and a side rail has been riveted to the left side of the receiver to accommodate a scope. All else remains as before.

Designed to provide head-to-head competition for the Ruger Mini Thirty, the "Para" SKS is an appealing envelope for an extraordinarily reliable firearm at an attractive price, as it carries a suggested retail of only \$230.

This configuration was never military-issue. These carbines were assembled and re-built from used, standard-length Type 56 SKS weapons. They were provided

with new barrels, when required, and re-finished by salt bluing (the bolt and its carrier have been left "in the white"). The receiver and bolt carrier serial numbers on SOF's test specimen matched. The bolt did not and the serial number had been ground off the trigger guard. In some regards our test results were surprising, to say the least, and this short rifle deserves consideration by anyone seeking a compact carbine chambered for the 7.62x39mm cartridge. As a consequence, the SKS system itself bears a closer examination.

Semiautomatic only, the SKS is gas-operated and locked by a tilting block. There is no gas regulator. Its bolt mechanism strongly resembles that of the world's first assault rifle, the German WWII MP44/StG45, which was used with great effect against the Soviet hordes on the Eastern front.

Its rather conventional method of operation is as follows. Upon firing and after the bullet passes the gas port, in this instance located only 3 inches from the muzzle, a portion of the gases are diverted and directed against the head of the three-ring piston. The piston drives a short, spring-loaded tappet under the rear sight base back against the bolt carrier.

After the bolt carrier has moved rearward about 1/4-inch, a cam on its inner stop contacts a projection on the top of the bolt, lifting the rear of the bolt out of its seat in the box-shaped receiver. The bolt and its carrier now travel rearward as a unit. The large and more than adequate extractor claw withdraws the empty case from the chamber and holds it to the bolt face until it strikes the fixed ejector and is expelled. All rearward movement ceases when the end of the bolt carrier strikes the inner wall of the receiver.

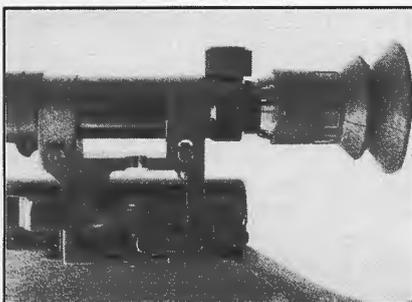
As the recoil spring drives the bolt and carrier forward, the bolt strips a round from the integral 10-round magazine. When the cartridge has been chambered, the extractor snaps in place over the cartridge grooves and all forward move-

ment of the bolt terminates. The bolt carrier continues to move forward a short distance, camming the rear of the bolt into its seat in the receiver. The firing pin is not retracted (and thus is free to fly forward during the counter-recoil stroke) and U.S.-manufactured commercial ammunition with primers more sensitive than MilSpec should be avoided or the weapon may fire out of battery. The bolt, as it seats, forces the trigger mechanism's safety sear down.

The SKS trigger mechanism is overly complex. It consists of a hammer and spring, trigger and trigger bar, recoil spring, disconnecter and safety sear which prevents the hammer from striking the firing pin until the action is completely locked. Trigger pull weight on SOF's test specimen was 7 pounds with a considerable amount of infuriatingly erratic creep. Avoid tampering with the SKS trigger mechanism to reduce the pull weight or more likely than not you'll end up with an unregistered machine gun. SKS trigger jobs should be performed by trained armorers only.

The safety is located conveniently behind the trigger on the right side. When rotated up to the safe position, the safety lever blocks all trigger movement.

Overall length of the "Para" SKS is about 36 1/4 inches, compared to 37 3/4 inches for the Ruger Mini Thirty. The stained and varnished wood buttstock and upper handguard are of the usual PRC "orange crate" quality. A heavy, reinforcing cross bolt passes through the stock just ahead of the magazine, under the chamber.



Type 89 scope mounts on a side-rail riveted to the left side of the "Para" SKS receiver. This 2 3/4 power scope weighs only 5 1/4 ounces and does not block the iron sights, but is mounted too high for a proper cheek weld.

Two smaller cross pins reinforce the front end of the stock. A conventional sling swivel is attached to the underside of the buttstock. The fixed, front sling loop is part of the gas block and is located on the left side. No sling was provided with the test rifle, but they are as common as dirt.

Both the SKS and Kalashnikov series have been much criticized for their supposedly inadequate length of pull (the distance from the buttplate to the front/center of the trigger). Length of pull on our test specimen was 12 3/4 inches. That of the Ruger Mini Thirty is 13 1/2 inches. In the U.S., length of pull on rifles and

shotguns designed for adults varies from 13 to 14 inches. I have a Commonwealth FAL with a 14 1/2-inch length of pull and that is just perfect for me as I have the arms of an orangutan. However, when using the iron sights, I personally encountered no problem obtaining a proper cheek weld with any SKS or Kalashnikov. In my opinion, the importance of a military rifle's length of pull is somewhat overplayed (unless you are quite small in stature, in which case the shorter the length of pull the better).

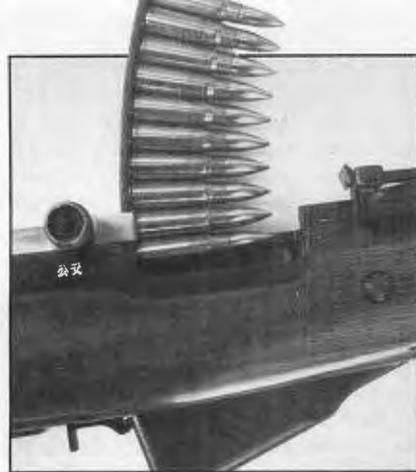
The cleaning rod is stored under the barrel, partially in the stock, in the European manner. The stamped sheet-metal, unchecked buttplate contains a spring-loaded trap which stores the usual SKS/Kalashnikov-type cleaning kit. The two-piece steel case houses a nylon bristle brush, jag tip for the cleaning rod and a drift punch (often mistaken for a spare firing pin). The case itself serves as a handle for the cleaning rod. When slipped on the rod and fitted to the muzzle, the case's cap doubles as a cleaning-rod bore guide.

