



POW RESCUE OPS IN VIETNAM

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

FEBRUARY 1992

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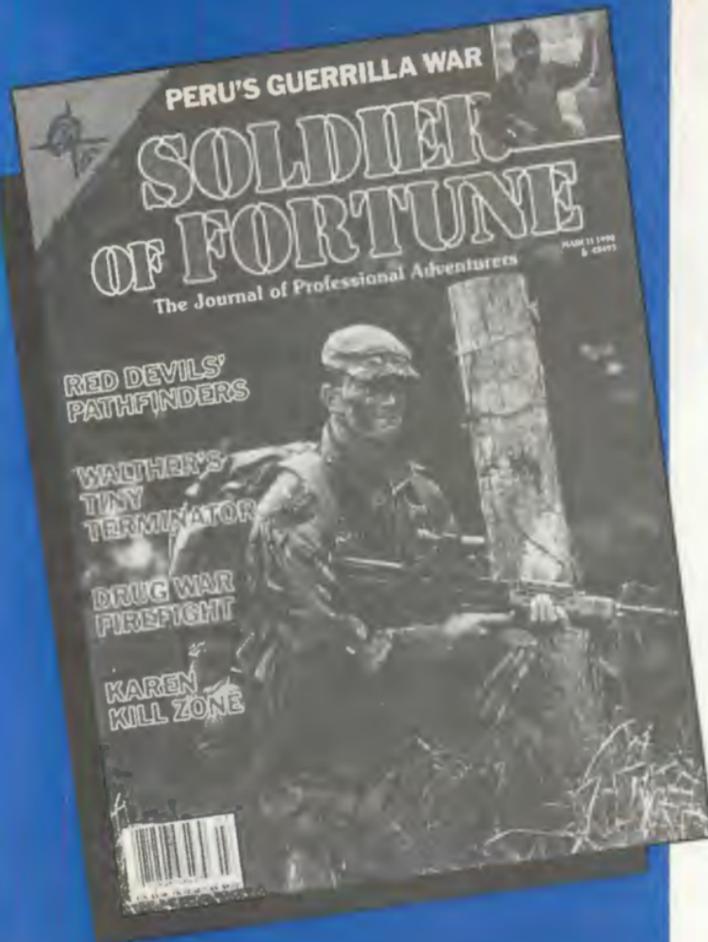
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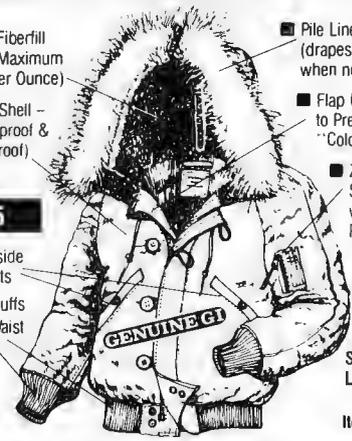
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FEATURES



Animal Terrorists — Page 48

Photo: NRA

BLUE BADGES OF HONOR Greg Walker
American Special Forces advisers in El Salvador saw their share of combat and meet award criteria. Yet, the U.S. Army refuses to grant them Combat Infantryman's Badges. Why? **32**

COMBAT ZONE CROATIA Bob Jordan
When Bob Brown sent an SOF team to Yugoslavia, his instructions were: "Get close, but don't get killed." One week later, as they ran through backyards and alleys of Petrinja, heading for the wreckage of a downed MiG-21, they wondered if they'd gotten *too* close **38**

POSTCARDS FROM THE CONTRAS Glenn Garvin
All wars provide moments of humor — and the contra war in Nicaragua had more bizarre moments than most. Garvin spent most of the war with the contras, covering it for the *Washington Times*. This excerpt from his forthcoming book will amuse and amaze you **42**

Marines — Page 68

Photo: Tom Nevin



EXCLUSIVE: PHOTOS THE PENTAGON DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE Don McLean
The winner of SOF's Desert Storm Photo Contest captured some moments on film that the military would just as soon not publicize. Look and you'll see why **46**

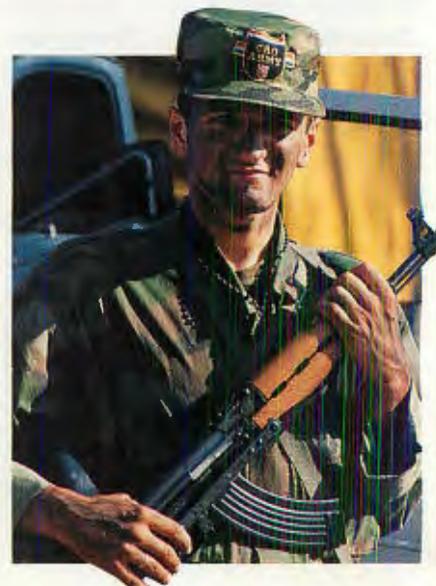
ANIMAL TERRORISTS Galen Geer
Hunters are virtually being held hostage by lunatic animal "rights" groups more concerned with their own agendas than with animal welfare **48**

LET'S GO GET 'EM Chuck Fremont
SOF interviews Fred Caristo, veteran of more than 200 POW recovery operations during the Vietnam war **52**

WE TRIED SO HARD Col. Fred Caristo
We knew they were being starved, tortured and brainwashed — why couldn't we find a way to rescue our POWs being held captive in Vietnam? Learn the true story behind U.S. rescue attempts in Southeast Asia **56**

Croatia — Page 38

Photo: Bob Jordan





El Salvador — Page 32

Photo: Greg Walker

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Croatia — Page 38

Photo: AP/Srdjan

SEALing SADDAM'S FATE Greg Walker
 In the Persian Gulf, U.S. Navy SEALs were finally given a chance to show what they could do — and the results were spectacular **60**

HEAVY FLAK
 Colonel Brown's article on the U.S. military's confusing policy of not issuing live ammunition to troops in the Persian Gulf elicited a huge response from our readers. Here's a selection of their comments **66**

A FEW GOOD SHOTS Maj. Michael J. Stroff III
 Many of the best marksmen in history have been Marines, but Corps training doesn't teach troops how to shoot when someone is firing back. What they need is a "gunfighter school" **68**

NO SHOOTING STAR Peter G. Kokalis
 Spanish-manufactured M-40 Firestar is a curious blend of excellent features and mediocre execution **70**

COVER

COVER: Armed with Yugoslav M84 GPMG, which closely resembles the Soviet PKM and is chambered for the same 100-year-old 7.62x54R cartridge, a Serbian volunteer celebrates the Yugoslavian army's capture of the town of Vukovar. As we go to press Vukovar has officially fallen, but courageous, outnumbered Croatians still report small pockets of resistance, and fighting continues in other towns throughout Croatia. Our coverage of the war starts on page 38. Photo: AP/Srdjan Ilic

BULLETIN BOARD



Staffer Krissie Anderson ... Kicked butt in the women's pugil-stick competition at SOF's Las Vegas convention this past September, and promptly donated her \$100 third-place winnings to the United H'Mong Foundation, shown here with Krissie at convention. If you would like to help H'Mong freedom fighters buy medical supplies, contact Mr. Soua X Her of the Foundation at 209-722-2970; or Box 724, Merced, CA 95341. Photo: United H'Mong Foundation

CALIFORNIA GUN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ...

Initiative petitions for a proposed constitutional amendment in California that would preclude the legislature from enacting any law to restrict gun ownership, or to require registration of firearms or ammunition, are now being circulated.

Signatures of 615,958 registered voters must be collected by 20 March 1992 to place the initiative on the November 1992 statewide ballot. Look for it at your local gun- or sporting-goods store — if they don't have one on the counter, *tell them to get petitions from Bernadine Smith at 209-584-5209; or Senator Don Rogers at 805-395-2927.* This is not a state pre-emption law; it is a constitutional amendment, and the difference is important. This effort needs both petition circulators and funding. Give them a call.

SOF ANNIVERSARY SWEEPSTAKES WINNERS ...

SOF honcho Bob Brown drew the names for our 16th Anniversary Sweepstakes in a ceremony at the SOF offices 15 November. The winners were: **First: John A. Bartnicki** of Brooklyn, New York (trip for two to SOF's Orlando, Florida, convention; includes air fare for two, four nights at the Orlando Marriott and \$500 spending money). **Second: Terry Majors** of Wampum, Pennsylvania (Ruger M77 stainless .243 rifle with scope, and

Ruger model KP85 MkII DC stainless 9mm pistol — retail value \$980). **Third: N. E. Orendain** of Apple Valley, California (BSL-1 Laser Sight by B-Square, including mount — retail value \$500).

PENTAGON KNEW POWs REMAINED IN 1973 ...

According to testimony given to a special Senate investigating committee, as many as 10 American POWs may have been alive in Vietnam when the United States announced in 1973

The Two-Round Zero ... A sharp-eyed reader from South Africa caught some misidentifications in the article *Armor Afrikaans* in the June, 1991, *SOF*: On Page 35 a Buffel (below, single-seat cab) was labeled a Caspir; the Batteleur system is a Valkiri MRL mounted on an armored 6x6 truck, but on Page 34 the photo labeled a Valkiri was actually a truck-mounted Swift AT missile system. Alert L/Cpl Assi Ferrara wrote from Italy to point out that the "Soviet T-55" on the fold-out map in the April issue was actually an Israeli Ti-67 (upgraded T-55). And thanks to Lt. Tom Hanniff, USAR, for noting the APC labeled "BTR-60" on page 31 of the December, 1991, *SOF* is actually an MT-LB. Third place winner in the Desert Storm photo contest was incorrectly credited: Third place winner was Marine Sgt. Dennis Snellgroves. Photo: (and corrections) courtesy J.J. Strauss



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AMBUSH!