The front sight is an adjustable (for both windage and elevation zero) post type, protected by a substantial hood. The open U-notched, sliding tangent-type rear sight is adjustable for range in 100-meter increments from 100 to 1,000 meters. A second 300-meter position (marked with the letter "D") directly behind the 100-meter setting is the battle-sight position, used in combat for all ranges out to 300 meters.

Our test specimen was accompanied by a 2 3/4 power military scope and mount. The scope has a large rubber eyecup and the ocular can be adjusted through a range of plus or minus 5 diopters. The adjustment ring turns too easily and was often jarred out of alignment during the test firing sequences. This can be minimized by pressing the eyecup securely against the face. The reticle pattern consists of a standard set of cross hairs which are fairly thick except at the center. The reticles can be adjusted plus or minus 20 inches at 100 meters to obtain zero. The 18mm objective lens has a field of view of 6 degrees and rubber protective cover.

Although it employs a throw-lever locking system, the mount is not of the quick-release type. However, it is sturdy and no zero re-adjustments were required during SOF's test and evaluation. The scope and its mount do not block the rifle's iron sights, but, the tradeoff is that the scope sits so high above the bore's axis that it is not possible to assume a proper cheek weld when acquiring a target optically. Suggested retail for the Type 89 scope and mount is only \$100. Complete with this scope, which weighs 5 1/4 ounces, the "Para" SKS tilts the scales, empty, at approximately 8 1/2 pounds (the Mini Thirty weighs 7.2 pounds, empty, and without a scope).

The SKS is most conveniently loaded by retracting the cocking handle until the



The SKS is most conveniently loaded by means of a 10-round stripper clip, but individual rounds can also be inserted into the magazine.

bolt is locked rearward by the hold-open device and placing a 10-round stripper clip into the charger guide machine into the top forward end of the bolt carrier. Push down with the thumb until all cartridges are loaded into the magazine. After removing the stripper clip, pull back on the retracting handle and release it smartly. The bolt and carrier will fly forward, chambering the first round. Individual rounds can also be loaded. The magazine can be unloaded by pressing the magazine catch. The magazine housing and follower will pivot downward, scattering the cartridges in a 2-foot arc on the ground in front of you.

All SKS barrels feature broached rifling with four grooves and a right hand twist of one turn in 9 1/4 inches. The chamber and bore are chrome-lined. Chrome lining is a common attribute of ComBloc small arms. While it eases maintenance chores, it's not very cost effective in a semiautomatic-only weapon, where overheating is not a serious consideration. And, don't think this precludes maintenance entirely. All ComBloc-produced 7.62x39mm ammunition is corrosive, no matter what the importers might contend in their advertising.

The cruciform-type folding bayonet with chisel tip has been shortened by 3.7 inches. It serves no purpose except to improve the rifle's appearance and infuriate the likes of Sarah Brady and Howard Metzenbaum. For the latter reason alone, I like it, although surely with this menacing device attached, the rifle can serve "no legitimate sporting purpose" in the eyes of the BATF. Those with less sanguine natures can obtain a version without the bayonet for \$10 less that is euphemistically known as the "Cowboy's Companion."

To disassemble the SKS for cleaning, first drop the magazine by pushing the magazine catch/release to the rear and clear the weapon. Then, while pressing down on the receiver cover, rotate the receiver cover retaining pin by its lever to the vertical position and withdraw as far as possible to the right. Remove the receiver

cover and pull the unitized recoil spring and guide rod out of the rear of the bolt carrier. Pull the retracting handle fully to the rear and lift the bolt carrier and bolt out of the receiver. Rotate the gas cylinder catch to the uppermost position and lift the rear of the handguard to remove the gas cylinder and piston. Withdraw the tappet and multiple-strand spring from the rear sight base. Depress the catch behind the trigger guard (with the safety on) and pull the trigger housing group down and out of the stock. Withdraw the magazine assembly from the stock. Separate the stock from the barreled action. No further disassembly is required.

Use Shooter's Choice bore solvent to clean the gas cylinder, piston and the bore and chamber. This should be repeated for several days after firing corrosive ammunition. Use a thin film of All Weather Weapons Lube (Sulfo, Inc., Dept. SOF,

1158 Erie Ave., North Tonawanda, NY 14120; phone 716-695-3585) on the reciprocating components. G96 Gun Treatment (G96/Designtech, Dept. SOF, 707 Commercial Ave., Carlstadt, NJ 07072; phone 201-507-5002) should be applied to all of the metal surfaces except the interior of the gas cylinder and the piston head, which should be left free of any lubrication. Re-assemble in the reverse order. The trigger housing is often difficult to re-install on the SKS and you must press down on both its catch and the housing itself with vigor.

Because millions were produced, by an untold number of arsenals, Chinese SKS carbines present collectors with an almost confusing array of slightly different features. Our test specimen represented a curious mixture of early and late production elements. The gas cylinder was of the late two-piece, sheet-metal type. The re-

ceiver cover's take-down lever was in the late configuration. The bolt body had the lightning cut found on early production series rifles. The trigger guard was of the early, milled type. The receiver, a milled forging (some PRC SKS rifles were manufactured with stamped and riveted sheet-metal receivers) was in the early configuration. There were no arsenal markings of any kind. While certainly not a collector-grade firearm, its performance on the range was nothing short of phenomenal.