Navy SEALs in Deadly Action

The most devastating terror tactic of U.S. Navy SEALs in Vietnam was the ambush. SEALs were experts at delivering themselves silently to ambush sites, setting up kill zones and laying down blankets of fire from which no enemy could escape. Occasional survivors told chilling tales of the "men with green faces" appearing out of nowhere, bringing sudden, violent death. **Ambush!** features all-new, never-before-seen footage from the personal archives of SEAL veterans. This is not a rehash of SEAL history – rather, it is an instructional video on the art of the ambush as told by the men who perfected the tactics. SEAL vets describe what it was like to go out on "wham and scam" operations, the differences between planned vs. hasty ambushes, unconventional methods used only by SEAL teams, the vital importance of the element of surprise and all of the fine details of springing a successful ambush. Filmed with the cooperation of the UDT/SEAL Museum, **Ambush!** is the definitive video on how America's deadliest warriors carried out the deadliest of missions. Color, approx. 60 min., VHS only. **\$29.95**



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FORGOTTEN LEGIONS

Obscure Combat Formations of the Waffen-SS
by Antonio J. Munoz

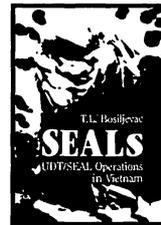
This history of obscure Waffen-SS units has all the elements of a war novel: ambushes, glider assaults, rescues, courage, betrayal. Included are Turkic, Hungarian, Serbian, Czech and Russian formations, as well as never-before-seen photos, diagrams, maps and first-hand accounts from diaries and survivors. 8 1/2 x 11, hardcover, photos, illus., 424 pp. **\$59.95**



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SEALS

UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam
by T.L. Bosiljevac

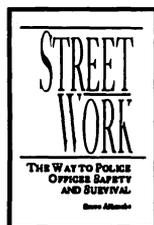
The definitive book on U.S. Navy SEALs' role in Vietnam. Accounts of combat missions reveal incredible acts of skill and valor by SEAL troops under fire. Sixteen pages of rare photos show SEALs in training, on patrol in VC territory and moving up canals in the Mekong Delta. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, hardcover,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



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HANDGUN STOPPING POWER

The Definitive Study
by Evan Marshall and Ed Snow

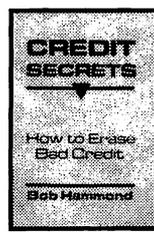
Dramatic first-hand accounts of the results of handgun rounds fired into criminals by cops, storeowners, cabbies and others are the heart and soul of this long-awaited book. This is the definitive methodology for predicting the stopping power of handgun loads, the first to take into account what really happens when a bullet meets a man. 8 1/2 x 11, hardcover, photos, 240 pp. **\$39.95**



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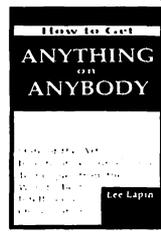
A graphic demonstration of how to exploit the vulnerable vital points of the human anatomy. The instructors – bouncers in some of the most violent bars and roadhouses in the country – focus on strikes that they know from experience will put a man down. Some of the techniques in this video are only appropriate 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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Herbert Humphreys Jr. ... Memphis businessman, has become the first American to receive the *President Ramon Magsaysay Medal of Honor* from the Philippine-American Philanthropical Foundation. Humphreys was recognized for his advisership to the Philippine government and for financial support of medical relief missions to rural islanders. And although we don't have any medals, *SOF* would like to send hearty thanks to Humphreys for his untiring, generous support of the Nicaraguan contras.

that all living Americans had been returned. Garnett Bell, chief of the U.S. POW/MIA office in Hanoi, said "I believe we can say with certainty there were live Americans" held in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia after all American POWs were supposed to have returned home. Sketchy evidence of live Americans started being gathered immediately after the war ended, Bell said.

UNDERAGE VETERANS SOUGHT ...

A national veterans' association is seeking vets who served underage (enlisted less than the age of 17); national reunion slated for next year. Contact Jack Briton, 3444 Walker Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21042; 301-461-9779.

BE A (PICK ONE): AMBASSADOR, CONSUL, PRINCE, DUKE, COUNT, BARON, KNIGHT —CHEAP ...

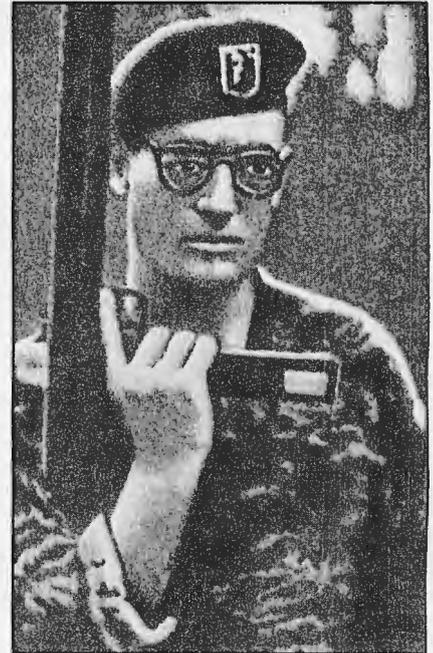
Girls in the bar no longer believe your best "This ain't no shit, there I was on a Phoenix mission at 500 feet in my BUF and the Charlies were stacking up so high in the cockpit I couldn't see out and we were dropping bayonets at treetop when we captured the only Soviet general in Vietnam, but I can't show you my medals because everything was classified" stories?

Well, maybe you should aim higher. *Everybody's* the most-decorated Green Beret commander from Vietnam today — why not be an ambassador? Or a consul? Or *royalty*? Or at least nobility, such as a duke, count, baron or knight. For a nominal fee, say, \$100 made out to "Bulletin Board Editor," we can arrange proper introduction to an outfit who (for a somewhat larger fee) will bestow upon you whatever dispensation or title you require.

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Ambassadorships run about five grand, consulates only \$2,500, but if you want a Recognition of Claims to a Throne (with signed treaty), it'll set you back \$10,000 unless you can settle for Creation of a Grand Dukedom with qualification of Highness or Serene Highness for only \$5,000. If you'd like to step up from "Hey, dummy" to being called "Sir," and can't presently afford a "Your Royal Highness," there are some real bargains available in the Nobility and Chivalrous Order section — being knighted, for instance, will only set you back a thou — or you can be counted or duked for a similar donation.

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Welcome to the Glasnost Zone ... Better than Elvis at Circle K, reader Lars Gyllenhaal found Buddy Holly in a Soviet military book on mercenaries entitled *Black Legions*. The caption on this stolen-and-retouched-beyond-recognition-by-a-ham-handed-red-artist "photo" reads: "R. Brown, professional killer, CIA-agent, publisher of the journal *Soldier of Fortune*." Well, one out of three probably isn't too bad — for them.

registered as a non-profit religious organization in the United States, what you donate is *tax deductible*."

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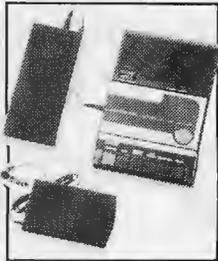
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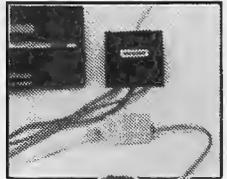
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TRANSMITTER KITS



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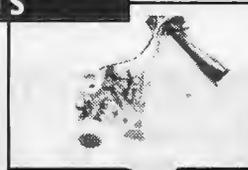
When assembled looks like a standard 110 power outlet but picks up and transmits all sounds in a room (great for security). Tuneable

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*Notice: These kits are to be used ONLY for experimentation, testing and training in Electronic Counter-measures. See warning.

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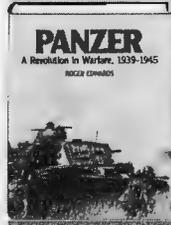
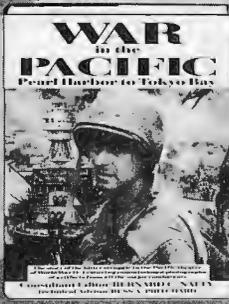
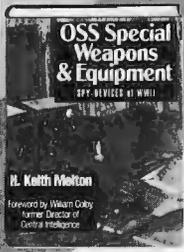
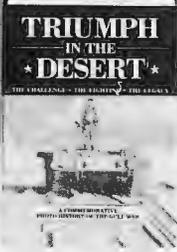
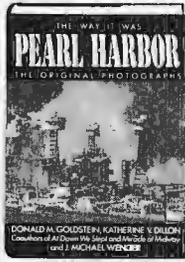
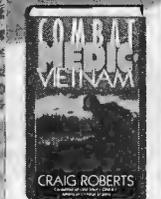
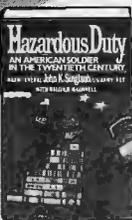
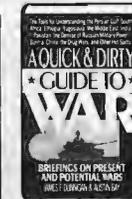
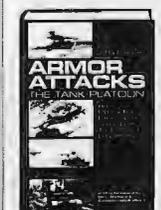
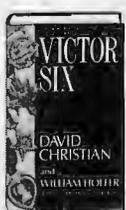
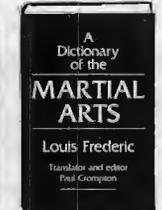
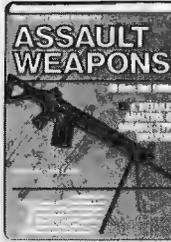
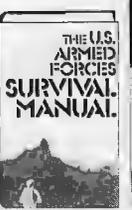
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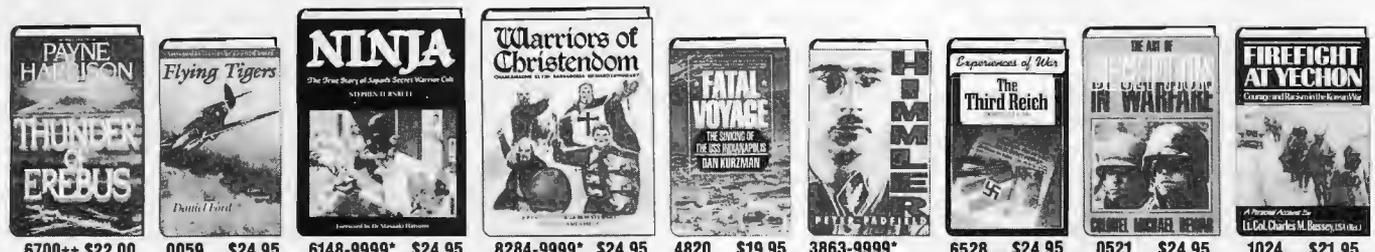
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SOF 2/92

AFTER THE PARADE ...

What happened to the idea of supporting our troops? I don't know about the rest of the troops that have returned from Saudi Arabia, but here in Phoenix, we have received little or no actual support from anyone since our return. If it requires more than getting out of an easy chair or raising the flag, people don't really want to hear about it.

The price of freedom was costly for a lot of us. Many had to give up their private businesses because there was no one else to run them or help keep them going. Also, here in the state of Arizona it takes up to five weeks to draw unemployment after getting out of the military.

Another problem is creditors who are not willing to work with Desert Storm veterans who are having financial difficulties after being discharged from active duty. Usually, if they received letters notifying them of the person's participation in Desert Storm while the person was over there, things are fine. But if they did not receive notice until after the person came home from Saudi Arabia, they are giving the veterans a hard time and in some cases not honoring the Soldier's and Sailor's Civil Relief Act.

If you need help with this, call your local Judge Advocate General office (military lawyers) and they will try to help. Unfortunately, there is little they can do if the creditor does not want to work with them.

Ivan Gere
Tempe, Arizona

A FEW BAD APPLES ...

I just finished the December '91 issue and I read "I Was There" with interest. I am a Vietnamese refugee who was naturalized a few years back. I'd like to think that the Vietnamese communities thriving throughout the United States contribute a little something toward the greatness that is America.

Alas, we have quite a few bad apples, too. These gangsters — youth or Mafia-type — are a disgrace to Vietnamese customs and traditions. I applaud Mr. Bendsten for giving those scoundrels hell. I just hope he and the readers of *SOF* won't hold it against Vietnamese refugees as a whole.

I wish I had been there to show those scum and the rest of their flea-ridden friends what an air assault soldier can do.

Sgt. H.T. Dang
HHC 101st Abn. Div.
Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

Your December '91 "I Was There" talks about four Vietnamese who tried to rob a gun shop. My wife, Nguyet, who is Vietnamese, saw the names of the creeps beneath their pictures. I also speak Vietnamese, and we both think the names were probably Laotian.

Although I despise Asian punks, I hate to see Vietnamese get blamed for more than they actually do.

Raymond Ebbets,
Sylmar, California



FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE ...

Following is the translation of a letter we received from the USSR, accompanied by the photo. The inscription on the back of the medallion says "Love Mom & Dad." Look familiar to anyone?

Good day. While on assignment on a former U.S. Army base (Cam Ranh Bay), I found this silver medallion. Is it possible to find the owner in America?

Pridnia Gennadi
243100 USSR
Brensk Obl.
Klitsi City
1st Corner Skatchkowiedki #23

EDITORIAL FOLLIES ...

I just had a chance to look at my piece you published in November '91, page 45.

While welcoming the publication of my comments, I must object to your insertion of two words into the copy. I did not, and still do not, expect any intervention by the USSR into Yugoslavia's conflict.

My comments, reprinted in the second paragraph, relate only to the JNA [Yugoslavian army] which, as this is being written, continue to operate in the worst traditions of the armies of Stalin and Hitler.

I have no love for the USSR, particularly having worked there twice this year, but this is one conflict where only their past actions can be brought into disrepute.

John Evans
United Kingdom

Our editors screwed up on this one. Sorry, John.

CROATS NEED HELP ...

I am an American of Croatian descent proudly serving as an officer in the U.S. Army. It was heartening to see someone come forward with the truth about the war being waged against Croatia by Serbian Chetniks and the Serbian dominated Yugoslav army, both of which are communist. Your reporting from the field is a tribute to journalistic integrity and fairness, qualities that seem to elude the political agenda of our mass media.

The Croatian people continue to fight back against an enemy that is materially superior in every respect. Although outgunned, Croats have managed to inflict more than a "bloody nose" upon their enemies.

However, Croatia needs all the help people of good will can spare. Without material and financial assistance, the Croatian defenders cannot last forever. Contributions to the defense of Croatia, and requests for information about the war, can be sent to the following address:

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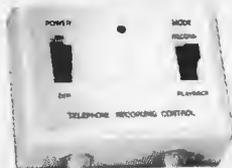


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check for desired sound. The Voice Changing Telephone is an ideal security device for women and children home alone; discourages annoying callers; can be used as a pre-screening tool; or use the extreme ranges of the digital processor

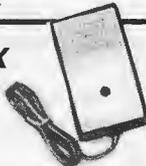
to create funny cartoon voices. Lesser quality hand-held voice changers run over \$300.00. Our price on this quality Telephone Voice Changer \$89.00 (each add'l \$80.00) each.

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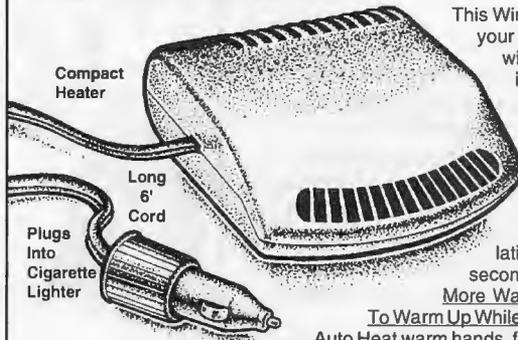
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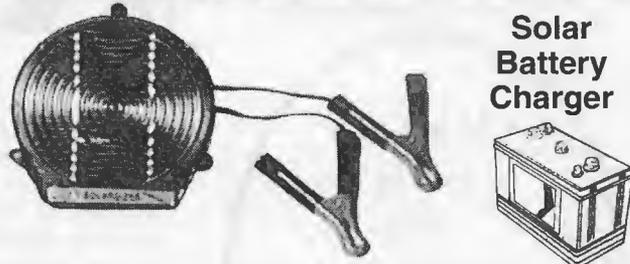


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ATTACK ON GUN OWNERS ...

Mr. Kokalis' piece on the Egyptian AKM points up the whole story of BATF's attack on gun owners and sleazy tactics to ban import of semiautomatic firearms into the country. Every gun owner in America must stand united against BATF and their unconstitutional actions against law-abiding gun owners.

Make no mistake, their goal is total regulation of all gun owners and eventually the banning of privately owned guns.

If my letter is printed in FLAK, do use my name. Tyranny should know that their enemy has a name. In the now famous tradition of John Hancock,

Allison Caldwell
Pembroke, New Hampshire

THANKS
FOR
NO
SUPPORT



REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
CAMPAIGN MEDAL

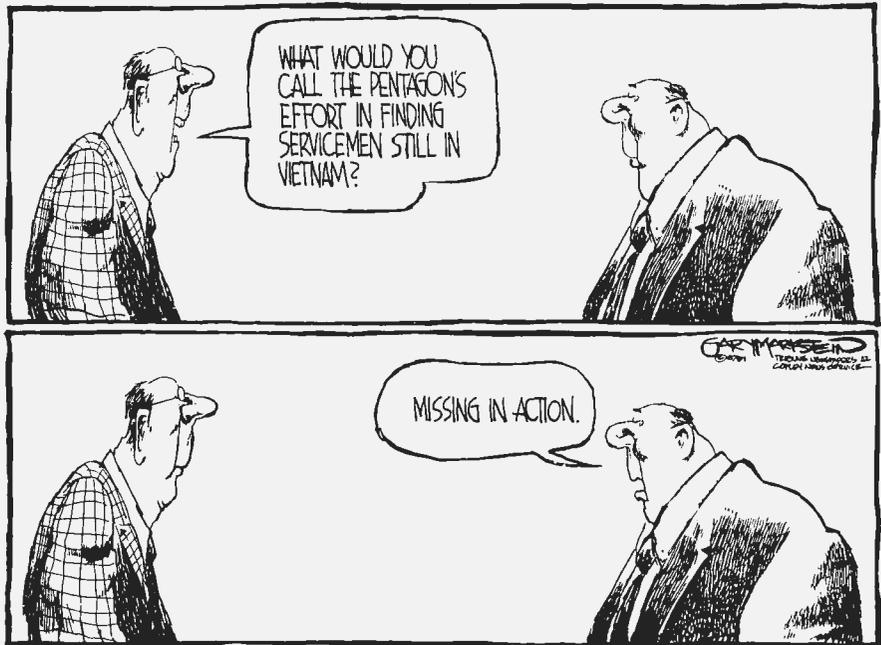
THANKS FOR NO SUPPORT ...

I am very proud of the forces in the Gulf, but I get a little fed up with people making heroes out of those people and saying it's for the Vietnam vet too. I also take exception with Christopher White who wrote in FLAK (November '91) that his four days were worse than a year in Vietnam.

I spent 364 days in the 9th Infantry Division watching my friends get shot and blown up with booby traps, wondering if I was next.