PRC match-grade ammunition (head-stamped 141 71) was employed during SOF's test and evaluation of the "Para" SKS. This ammunition has a copper-washed steel case (Berdan-primed) and jacket. The boattail projectile weighs 122 grains, nominal, and has a lead and antimony sleeve with a mild steel core. Nominal diameter of the bullet is .310-inch.

Average velocity of this ammunition, 10 feet from the muzzle, as measured by an Oehler Model 35P Proof Chronograph, was about 2,310 fps (at an ambient temperature of 70 degrees F), with a standard deviation of only 17 fps. This is within 20 fps of the arsenal-specified velocity of 2,330 fps produced when fired through a Kalashnikov, which has a barrel length of about 16.3 inches.

When fired from the bench, using the Type 89 scope, group size was a consistent 1.6 minutes of angle (MOA) at 100 yards. That's truly outstanding for a semiautomatic military rifle and cuts the groups we obtained when the same ammunition was fired in a Mini Thirty (bore diameter: .3085 inch) almost in half. Furthermore, very few Kalashnikovs will shoot under 4 MOA. It would appear that the heavy, rectangular-shaped forged receiver and tilting bolt locking system of the SKS produce far less vibration and torque than the AKM's pinned and riveted sheet-metal receiver and rotary locking system.

Empty cases were usually expelled 3 to 4 feet to the front and right of the carbine. Muzzle blast and the flash signature were approximately those of the AK-47. As a result of its weight — heavy by today's standards — and the intermediate-size cartridge for which it is chambered, perceived recoil, even with its abbreviated barrel length, was inconsequential.

I have fired thousands of rounds through SKS carbines of every make and description and have experienced only one stoppage — a failure to extract from a specimen with a badly corroded chamber. There were no stoppages of any type during our test and evaluation of the "Para" SKS. Failures can be induced in the SKS series only through outrageous neglect.

You can buy two "Para" SKS carbines for the price of one Ruger Mini Thirty and still have enough left over to purchase 500 rounds of ammunition. Compact and reliable, the "Para" SKS should make for several regiments of happy campers. ✕



"Para" SKS with Type 89 scope — field stripped.

"PARA" SKS SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:**7.62x39mm.
- Operation:**Gas — no regulator, locked breech with a tilting bolt, semiautomatic-only.
- Feed mechanism:** ...Integral 10-round, staggered-column magazine, loaded by means of 10-round stripper clip or with individual rounds.
- Barrel:**Four grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 9 1/4 inches, chrome-lined chamber and bore.
- Barrel length:**16 1/2 inches.
- Overall length:**36 1/4 inches.
- Weight, empty:**Approximately 8 1/2 pounds with Type 89 scope and folding bayonet.
- Sights:**Front post adjustable for windage and elevation zero, protected by hood; sliding tangent-type rear sight adjustable for range in 100-meter increments from 100 to 1,000 meters with 300-meter battle-sight setting. Optional 2 3/4 power, side-rail-mounted scope available (see text).
- Finish:**Metal surfaces, except for bolt group and piston, salt blued.
- Furniture:**Stained and varnished wood buttstock and handguard.
- Price:**\$230.
- Manufacturer:**Unknown PRC arsenal.
- Importer:**Navy Arms Company, Dept. SOF, 689 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield, NJ 07657; phone 201-945-2500.
- T&E Summary:**Compact, reliable, accurate and cost-effective; heavy.

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I WAS THERE

Continued from page 16

when we were in a position to torpedo a destroyer, it would find us and go on the offensive.

After an escape, seconds passing like hours, the guy in charge of the scopes, Chief Fukasaku, would finally whisper the words of safety, "Zenshu ongen nashi" — Not a thing to be heard, mates. In the sweat-covered intensity of the game, Fukasaku's words meant nothing less than survival; they meant we weren't a pile of steel on the bottom of the Pacific.

A few days later I was back at Pearl, crawling up to the sunshine. Behind me came the American commander, looking 10 pounds lighter and 10 years older than I remembered him. A reception party of American and Japanese admirals were busy shaking hands and congratulating one another on a successful mission.

An anonymous E-4, I walked off in search of my car. Eyes refusing to adjust to the sun, I tried to think about the trip. Hopefully, my work on the *Takashio* helped cause some confusion for the destroyers. I wasn't on the American side of the mission, but I felt good that I had given all I had.

It was strange working against my American brothers, but I knew that for us on the *Takashio*, the whole point of this thing was to test them to the best of our ability. The better we tested them, the better they would be when the game was not a game, and that was what really mattered.

John and Bogie would understand. Incidentally, the title of this piece translates to, "Fun on a Sub." ✕

FULL AUTO

Continued from page 29

steel-bodied magazine. A 40-round magazine with an aluminum body was discontinued several years ago. When loaded to capacity, the body would bulge and failures to feed were an all-too-frequent occurrence. MCP's 40-round version has a body that is slightly smaller, but constructed of steel. While its double-spring system appears identical to that of the H&K, SOF's test specimen functioned without any stoppages in a selective-fire HK33K.

A 40-round magazine with a steel body is also available for the HK94/MP5 series. Purported to be 20% stronger than the factory 30-round magazine, it actually holds 43 rounds of 9mm Parabellum and can be seated into the magazine-well with this

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amount if the bolt is held rearward in the retracted position. The MP5 should always be reloaded with the bolt forward and you should do so whenever you think you are running low and the tactical environment permits. The bolt should then be racked smartly. If there was a live round in the chamber and it flies out into the sunset, so be it. Your life is worth far more than a single 9mm Parabellum cartridge.

If there is time to do so, quickly remove the magazine and make certain the top round has moved over (i.e., the round previously above it is now in the chamber). With this technique in mind, I recommend loading only 39 rounds into the MCP 40-round magazine to insure positive seating with the bolt in battery. When utilized in this manner, we experienced no stoppages and this still provides you with an additional five two-shot bursts.