They went and did a job and so did we. They were praised and we were neglected. Nothing will make up for that.

Sam Liming
Keyport, Washington



We agree with your basic observations, but let's be accurate. White stated, "... those four days ... could have been just as lethal as 365 days somewhere else." If you buy the farm, it doesn't matter if you've been in combat 10 days or 10 years.

WEAPONS CACHING ...

It was big of Robert K. Brown and SOF to go the added expense of reproducing the Special Forces caching manual and subsequent information on weapons caching.

They were much more than information on caching. It put the politicians on notice that we are not going to sheepishly submit to their iron curtain bullshit.

I am glad somebody finally had the guts to do it!

Ron Quatermain
Palm Springs, California

Our weapons caching issues proved to be quite popular. We'd like more reader input as we intend to publish a follow-up article; names and addresses not necessary. Caching articles, which appeared in the November and December 1991 issues, can be obtained for \$5 each. Write SOF, Box 693, Boulder CO 80306.

MIA OR VD-POSITIVE? ...

I have an audio tape in my library made about 20 years ago by the late

Pastor Sheldon Emry.

He states he did some research on Vietnam, and there was a venereal disease in Vietnam that was fatal, and any person that got it died within a few weeks or months.

He stated that so many American servicemen were getting it that the government set up compounds in the Philippines, and men diagnosed with this disease were taken to the Philippines, put in these compounds and left there until they died. Their parents were notified that they were missing in action. They were buried in unmarked graves.

Pastor Emry stated that he received this information from a number of medics who served there. The tape mentioned "thousands" who were disposed of in this manner.

Surely a list of those so buried exists somewhere. Has anyone bothered to interview any medics?

W.D. Ferguson
Applegate, Oregon

This sounds like a variation of the "Black Syphilis" rumor that was making the rounds of the latrines and bars when I was in 'Nam. It was allegedly incurable and those infected were supposedly detained in camps till they died. Ho-hum. However, we'd be happy to listen to the tape if you want to send it. ✂

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WORLD SITREP

4 BURMA
Increased fighting near Manerplaw; Karens sank several Burmese resupply boats on Salween River near Mae Sot, Thailand ... stepping up activity on border with Bangladesh, preparing to attack Moslem guerrillas taking refuge there, the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF) and Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO). ARIF and RSO receive support from various militant Islamic groups in the Middle East; Afghan instructors are in evidence along Burma-Bangladesh border; more than 100 Burmese are training near Khost.

2 BOLIVIA
Offered semi-amnesty (no extradition) deal to druggies who turned themselves in; amnesty has now run out.

1 ANGOLA
Will receive \$27 million in UN aid, to be given in form of food and household items to UNITA and government troops who demobilize.

3 BULGARIA
Multiparty elections see communists ("Socialist Party") lose to Union of Democratic Forces.

5 CAMBODIA
Aussie units in blue berets have set up shop as advance guard for huge UN peacekeeping force.

6 CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC
Plans to cancel export of 100 CSFR-made T-72 tanks to Syria; will export no more heavy weapons to Middle East until after peace conference.

7 COLOMBIA
President Gaviria says government to tighten security and administration at prisons that hold Pablo Escobar and other surrendered drug traffickers.

8 CUBA
Speaking at communist party congress, Castro rejected Western-style democracy as "complete garbage," characterized Cuba's system as "most democratic in the world" ... two doctors from Institute of Neurology and Neurosurgery in Havana given 12- and eight-year respective sentences for planning to kill Castro.

10 GUATEMALA
Increasing guerilla activity.

9 GERMANY
Twelve Soviet tanks (former East German stocks) being clandestinely shipped as "farm equipment" to Israel by German intelligence, uncovered by customs officials in Hamburg ... Germany agrees to pay \$300 million to Poles exploited by Nazis as slave labor in WW II (about \$300 each to 1 million survivors) ... Secretary of State James Baker, German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher propose NATO create new North Atlantic Cooperation Council to include former members of Warsaw Pact.

11 HAITI
Coups, chaos; President Aristide in exile in Venezuela; U.S. suspends all economic and military aid ... delegates from Organization of American States greeted by thousands of protesters organized by military regime ... embargo taking its toll.

13 INDIA
Heavily dependent on Soviet weapons systems, Indians are tooling up to produce own spares; hope to find external market for these spares and contracts to refurbish equipment.

12 HUNGARY
Told NATO meeting in Brussels it would like to replace aging MiG-21 jets with Western defensive aircraft, have closer ties with — even membership in — NATO.

14 IRAQ
Saddam Hussein declares Iraq could last 20 years under economic sanctions ... Turkish forces fighting rebel Turkish Kurds entered Iraq on several consecutive days.



29

ZAIRE

Fighting continues. Evacuations continue under protection of multinational forces; rival Zairian governments claiming authority.

28

YUGOSLAVIA

Fighting continues. Belgrade government steps up large-scale attacks on Croatian cities.

27

USSR

Voters in Armenia hold first direct presidential election, tap Levon Ter-Petrosian ... Ukrainian Parliament votes to create own military force ... fire at Chernobyl nuclear plant destroys part of roof, worst incident since meltdown of 1986 ... Chechen-Ingush wants to break away from break-away Russian Republic.

26

UNITED KINGDOM

UK, Italy propose the Western European Union develop its own rapid-reaction force for deployment outside of NATO's territorial boundaries.

25

TOGO

Renegade troops seized state broadcasting center in bungled coup attempt against new pro-democracy government.

24

SAUDI ARABIA

Wants to buy an additional 14 Patriot missile fire units ... all U.S. armor will leave; Pentagon wanted to leave one division's worth of armor and supplies prepositioned, was unable to work out bilateral agreement with Saudis.

23

TURKEY

Has received \$5.6 billion in aid from Germany since 1963; may lose it if they continue cross-border attacks on Kurdish rebels who have fled to Iraq, says Ottfried Hennig, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Defense.

22

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Has developed a prototype ballistic missile able to launch satellites into orbit.

21

PHILIPPINES

Guerrillas declare unilateral truce to celebrate Philippine senate's rejection of new U.S. military-base treaty.

20

PERU

Will receive dozens of U.S. military advisers to help train Peruvians to concurrently fight druggies and Shining Path guerrillas.

19

NIGERIA

Northern city of Kano scene of continuing violence between Christians and Moslems; hundreds have died so far.

18

NICARAGUA

Government has set up commission to confiscate more than 80,000 guns now in civilian hands.

15

ITALY

NATO ministers meeting in Taormina, Sicily, agree to slash their nuclear arsenal in Europe by 80%.

16

KUWAIT

Kuwait, U.S. forces conduct first joint maneuvers since Gulf War, under 10-year bilateral agreement for training, joint exercises. Last oil well fire extinguished.

17

LIBERIA

Summit meeting in Ivory Coast by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) endorsed accord that will give control of all Liberian territory to West African peacekeeping forces (ECOMOG). ECOMOG was in control only of Monrovia. Charles Taylor, whose forces controlled most of Liberia, accepted terms under strong pressure. Once ECOMOG forces control all transport nets, border posts and internal checkpoints, elections will be planned.





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#1500 Edge Axis \$79.95

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COMBAT CRAFT

Text & Photo by Chuck Fremont

Cold Feet Can't Fight

ASK a grunt what he hates most about winter training and "cold feet" will usually be at the top of the list. I'm one of those strange Special Forces types who enjoys winter operations, but the fun meter moves toward zero when my toes start to hurt.

We generate heat as long as we stay alive, but it's easily lost, especially from our feet. There are four main ways our bodies lose heat: conduction, convection, expiration and evaporation.

Conduction happens when you come into contact with a cold object, like grabbing a rifle barrel with your bare hands. Convection is the carrying away of heat from your body, as when a cold wind hits you in the face. Expiration is the loss of heat through breathing — warm, moist air carries out heat from your lungs; this results in core heat loss. And evaporation is the loss of heat due to moisture leaving your body; you notice this more in the summer, but it's still important in winter.

A thin layer of clothing will prevent conduction losses. Army anti-contact gloves, for example, are thin shells designed to prevent skin sticking to metal in subzero weather. For our feet, combat boots work if conduction is the only concern.

Respiration heat loss is unavoidable; you just need to eat extra carbohydrates and drink plenty of liquids (no alcohol; limited caffeine) to keep your metabolic rate up.

Convection heat loss from our body core is prevented by layers of insulation combined with windproof shells. With our feet, insulated boots, oversized boots combined with thick socks (or better, a thin inner sock with a



Special Forces teams use military vapor-barrier boots and traditional leather ski boots for winter operations. Skis and bindings are by Ramer; this system is used by some SF mountain units. M14 rifle is preferred over M16 for cold environments.

thicker outer one) are the usual solutions. But sweat rapidly degrades the effectiveness of socks. Modern synthetic fiber socks wick away moisture, but I don't think they are the entire answer for extreme cold.

There are some tricks for keeping socks dry. Some mountaineers spray their feet with antiperspirant; this is more effective than foot powder.

Vapor-barrier (VB) inner socks keep your outer socks dry for longer stretches, and a VB also prevents heat loss due to evaporation. Bread sacks worn over a light synthetic inner sock will keep your heavy boot socks dry on a cold January day, thus preserving their insulating properties. You can get immersion foot from continuously wearing VB socks, though. Take them off when you have a chance; clean, dry and powder your feet, and wear breathable footwear in garrison. I've used a pair of Patagonia ripstop-nylon VB socks for about five years, and they've held up OK.