Retail price of all three of the MCP magazines is \$59 each, two for \$50 each or three or more at \$45 each (mix or match), delivered and completely covered by a one-year repair or replacement warranty. ✕

TERRORIST "U"

Continued from page 67

of revolt on the Arab world remains largely in the future. Closer to Afghanistan's own borders, it is already very much a part of the present.

The Kashmir Connection

Nowhere is that truer than in Kashmir. The Kashmiri anti-Indian revolt, which erupted into widespread violence in January 1990, has used the Palestinian Intifada and the Afghan jihad as an important ideological inspiration. More importantly, since the early/mid-1980s, hundreds of militants have benefited from training alongside the Afghan mujahideen, particularly in the Khost area.

Jalaluddin Haqqani makes no secret of his stand on the Kashmiri freedom struggle. As he put it in an interview earlier this year, "We have had many Kashmiris here with us and they have gained useful practical experience." The way Haqqani tells it, once his mujahideen have taken care of domestic communists, Delhi can expect to see a few Afghans helping out on the streets of Srinagar.

There is precedent for an Afghan involvement in Kashmir. When Kashmir announced its independence from India in 1948 a *lashkar* (army) of tribal Pathans moved from Afghanistan and Pakistan to aid brother Moslems. Unfortunately for them, the Indians held air superiority and were able to prevail militarily.

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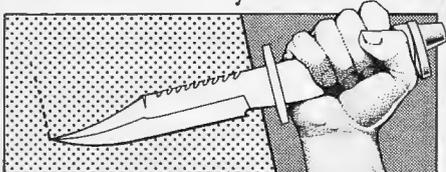
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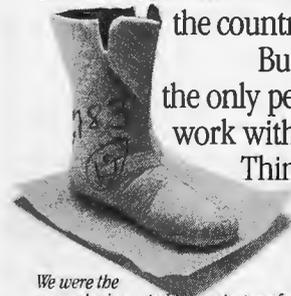
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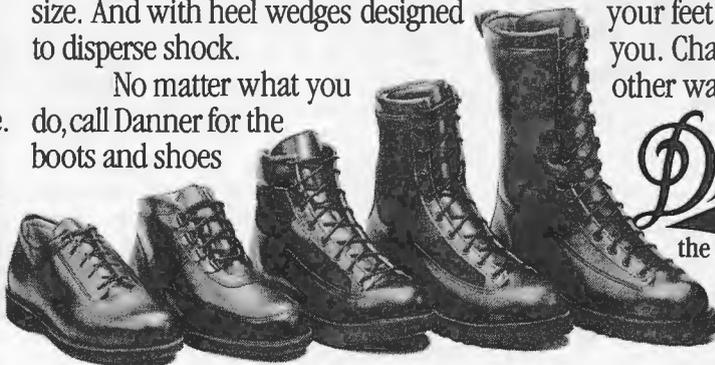
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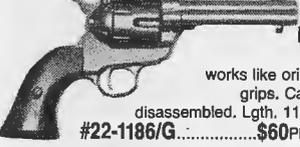
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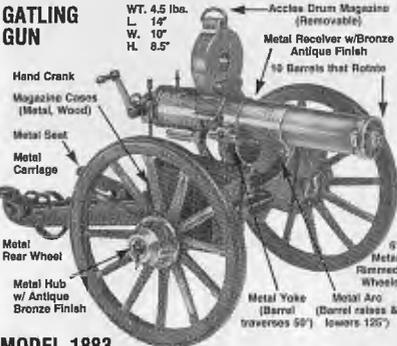
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What is clear is that the Afghan assistance to the Kashmiri struggle has already given an essentially nationalist movement a powerful Islamic overlay. No coincidence is that the fastest growing, best organized and best armed faction now battling it out with Indian forces is the *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* (Party of Mujahideen). Its leader, Ghulam Mohammad Safi, spent one year fighting in the hills and trenches around Khost.

Chinese Jihad

The Afghan school of jihad is also making its impact felt in the Islamic areas of Chinese Central Asia — the sprawling western province that Beijing calls *Xinjiang* or "New Dominion" and the locals — who are not overly excited about dominion status — call Eastern Turkestan.

Moslem *Xinjiang*, like Buddhist Tibet, remains a province inhabited by non-Han Chinese minorities, kept in line by the threat of Han Chinese arms and the pressure of Han Chinese colonial migration. Discriminated against and oppressed by Beijing's cadres for decades, *Xinjiang's* Islamic minorities — Uighur, Kirghiz, Tajik and others are "parched grass" on which the sparks of religious revolt are already beginning to land.

The brief history of Chinese communist rule in the province has been punctuated with "incidents" of local unrest invariably suppressed with massive force. Pakistan, a close friend of China, succeeded in persuading Beijing to improve treatment of Moslems in the 1980s, but many of these gains were eroded in the crackdown following the repression in Tiananmen Square and Tibet in 1989. Only in 1990 did the Islamic underground in the province, aided by Afghan mujahideen contacts, shift the fight onto a province-wide basis.

In April, Chinese security forces moved to preempt an armed revolt in the district of Baren, south of Kashgar. Resistance left at least 22 dead according to official reports. Unofficial estimates put the death toll far higher. Nor did Beijing advertise the fact that at the same time as the Baren clashes, demonstrations and riots took place in at least 10 other cities across the province.

Western intel sources believe that the Afghan assistance to the Moslems of *Xinjiang's* Islamic underground has been significant. As in Kashmir, it has almost certainly involved access to weapons (ironically, often of Chinese manufacture), possibly smuggled across the rugged Karakoram border by Afghans based in Pakistan. If so, this would merely duplicate the strategy adopted by muj radicals in Afghanistan, who for years have been smuggling weapons and literature into the Moslem republics of the Soviet Union. (See "Muj Invade USSR," June '90).