Extreme cold means some kind of high performance boots. Choices include insulated leather boots (e.g., Danner "Fort Lewis" boots or Herman

Survivors); rubber-bottomed "pac" boots like Sorels with removable felt liners; modern mukluks like those made by Northern Outfitters; plastic-shelled mountaineering double boots (Koflach makes good ones); insulated overboots or "supergaiters" (e.g., Fabiano's "Trionic" boot and gaiter) or military VB boots (i.e., white "mouse" boots — the black ones aren't warm enough in subzero conditions).

The trouble with "mouse" boots is they are miserable for serious marching, climbing or skiing. If you're walking an easy perimeter they're fine, but plastic-shelled climbing boots are the best bet for hard duty such as rock-and-ice-climbing, ski mountaineering, etc. For the military, plastic boots have an added benefit: They can be reissued by replacing the insulated inner boot.

Plastic boots can get you in trouble if sized wrong. They don't stretch, but feet swell when cold — up to a half-size. If plastic boots are sized too close, you will lose circulation, leading to cold feet, leading to frostbite, leading to no feet if you don't take care of them. Make sure that plastic-shelled boots are correctly sized — not tight; talk this over with a knowledgeable boot fitter.

Right now, the ultimate winter-mountaineering boot system is probably a top-quality plastic double- or triple-boot, sized to allow wear of a VB sock, thin liner sock and thick insulation sock. You can even get supergaiters for these boots.

A good traditional double- (or triple-) leather boot, worn with VB socks, will get you through some extreme conditions. They're expensive, and since they form to your feet they shouldn't be

reissued. But good Fabiano or equivalent leather boots, well cared for, will last a long time.

Military VB boots are great for mechanized work, but you need to get out of them at least once a day so your feet can dry out. Take the hygiene precautions required with VB socks, and invest in a pair of insulated booties with a heavy-duty bottom so you can walk around. Wear these to sleep in if you have trouble with cold feet.

If you have a pair of Sorels or similar pac boots, you need at least two sets of liners you can alternate wearing, so one set can dry out. If you really want

Plastic boots can get you in trouble.

to keep warm, buy pacs large enough to put a good ski-boot liner in. You see this combination on drilling rigs in Wyoming a lot.

What can you do with combat boots? First, make sure they are large enough to wear with your cold weather socks. This probably means a half-size larger than usual; maybe a full size if you plan to wear them with VB socks. Exchange them if they're tight. This goes for the Special Forces "Boots, Ski, Mountain" as well.

Select socks carefully — no cotton; once it gets wet, it stays wet. The inner sock should be a synthetic wicking fabric. I personally don't like polypropylene because it's tough to clean and melts if exposed to flame. For me, DuPont Thermax and similar fabrics work well. Your insulated sock should be densely woven, thick and tough. I'm old-fashioned enough to still wear 100% wool socks — Austrian Dachssteins — but there are some excellent synthetics out there. GI cotton-wool boot socks aren't adequate.

The bottom line is that you can't take chances with your feet. Make sure your footwear will work before deploying for winter ops.

For more information: Fabiano, Koflach and Sorel boots are carried by most high-quality mountaineering shops, as are VB socks. Northern Outfitters (801-224-5342) is a specialty manufacturer in Orem, Utah.

Chuck Fremont is a Special Forces NCO.✕



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**Edited by
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BATTLE BLADES

Text & Photo by Greg Walker

Better Blades From Benchmade

“**T**HREE considerations drive this company. First, quality—the finest of materials, design and workmanship for the end product's price. Second, production time. It's Benchmade's goal to manufacture and deliver knives in a timely fashion to both our clients as well as customers. Lastly, made in the USA. Not put together in America, but made in America! There's a big difference,” states Les DeAsis, CEO of Benchmade Knives.

He leans back in his chair, a smile suddenly creasing his face. “And I'm having fun,” he adds.

DeAsis is the master innovator behind the Bali-Song butterfly knife, one of the most popular folding knives in America. His attention to detail and quality production resulted in Bali-Song blades becoming high-end collectibles, carried and used by knife fanciers the world over. They are still being made today, as both custom and production offerings.

“Bali-Song is part of the DeAsis family heritage,” Les comments. “It'll be handed down to my children once I'm gone.”

Benchmade Knives evolved from DeAsis' former company, Pacific Cutlery. Relying heavily on overseas production, PC experienced internal as well as external problems which soon motivated DeAsis to close his doors. Redrafting a business plan which made U.S. production its centerpiece, Les purchased equipment, hired craftsmen, and left Los Angeles for the leaner, cleaner lifestyle of Oregon. That was two years ago. Today, Benchmade Knives is a flourishing manufacturer with both an in-house line and outside contracts for such noted specialty designers as AMK and Spyderco.

DeAsis specializes in working cutlery, although world-famous custom-knife maker Jody Samson provides Benchmade's collectors with stunning works of edged art. Samson, who studied under the legendary John Nelson Cooper, handcrafts daggers,



Brend Combat Talon is a co-project between DeAsis and combat-knife maker Walter Brend. Flawless execution and attention to detail gives you a \$600 custom knife for \$129.95 (suggested retail) from Benchmade Knives.

swords, battle-axes and combat knives for the discriminating buyer.

Working alongside Samson is Bob Bowden, one of Bali-Song's original hands. Bowden, a bona fide benchmaker, is responsible for detail work and special custom projects. Together, these two men turn out some of the best blade-ware in the industry. At DeAsis' side is Eric Bedoy, his long-time friend and adviser. Bedoy specializes in assembling the custom Bali-Song line, while also handling shipping and other Benchmade administrative matters.

Particularly noteworthy is the Brend Combat Talon, a custom design from Walter Brend, which *Fighting Knives* magazine called “the combat folder of the year” for 1990.

“We worked closely with Walter (Brend) on this project,” DeAsis notes. “You're dealing with a maker's reputation, his livelihood. The knife had to be right, not just close. Brend is known among his peers and clients as perhaps the best combat knife maker in the United States. Our production version of his folder honors that compliment.”

Battle Blades compared a Brend custom design to the Benchmade model and found them of equal quality in design and fabrication. DeAsis has recently begun tempering the liners of the Brend folder, not because he has to but because he feels it makes the knife that much better. Steve Gartin, publisher of *Sporting Blades*, called the Brend from Benchmade one of the smoothest-opening and strongest production folders he'd ever handled.

“It's been a good project for us,” says Les. “The buyer can now get a high-quality Brend design at a sug-

gested retail price of \$129.95. The custom models go for over \$600, which may be out of some folks' reach these days.”

The company also offers its own line of folders. “We make practical pocketknives you can afford,” DeAsis notes. “Swedish steel for the blades, Zytel handles for toughness, Kraton inserts for a sure grip

regardless of working environment. Our locking systems are proven; I want reliability over exotic but perhaps unreliable design. A Benchmade folder is one you'll have around for years.”

But there's another side to this Oregon knife company which is just becoming apparent to the industry. Following the collapse of Western Cutlery in mid-1991, Benchmade became sole contender for those wanting to move some of their overseas production to the United States. With production prices being raised in Japan and delivery dates fluid, specialty cutlery firms/personalities are searching for better rates, higher numbers, faster delivery and long-term stability.

“We're a full-function shop,” DeAsis points out. “I can make folders, fixed blades, custom and mass production product. With our new serration machine, we can offer serrated blades in any pattern wanted. We can injection-mold handles or provide grips from Micarta, stag, or hard and exotic woods. My design base is computerized, so there are no blueprints necessary or unworkable patterns which waste time and money.”

Today, Benchmade sees itself accomplishing what its founder envisioned while still in Los Angeles. “The easiest thing in the world to do is buy equipment and tell everyone you're going to make knives,” DeAsis says. “But doing it — and I mean doing it well, consistently — is a whole different story. You look at my hands and you see dirt, cuts, abrasions. I'm on the floor making knives, not just talking about them.”

Continued on page 74

TAC Nine For TAC Teams

FULL AUTO

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



SOF fitted TAC NINE sound suppressor to H&K MP5 A3 for test and evaluation. Unit meets or exceeds all RAM-D (Reliability, Availability, Maintainability-Durability) criteria, and is ideal for many special-operations assignments.

COMplete silence is not necessarily golden. To the layman the total drop in sound level, as measured by a logarithmic ratio commonly used in the sound industry and called the decibel (dB), is the bottom line in assessing any sound suppressor, or "silencer" as they are known by fiction writers. When a civilian purchases a sound suppressor, he generally wants to impress himself and his friends by touting how "quiet" it is. The greater the reduction in sound-pressure level, the better.

To professional users, such as military SpecOps units and law enforcement Special Reaction Teams (SRTs), other parameters often outweigh the requirement for the absolute-maximum obtainable reduction in sound-pressure level.

For those who must dance through the elaborate and complex choreography involved in the "dynamic entries" of buildings infested with terrorist vermin, the ability to hear voice commands is a primary reason for employment of a sound suppressor. While the exact dance steps involved in a dynamic entry remain justifiably shrouded in secrecy, the stealth of an assassin is not part of the action.

Size, weight, durability, smoke and flash signatures, ease of maintenance, and sometimes special capabilities that have no relevance to the civilian

marketplace, in addition to sound reduction, make up the spectrum of attributes desired in sound suppressors by the nasty boys dressed in Ninja black. The military frequently refers to all of this as RAM-D (Reliability, Availability, Maintainability-Durability).

Once again in the forefront, AWC Systems Technology (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 41938, Phoenix, AZ 85080-1938 —catalog free to Class 3 dealers and legitimate government agencies, \$5 to individuals) has recently developed a caliber 9mm Parabellum sound suppressor for submachine guns only that meets or exceeds the MENS (Mission Essential Need Statement) of the most elite snake eaters.