More interesting still, some analysts believe that up to 1,000 Uighur

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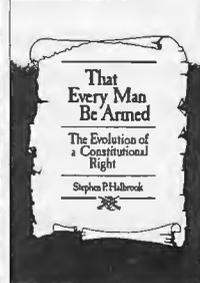
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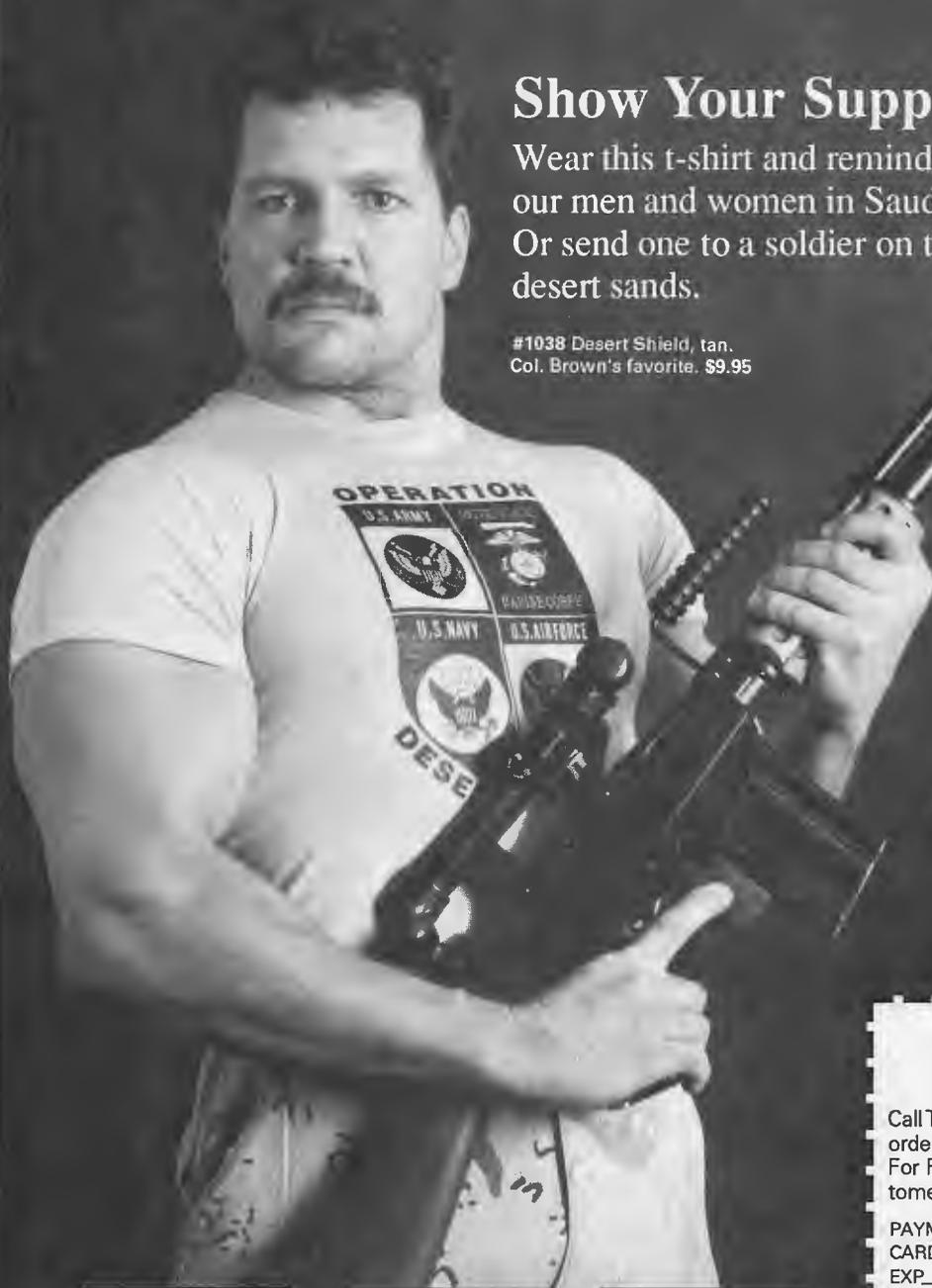
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mujahideen are now operating in the rugged Pakistan-Xinjiang border zone. That, however, remains to be confirmed. The Chinese have sealed the area off with predictable efficiency and the Afghans who would know aren't talking.

What is for sure is that with major Moslem insurgencies aflame in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and an Islamic revival sweeping the turbulent republics of Soviet Central Asia across the border, Beijing can expect plenty more trouble in Xinjiang. The army paper *Jiefangjun Bao* (Liberation Army Daily) all but acknowledged that last June when it called on army units to prepare for fighting in mountainous border zones.

For the moment, Beijing's policy remains one of holding the lid firmly down on a steaming kettle. The laws of physics being what they are, this approach is unlikely to do more than stave off the day when Beijing's communist hard-liners have to confront a far older and suddenly more potent ideology than Marxism-Leninism — the green banner of Islam calling its own to revolt.

Veteran combat journalist Mike Winchester has been covering Afghanistan since the first days of the Soviet invasion. A renowned expert on Afghanistan and the volatile regions along her borders, Winchester is a frequent contributor to SOF.



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Accordingly, we urgently request that all owners of P85 pistols contact us immediately to obtain any further information they may desire, and to arrange for return of their P85 pistols to the factory for modification. Please contact us at:

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This free safety modification applies *only* to pistols rollmarked "P85" on the slide. Pistols which are rollmarked "MKII" will have these modifications as part of their original manufacture, and are not subject to this modification.

We are also taking this opportunity to remind shooters of the most common and basic firearms safety rule:

ALWAYS KEEP THE PISTOL POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION!

This is particularly important when loading, unloading, or decocking any pistol.

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STRANDED IN SUDAN

Continued from page 41

When I again met up with him, the taxi driver charged me even more than before. "What's this?" I demanded. "You told me you would drive me for free!"

"Ah," he grinned. "But you and I, we are friends now. We have a special arrangement because you say I can have the little light, so, for you, I make a special price."

He didn't get the mini-maglite.

I passed most days playing Scrabble with two Eritrean lawyers, each of whom possessed the most incredible vocabulary. How can you compete with people who use words like "Xi"?

"Xi? What the hell is Xi?"

"It is a letter of the Greek alphabet."

"You can't use foreign words."

"But, it is in the dictionary."

Eventually, my transport turned up and I departed for Eritrea. Upon my return, I spent another week at Port Sudan trying, in vain, to get a flight back to Khartoum. One day, I ran into Simon, in town for the day to extend his visa.

"Hello," he greeted me, "I was worried about you. I thought you might be dead by now."

Over a Pepsi, I told Simon about my adventures in Eritrea and he told me about

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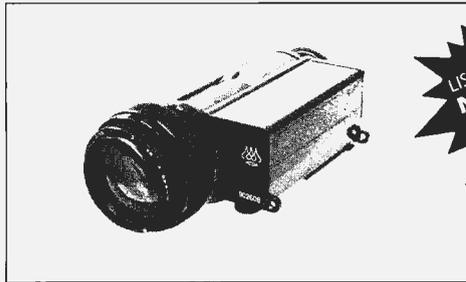
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the problems he faced in the course of erecting windmill-operated water pumps. At one point, he had been trying to convince local tribesmen that the best location for a windmill is not downwind from a huge boulder.

After several days, I was assured by Sudan Air that there would definitely be a flight that afternoon. At 1500 I joined a crowd of disgruntled ticket holders in the sun outside the airport. There were three Italian nuns there whose resigned expressions were indicative of many years spent in Africa. The eldest told me that she had lived in the Sudan for 40 years. Forty years and she was still perfectly sane. The nuns smiled when an airport official informed us that there was to be no flight that day, after all. I tried not to collapse into a sobbing heap.

"Ah well," I said wearily, "maybe tomorrow."

"In sha'allah," smiled the youngest nun, "God willing."

Bus Ride from Hell

But, there was no flight the next day, or the one after. In the end, I was obliged to book a seat on a bus which, I was promised, would get me to Khartoum in 12 hours. On a Sunday afternoon, I and about five dozen Arabs piled aboard an antiquated bus designed to seat four dozen.

The bus depot was situated alongside a railway line and before we got underway, I witnessed the unnerving spectacle of a train smashing into a bus just like ours as it attempted to cross the track.

Nobody seemed unduly alarmed by the incident, so perhaps it was a regular occurrence. That was a frightening thought. I was still debating whether my choice of transport was the right one, when the engine coughed into life and the bus shuddered and rattled its way out of the depot and onto the main Port Sudan-Khartoum road.

Minutes later, we reached a customs checkpoint on the town's outskirts. Everybody had to wait in the blazing sun while a customs officer examined our baggage. One plainclothes man was intrigued by my cameras. He grabbed a Nikon and looked through the viewfinder. A crowd gathered, obviously impressed with their fellow countryman's familiarity with Japanese technology. The officer panned the camera from side to side and up and down before nodding with satisfaction and handing it back, never realizing that the view would have been more interesting if he had removed the lens cap.

At around midnight, a sandstorm reduced visibility to nil, forcing us to pull over and wait until the wind died down. In order not to suffocate, we left the windows open. Of course, this meant there was little difference to sitting outside. Soon, everyone and everything was covered in fine sand.

At 1100 we arrived at the Sudanese equivalent of a truck stop and everybody

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filed off for breakfast. So far, we had been on the road for nearly 20 hours. When we reached Khartoum four hours later, I bade farewell to the men and women who, after getting over their surprise at finding a Westerner in their midst, had treated me with considerable kindness, even sharing their bread and precious fresh oranges with me.

I checked in at the Acropole and the next morning made my way to the Office of Passports, Immigration and Nationality. My visa had now expired. Consequently, I had to pay for an extension, without which I could neither stay in the country nor leave. Sudanese logic again.

As soon as my passport was stamped, I lost no time in finding a flight out of the Sudan. I still had work to do elsewhere in Africa and was now behind schedule. My next port of call was Zimbabwe, a land not without its own idiosyncrasies. But that, as they say, is another story.

Frank Noble is an Australia-based photojournalist. He previously served with Britain's Royal Marines, and has published numerous articles in SOF and other publications.

IRAQ'S ARMS

Continued from page 154

RPG-7V rocket launcher designated the "Al Nasirah"; and a 26mm signal pistol.

Iraq produced the "Arabil" 262mm multiple rocket launcher with rockets that carry 200 grenades, plus assorted howitzers, guns and mortars based on existing designs. In 1987, a West German firm signed a contract for construction of an artillery equipment plant. Iraqi domestic production of armor was limited to APCs.

Ammunition was produced in 5.56x45mm, 7.62x25mm, 7.62x39mm, 7.62x54mmR, 9mm Parabellum, 12.7x108mm, 14.5x114mm, plus rounds for mortars, howitzers and guns in 23, 30, 57, 60, 82, 100, 120, 122, and 130mm. Offensive and defensive grenades were made, as were antipersonnel (AP) and antitank (AT) land mines. Communication equipment of varying types was manufactured under license from Thompson-CFS of France.

Iraqi Missiles

Of particular concern to the international community was Iraq's emphasis on the development of surface-to-surface missiles and long-range "super guns" that could deliver existing chem/bio warheads and projected nuclear weapons far beyond Iraqi borders.