Called the TAC NINE, this "can" is available in two configurations: 1) using a coupler originally designed by Tim Bixler to mate with the three-lug barrel of the ubiquitous Heckler & Koch MP5 or 2) a threaded mounting for attachment to submachine guns other than the MP5. AWC can thread submachine-gun barrels to match that of current H&K MP5 Navy models with threaded barrels (identical to the muzzle threads found on the new H&K "PDW").

The TAC NINE sound suppressor



H&K MP5 A3 and AWC TAC NINE sound suppressor can be discreetly carried in Eagle Industries' Discreet Case, which also accommodates three spare magazines and other essential equipment in an outside cargo pocket.

provided to SOF for test and evaluation was of the former type, and was attached to an MP5 A3 with retractable buttstock. The coupling collar must be backed off before attaching the unit to the three-lug barrel. Drop the suppressor over the muzzle and three lugs, and then simply turn the suppressor body until it's snug up against the barrel.

Overall length of the MP5 model is 9 inches; that of the threaded variant is 8.75 inches. The weight is 23 ounces. The suppressor body and its interior components are manufactured from non-magnetic 304 stainless steel; the MP5 coupler from 17-4PH (Precipitation Hardening) steel. Our test specimen was finished with a matte-black polymer coating.

Unlike AWC's sophisticated Warp series suppressors, the TAC NINE does not employ a wet environment. Maintenance consists of no more than occasional flushing with solvent or hot soapy water.

What is its life span? That depends upon a number of factors, such as the type of ammunition employed, the length of the burst groups and the time intervals between bursts. When deployed by experienced operators, the TAC NINE should last through approximately three MP5 barrel changes. MP5 barrels normally survive many tens of thousands of rounds. When was the last time you had to change your MP5 barrel?

To meet the requirements of an unidentified user, the TAC NINE was designed to fire with the barrel and suppressor unit filled with water (sounds like something an aquatic, carnivorous mammal of the family Phocidae would want). In case you're of a mind to try this in your backyard swimming pool, be advised that you must open the bolt and chamber the round underwater, as both the barrel and suppressor unit must be completely full of water and free of air. Any air pockets in the system will probably bulge the barrel and may damage the suppressor.

During our test and evaluation of the TAC NINE it was noted that this unit also serves as both an effective muzzle brake and flash suppressor. Due to

Continued on page 28

T-SHIRTS



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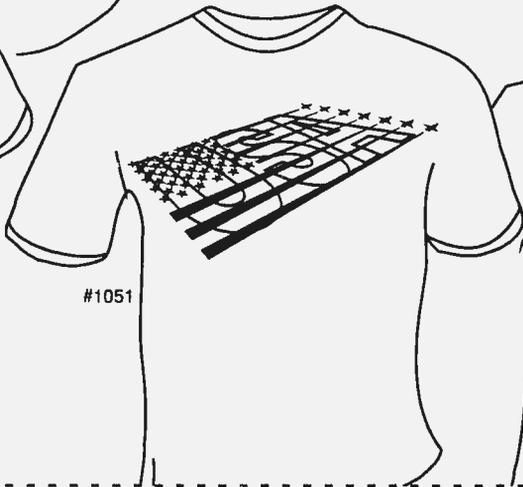
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its added weight on the end of the barrel and its operating characteristics, muzzle jump is noticeably diminished. No flash or sparking was detected when the unit was employed at night. This latter attribute is especially important to SRTs raiding illicit drug labs. The slightest spark from an unburnt propellant granule traveling downrange midst this type of laboratory equipment could initiate an explosion and/or fire.

Unlike the ported-barrel sound-suppression system on the MP5SD, this "snuffer" is a muzzle suppressor, thus the bullet's velocity is not reduced. Hollow-point ammunition, including the popular 147-grain JHP subsonic loads, can be employed without degrading the unit's reliability — which is of the highest order — or the bullet's wound ballistics potential. Attaching the unit to our MP5 resulted in only a negligible shift in the bullet's point of impact downrange.

Another tactical advantage over the MP5SD is that the TAC NINE can be easily removed from the weapon when sound suppression is not part of the op order.

Just how quiet is the TAC NINE? It is the muzzle blast to which all sound suppressors, successful or not, address themselves. They do so by use of a single formula from physics known

as the general gas law. Applicable to all ideal gases, the equation states that pressure equals temperature multiplied by a constant divided by volume.

As muzzle blast is a consequence of relatively high-pressure gases exiting the barrel, reduction of this pressure immediately before exit from an assembly attached to the muzzle, by either increasing the volume or decreasing the temperature (cooling), or both, will reduce the sound. Using U.S. government-approved sound measuring equipment, the TAC NINE suppressor provides a sound-pressure level reduction of 30 dB — exceptional performance for a unit of this compact size and light weight.

Sound levels also diminish as the observer goes further from the sound source. The sound level drops according to the "inverse square law" (i.e., the sound decreases with the square of the distance from the source). A unit that sounds fairly loud within the confines of a small room may not even be heard by an observer when fired from a distance of 25 meters outdoors, and from behind cover and concealment.

Sound suppressors have numerous tactical applications that extend well beyond the sinister stereotypes provided by media jackanapes. If every member of a tactical team is armed with sound-suppressed weaponry,

enemy fire — almost never sound-suppressed — is more easily distinguished, pinpointed and eliminated.

Several government agencies are already equipped with TAC NINE sound suppressors. More can be expected to jump on board shortly, as it is the finest special-operations submachine-gun suppressor available.

When you must be discreet, even when armed with an MP5 and TAC NINE sound suppressor, then I recommend the Discreet Case, manufactured by Eagle Industries Unlimited Inc. (Dept. SOF, 400 Biltmore Drive, Suite 530, Fenton, MO 63026; phone: 314-343-7547, catalog \$3). Designed for low-profile situations, one model of the Discreet Case even holds a tennis racket on the outside. Made from #1000 denier abrasion-resistant Cordura nylon (with 3/8-inch thick closed-cell foam padding), heavy-duty zippers with dual sliders open to reveal an interior that holds an MP5 A3 with inserted 30-round magazine and three spare magazine pouches. A padded outside cargo pocket will hold the TAC NINE and other equipment. The case is also provided with welded-steel "D" rings and a detachable padded shoulder strap. The price is \$68.95 and cases of this type are available for other weapons systems as well. ✎

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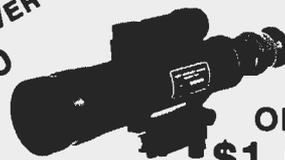
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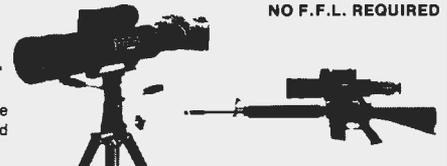
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SOF ran this message in the Washington Times on 6 Nov. 91, the day after the U.S. Senate opened hearings on POW/MIA matters. Robert K. Brown is monitoring the Senate process closely to make sure hearings result in a real investigation rather than another government boondoggle.

THIS TIME, AMERICA MUST BE TOLD THE TRUTH ABOUT ITS POWs AND MIAs

Yesterday, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs opened hearings aimed at getting to the bottom of the POW/MIA issue. These hearings are of vital importance.

America needs to know whether the countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia kept U.S. servicemen hostage long after the war ended. And we need to know if there are any living American POWs being held against their will in Southeast Asia.

We need to know if the government of Vietnam and its puppet regimes in Laos and Cambodia, hungry now for recognition by this country — and the resulting economic development — have coldly and cynically withheld information on American captives from their friends and families.

The Select Committee needs to get full and meaningful answers to the following questions:

Why is Vietnam warehousing the remains of American captives?

U.S. intelligence has known for years of the existence of a Hanoi warehouse containing hundreds of boxed remains — coated with preservatives — of American servicemen.

Why are so many records on POW/MIA cases still classified?

There is no credible national security reason for this, or for those files to be archived by at least four separate federal agencies, with no central authority for investigators to access.

Why has the Pathet Lao government of Laos stalled and derailed investigations of crash sites for years?

At the current rate of investigation, the roughly 200 sites in Laos won't be checked until the 22nd century. In

addition, the Pathet Lao have repeatedly denied U.S. investigators access to two top Laotian officials who have detailed knowledge of Americans captured in that country.

And there are questions the American public has a right to ask of the Senate Select Committee:

What were the criteria for selecting staff investigators? And how many of these individuals have military or intelligence experience in Southeast Asia?

What is the real purpose of the hearings? Is it to finally get to the bottom of the POW/MIA issue, or is it to lay the groundwork for normalizing relations with governments who view human remains as political currency?

The chances are slim that any living POWs will walk out of the jungles and mountains of Indochina. But answers to our questions about our lost brothers in arms are deliberately being kept from us by tyrants who now seek U.S. favors. The families of the missing have a right to know their fates, to bury them if possible or to at least put their memories to rest by learning the truth.

A soldier owes a debt of honor to his fallen comrades not to leave them behind. A nation bears the ultimate responsibility for bringing home her soldiers. That responsibility must not be sacrificed in favor of a politician's dirty deal.

ROBERT K. BROWN
Lieutenant Colonel, USAR, Ret.
Editor/Publisher,
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— The Army Times
24 February 1986

The deserts of Kuwait and Iraq are quieter now, the multinational heroes of Operation Desert Storm

back in their barracks, the tools of war once again relegated to training exercises and endless inspections for cleanliness. If there were ever a war to have gone to, Saddam Hussein's ill-fated invasion of his neighbor was it. One hundred hours of high-tension combat and then ... liberation and victory. In a single charge across the desert the stigma of Vietnam was forever laid to rest, the mistakes during Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury) and Panama (Operation Just Cause) forgotten.

This is not a story about the courage of our troops in the Gulf. Neither is it a tale of the desperate heroics seen during Grenada, or the clock-like execution of Noriega's downfall in Panama. Rather, this is a story about war in a tiny Central American country, where a gallant band of American soldiers have served faithfully since 1979. It is dedicated to those servicemen who have been killed by guerrillas of the *Farabundo Marti Liberacion Nacional*, better known as the FMLN.

Fifteen Green Berets were sent to El

Salvador in 1981. According to the Pentagon, the Special Forces (SF) soldiers were chosen for their “linguistic ability and training expertise.” Deployed from the 3/7th Special Forces Group, then located at Fort Gulick in Panama, the four five-man teams would be sent to three separate training areas which were to be “secured.” Their mission was to train the struggling Salvadoran army in communications, logistics and intelligence.

Timing for this move was critical. Beginning in January 1981, the communist-led FMLN had launched a major offensive against the Salvadoran government, an offensive that signalled the guerrillas' capability to conduct formal military operations against the army. The Reagan administration, having inherited the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua from President Jimmy Carter's bureaucracy, announced its intention not to remain passive where El Salvador was concerned.

Introduction of special advisers brought

OF HONOR

is Due

by Greg Walker



Former SouthCom commander Gen. Paul Gorman (left front) vetoed recommendations that SF advisers be awarded CIBs or combat patches while serving in El Salvador. Photo: Greg Walker

about a wave of liberal protest in the United States. Hadn't the Vietnam war started with the introduction of U.S. military advisers in 1956? Was Reagan going to repeat history, sending Special Forces first, following with the Marines as the war escalated? Political stakes were high. There could be no more Vietnams, no more body bags coming home from a tiny Third World country which the average man on the street gave less than a damn about.

The Double Nickle

One solution was to maintain a limit on U.S. military advisers in-country. In 1979, total U.S. military aid to El Salvador was \$12 million. Some 54-56 advisers were then stationed in El Salvador, providing assistance as directed. When the decision was made to increase aid to the Salvadoran government, the administration and Congress asked how many advisers it would take to get the job done. Not wanting to jeopardize greater funding, the

then-current number of military specialists was given as satisfactory. After that, the ceiling was "etched in stone," according to a former U.S. Military Group (MilGroup) commander.

Military aid to El Salvador jumped to \$80 million in 1982 (fiscal year 1983). This dramatic increase brought about an equally dramatic increase in mission requirements. It was obvious more advisers were required to carry out the new demands, yet the limit of 55 was not raised.

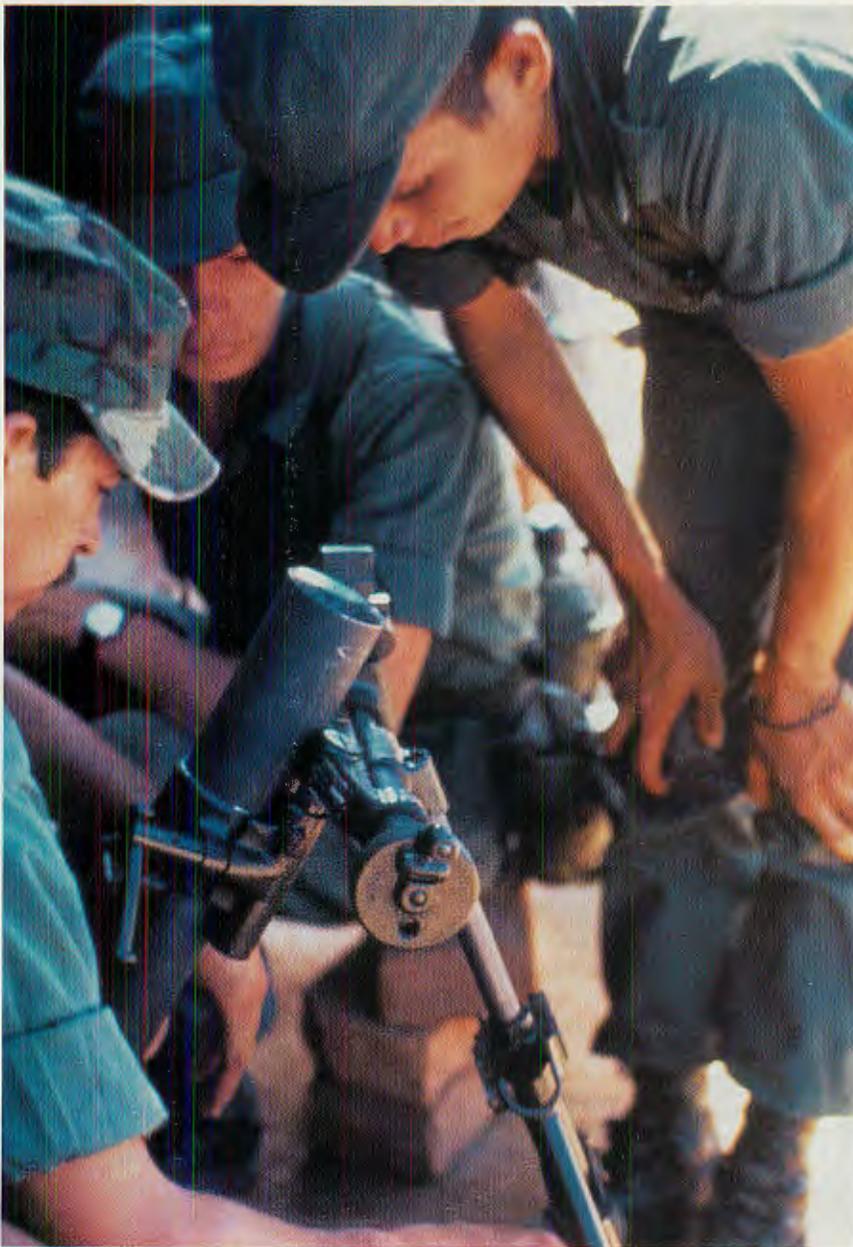
"No one in El Salvador wanted to take a chance of seeing the increased aid challenged in Washington," said another former MilGroup veteran. "It was felt that asking for the ceiling to be lifted on trainers was inviting disaster."

Located at the American Embassy in San Salvador, the MilGroup oversaw operations undertaken by U.S. military advisers. One consideration was how the advisers would be armed. Ordered not to

participate in Salvadoran combat operations, officials at the Pentagon did consent that advisers would be "allowed to use their weapons only if attacked."

The only weapon an adviser could carry was the issue .45 automatic pistol, a move meant to demonstrate the supposed non-combat role of American forces in El Salvador at the time. Confusion about this policy was evident once in-country. A number of MilGroup operators carried gym bags which contained either UZI or MP5 submachine guns. These were permanent MilGroup personnel for the most part. Advisers/trainers coming in from Panama and elsewhere didn't begin being issued such defensive weaponry in quantity until 1984.

The policy backfired. Looking for anything that would embarrass Reagan's Central American policy, the media made it a game to see who they might catch carrying more than Sam Colt's equalizer. They were successful early on, photographing an American officer toting an M16 on a



Training base in La Union depended on mortar teams trained on-site by SF advisers. SF officer (left) explains 60mm's capability to his charges. La Union was later partially overrun by guerrillas, with five U.S. advisers caught up in the fighting. Photo: Greg Walker

training range. The officer was ordered home; the message clear to those staying behind. Carry anything other than a handgun and watch your career go up in smoke. In the meantime, guerrillas were increasing operations, beginning to concentrate their attentions on the American trainers, whose vulnerability and high political profile made them handsome targets.

A War By Any Other Name ...

It is important to understand that the war in El Salvador is just that. It has never been referred to as being anything other than a war, especially in light of the more than 70,000 Salvadoran nationals who have been its victims. The assessment was that the Salvadoran army could defeat the

insurgency if properly trained, led and equipped. This could preclude American ground-combat troops being needed, something not likely to happen given the decision not to commit such troops to Nicaragua, a far greater threat to national interest as far as the administration was concerned.

During 1979-80 it was impossible to gauge the demands that would ultimately be made on U.S. trainers. The artificial ceiling imposed by the U.S. military soon demanded that Salvadoran units be sent to the United States, Honduras and Panama for badly needed military instruction, requiring greater adviser/trainer manpower.

Massive and violent escalation of the war by the FMLN in 1982 sent government forces reeling. Determined to cut the eastern portion of the country off from its capital, guerrilla forces began determined assaults on army bases situated at San Vicente, San Francisco Gotera, San Miguel, Usulután and La Unión. The two

bridges allowing commercial traffic to cross the Rio Limpa became primary targets, with guerrilla raids successfully dropping bridge spans that had to be quickly rebuilt by government forces.

By this time American trainers were operating throughout El Salvador. After several months of in-country training, the first Immediate Reaction (IR) battalion was formed, the Atlacatl. Thrown into battle, the battalion utilized SF-honed combat skills to successfully engage and inflict defeat on the FMLN. Atlacatl's impressive demonstration soon gave birth to additional IRs, such as the Arce, Atonal and Ramon Bellosó.

In March 1983, a Special Forces "A" team graduated the first Salvadoran paratroop battalion, a unit trained entirely in El Salvador. Following the paras came the first long-range reconnaissance company, known as the PRAL. This particular unit would be trained in Panama, then return to El Salvador to be under direct advisement of U.S. counterinsurgency specialists.

By mid-1982, Green Berets had carried out 46 separate Mobile Training Team Missions with the Salvadoran forces. These included counter-guerrilla operations, planning and assistance, small unit tactics, field medical training, patrolling, harbor security, air-field security, communications training, dam security, scuba training, border patrol training and security, arms interdiction surveys, advanced photography, airborne training, and heavy weapons employment. The work load increased in 1983, the war shifting in the government's favor by 1984. Before that shift, though, a major event would change the face of the war in El Salvador for the advisers serving there.