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to reach Tehran, technicians from West Germany, Brazil, Argentina (and possibly Egypt) "stretched" Soviet-supplied Scud missiles by adding a section cut from one to another, then enlarging the fuel tanks by 45 and 85cm respectively.

French intelligence sources indicated the additional weight of approximately 2,500 pounds lowered the payload to 1,300 pounds, but this hybrid missile had a range of 650 kilometers and could reach Tehran. Building one of these required the destruction of three Scuds. But a success, this missile was dubbed the "Hussein." Intelligence estimates gave Iraq several hundred of these by the time the war ended with Iran.

An outgrowth of the "Hussein," the "Abbas," was successfully test flown in 1988. More recently, there have been successful test flights of the co-op Argentinian-Egyptian-Iraqi Condor-2 missile or a derivative, thought to have a potential range of greater than 1,000km. Argentina was prevailed upon to cease its cooperative work on this missile, but all indications are that this came too late.

In addition, late 1988 saw Iraq test an anti-missile missile designated the Fao-1, said to be capable of stopping short- and medium-range surface to surface missiles. Final development/production of this item was thought to still be in embryonic stages when work was halted by allied air strikes.

Aerial Bombs

Iraq had established domestic production of 250 and 500kg bombs, and Cardoen Industries of Chile built Iraq three additional factories for aerial bomb production, capable of producing CB-130, CB-250 and CB-500 cluster bombs.

Naval Production

A \$754 million contract was let in 1985 to Hyundai of South Korea to build a naval repair shipyard.

Poor Man's Nukes

Iraq had no qualms about making widespread use of chemical agents in its war with Iran, or even against its own people in Kurdistan. Factories at Samara and Al Fallujah had the capability in 1988 to produce about four tons a month of sarin nerve gas, and 60 tons a month of yperite mustard gas. During the war with Iran, these reagents were mixed with cyanogen chloride to form a devastating topical, pulmonary and nervous system agent.

A chemwar research center was located at Salman Park, about 40km southwest of Baghdad, which was bombed heavily in early Coalition air strikes. Intelligence sources indicate a biological warfare center existed under the auspices of one of the Iraq's chemwar centers.

...And The Specter of the Real Thing:

In 1975, France made agreements with Iraq to supply a small (800-kilowatt)

nuclear reactor ("Isis") and a 70-megawatt reactor ("Osirak"). In 1979, Paris requested 10-year monitoring rights for this reactor, which were granted. Iraq was a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty, giving the International Atomic Energy Commission rights to on-site inspection.

Iraq, however, refused to give up reprocessing fissionable material — which would have facilitated the production of plutonium — and in addition asked France to deliver some 70kg of enriched uranium. Israel decided it was in danger from Iraq's potential manufacture of nuclear weapons, and in June 1981, destroyed the Osirak reactor with preemptive air strikes.

The precise status of Iraq's nuclear program is unknown, although it is known that the country was in production of uranium, and had long scoured world markets for components suitable for building their own fissionable material production facilities.

"Best guesses" as to when Iraq might have joined the nuclear club vary from "imminent" to five years. In any case, its ruthless willingness to use whatever weapon it had, against any target it chose, was chilling to a semi-civilized world. ☒

PATRIOT GAMES

Continued from page 156

track incoming missiles or enemy aircraft. Once a target is located, Army technicians in a mobile ECS near the radar system decide when and where to fire the Patriot.

After the 17-foot, 4-inch antimissile missile leaves one of four canisters in a box-like mobile launcher, it rapidly accelerates to a speed of more than Mach 3. Once airborne, it sends out a steady stream of radar pulses which are monitored by computers on the ground.

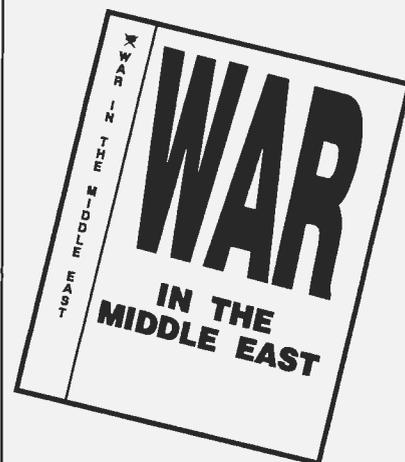
Based on data received from the Patriot, the ECS transmits adjustments in the flight path to the Patriot's on-board computer, which makes the necessary course corrections. This enables it to intercept its target up to 50 miles away.

In 15 test-firings against ballistic missiles since 1986, the Patriot scored 100%, intercepting every target. In the real world of high-tech warfare, however, the antimissile missile failed to knock down a Scud, which exploded in a crowded Tel Aviv neighborhood on the eve of 22 January. At least three people were killed, and more than 70 injured.

Although promising, the Patriot is not foolproof. Like any system, it can be beaten. My colleagues still in Dhahran and Riyadh, however, say they sleep a lot better knowing Patriot batteries are between them and the guys up north.

Ross Simpson is Soldier of Fortune's man in the Middle East, and has filed numerous stories for us over the months. ☒

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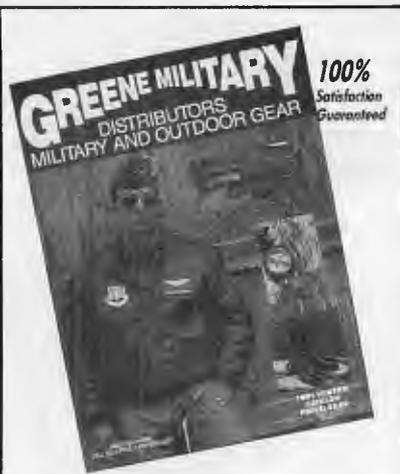
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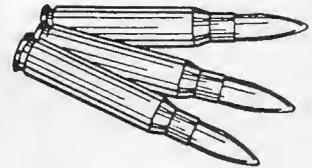
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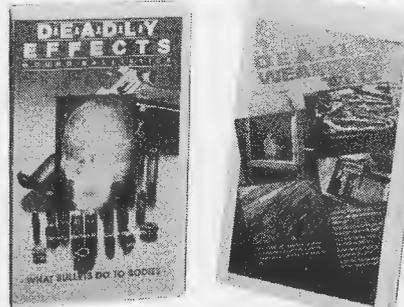
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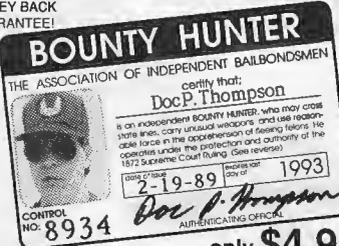
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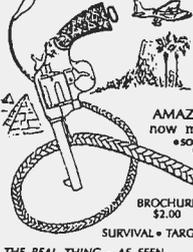


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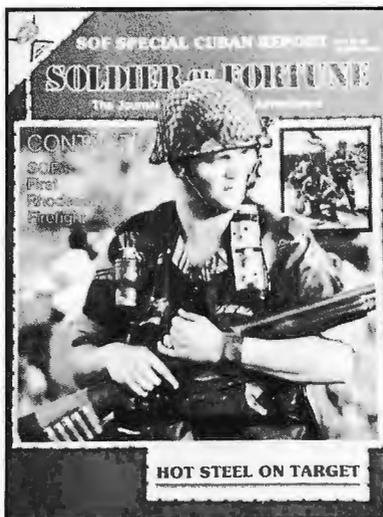
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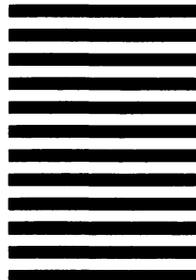
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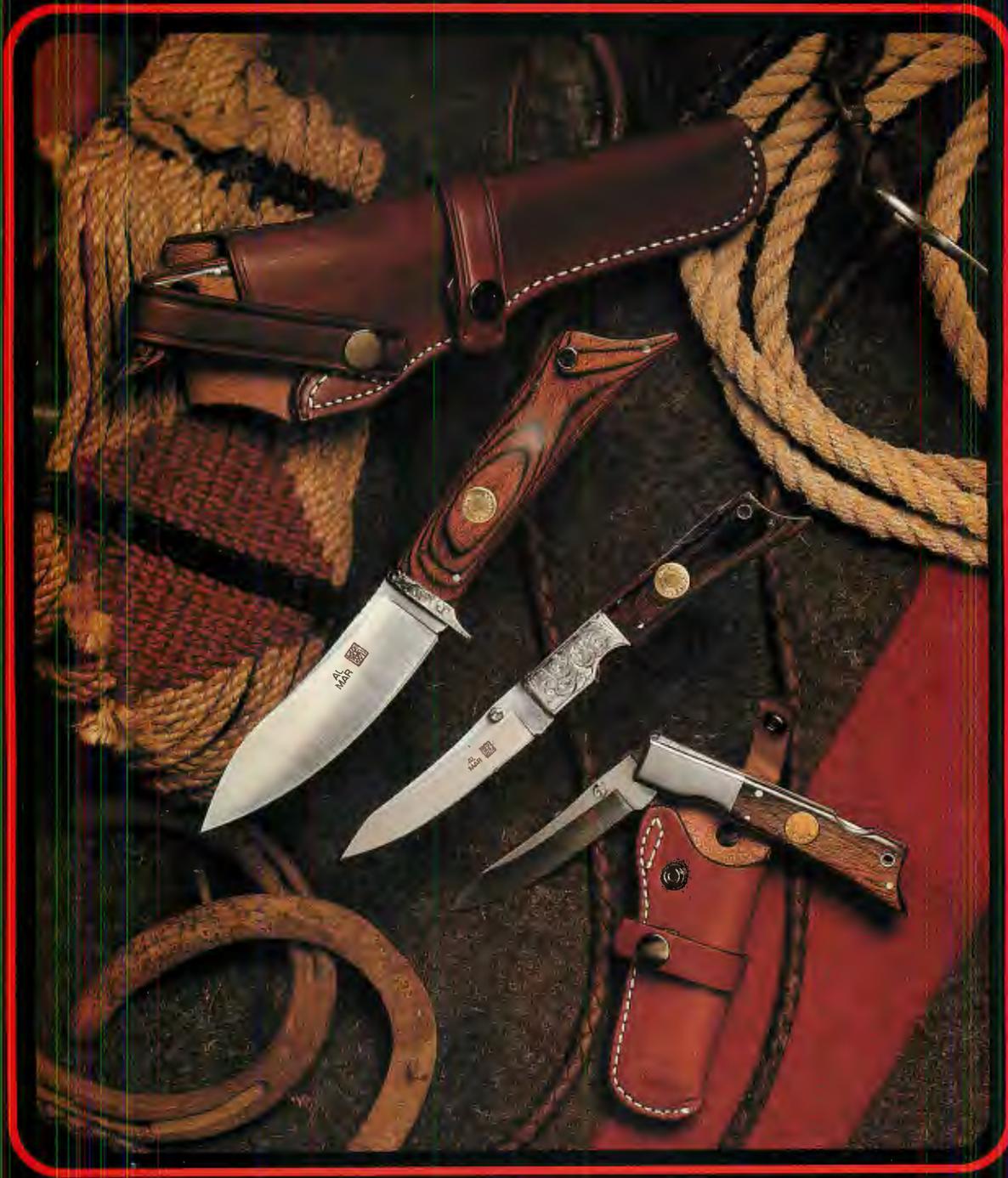
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