The First American Victim

In early June 1983, Lieutenant Commander Albert Schaufelberger was attacked by FMLN urban guerrillas in downtown San Salvador. Shot several times in the head at close range, Schaufelberger became the first armed American adviser to die at the hands of the FMLN. The assassination was carried out by guerrillas of the Popular Liberation Forces, one of the five guerrilla organizations then under the umbrella command structure of the FMLN. Schaufelberger's assassination was called a "legitimate action of national self-defense" by rebel radio stations, which broadcast the news throughout Central America.

Schaufelberger was a carefully selected target, but he was not the only target. The MilGroup commander himself had recently shaken off two guerrilla surveillance units. After Schaufelberger's death, MilGroup began using chase vehicles, which would deal with suspected urban terrorists as they were spotted. According to MilGroup commander John Waghelstein, this tactic soon solved the problem.

Two important points need to be made here. The first concerns popular speculation that Schaufelberger somehow "asked for it" by appearing in *Life* magazine (March 1983). The article covered both the Army and Navy's Special Forces efforts in El Salvador, with prominent illustrations of both services' personnel. My research reveals for the first time that the FMLN was already pre-targeting U.S. Embassy/MilGroup personalities for assassination. Al Schaufelberger was simply in the wrong place at the right time.

Second, the 1989 assassination of Colonel James "Nick" Rowe in the Philippines shows an interesting parallel to Schaufelberger's murder. Again, the guerrillas (New People's Army) had prepared a MilGroup "hit list." This time, though, chase cars were following those noted in intelligence reports to be on the list. For reasons not yet explained, Col. Rowe's chase vehicle was canceled less than 24 hours prior to his being attacked. The bottom line seems to be that the world's guerrilla organizations have a far better record killing our MilGroup personnel than one would like to believe.

"Up until that afternoon, things were pretty tranquil," recounted a former adviser who was in San Salvador the day of the killing. "I was at the Sheraton when we got the news about Al. The embassy ordered everyone to stay put; they were calling all over the country trying to locate our people. Weapons were coming out of everywhere. I saw one captain pull an MP5 out of his tote bag. On the other hand, at least two Special Forces types were totally unarmed and were asking for anything extra we had available. The 'Gs' missed a major opportunity to take more of us down that night. We were totally confused and centrally located. It would have been an easy hit."

Schaufelberger's tragic death stunned the MilGroup community. The following day saw a careful migration of armed and wary trainers arriving at the heavily beefed-up embassy compound. With as many advisers present as he could safely bring into San Salvador, Waghelstein stated, "The guerrillas have changed the rules of the game." What he was saying was that U.S. advisers were now considered viable targets by the FMLN.

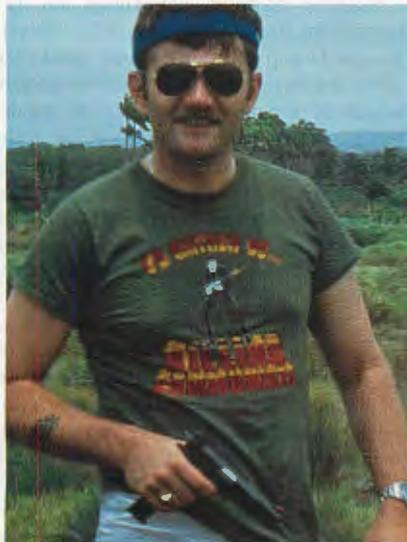
Why more American advisers have not been wounded/killed stems from an apparent policy decision by the FMLN. In a recent interview with Chief Warrant Officer 4 George Weniger, a 30-year SF veteran who served several tours in El Salvador, he revealed the results of an interrogation where a high-level guerrilla commander was interviewed.

According to the rebel officer, the FMLN was frightened that the Reagan/Bush administrations would send in conventional forces, should U.S. advisers be further targeted. Great efforts were made



on the guerrillas' part to avoid intentional combat with adviser elements, although this was an impossible task given the nature of the war. This policy may explain why an SF team was not captured by the FMLN at the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador during the 1989 offensive. Although surrounded by FMLN forces, contact was broken off, even though an easy guerrilla victory could have resulted in at least a valuable hostage/POW situation.

Adviser/trainers in El Salvador were originally restricted to carrying only handguns. Most often seen was issue .45, although Browning Hi-Powers were in-country favorite. Photo: Greg Walker



Armed patrols are common sight throughout El Salvador. Urban guerrillas often attacked targets in city centers, including adviser "safe houses" in San Salvador. Photo: Greg Walker

"Danger Pay"

By 1984, the war was heating up for American trainers in El Salvador. Their Leave Earning Statements (LES) reflected an additional \$65 per month "danger pay," a semantic evolution of the term "combat pay." Trainers were no longer restricted to the old .45 auto; MP5s, UZIs and CAR-15s were being issued by the embassy.

"You weren't supposed to carry the automatic weapons in the open, if it could be helped," recalled one trainer. Another had this to say: "The word games were incredible. Submachine guns and the carbine version of the M16 (CAR-15) were now considered defensive weapons because of barrel length. Full-size rifles were offensive weapons, and since we weren't actively conducting such operations with the Salvadorans, defensive weapons were authorized for carry. It was all for the politicians and press ... our main concern was being able to fight back with more than just our dicks in our hands."

The adviser's concern was real, as in 1984/85 the following combat actions took place:

- In March 1984, a two-man SF communication team assigned to a critical Salvadoran election point came under harassing



fire at the *cuartel* (army base) in Usulután. This same *cuartel* had been earlier overrun by the guerrillas and was considered a prime target by the FMLN. In Honduras, a U.S. Army Ranger platoon was standing by with assigned aircraft support to act as an extraction element, should the Green Berets come under attack.

“We were to get them, or their bodies,” recalled a former Ranger who was there.

- In late May 1984, a contingent of SF personnel monitoring elections at the *cuartel* in El Paraiso came under fire by guerrillas. The same *cuartel* was also earlier overrun, with heavy losses suffered by the army. A C-130 gunship, code-named “Bill Kirk,” was scrambled from its base in Honduras. Using sensitive night-vision equipment, “Bill Kirk” advised the encircled Green Berets of “hot spots” — suspected guerrilla positions.

“We evacuated the radio bunker and manned whatever weapons were available. The guards were new recruits, with maybe two magazines per man of ammunition for their rifles. The embassy was preparing to order U.S.-piloted helicopters from the capital (San Salvador) to extract us. That didn’t happen, but we stayed low until the sun came up,” recounted an operator who was there.

- Outside the *cuartel* in San Vicente, a SF sergeant took command of a small army element which had come into contact

Overseeing rifle marksmanship classes in La Unión, circa 1984. U.S. trainer carries MP5. Advisers would later tote M16s, M79 grenade launchers, and Claymore mines at direction of Col. Joe Stringham, then MilGroup commander. Photo: Doun Rose

with guerrilla forces during a training maneuver. “The Salvo officer was young, and he just froze. I knew we were going to catch it if something wasn’t done.” The Green Beret noncom successfully engaged the enemy in combat, and was later awarded a Joint Meritorious Service Medal for his efforts at San Vicente.

- At the *cuartel* in San Miguel, an “A” team from Bravo Company, 3/7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), was awakened when the base came under intense ground attack by a major guerrilla force. Again, the attack was launched when many of the *cuartel*’s forces were on leave. Manning .30-caliber Browning machine guns that the team’s weapons sergeants had rebuilt after finding them in the *cuartel*’s armory, the Green Berets fought a nightlong battle from atop their barracks.

“The barrels began overheating, but we had prepared #10 cans filled with motor oil to pour over them,” recalled one of the defenders. “When those ran out, we lay on our sides and pissed into the cans, pouring urine over the barrels to keep them up. It stunk like hell, but it worked.”

The next morning, MilGroup commander “Smokin’ Joe” Stringham (who

had replaced Waghelstein) flew out to inspect the battlefield. He recommended the team for Combat Infantry Badges after seeing piles of spent .30-caliber casings and dead guerrillas outside the team’s defensive position. Stringham’s recommendation would be derailed by Southern Command (SouthCom) commander, General Paul Gorman. The team were told such an award would serve as evidence of American trainers engaging in combat, something no one wanted to address.

- A 15-man adviser element in La Unión found itself tasked to establish a regional training base for the Salvadoran military. Deep in “Indian Country,” the trainers were dismayed at the lack of perimeter defenses and competent security forces for the newly ordained project. Within one week they were on alert, as a sizable force of guerrillas were reported to be preparing to storm the *cuartel*.

“We each had an MP5, a .45 and about 100 rounds of ammunition,” noted one trainer. “We were in a ditch all night long, just waiting for the Gs to hit. One-hundred rounds would go through a submachine gun pretty damn fast.”

Later, Smokin’ Joe would declare a zone 25km in circumference around the base to be a “training area.” He would order the composite team to arm themselves with “whatever you can get ahold of ... just stay alive.” Within 24 hours, the trainers were within arm’s reach of Salvadoran-supplied M16s, M79 gre-



Tom Schaufelberger accepts El Salvador's highest decoration on behalf of his slain brother, in a Pentagon ceremony 18 June 1983. The award was presented by Salvadoran Minister of Defense Gen. Vides Casanova. Photo: AP/Wide World

nade launchers, hand grenades and M60 machine guns. The SEAL platoon located several miles away on the Salvadoran coast sent claymore antipersonnel mines and small-arms munitions.

“Our primary concern was to be able to fight from inside the cuartel, if attacked,” said one of the original trainers. “But we had our people out in the bush conducting training both day and night. We went on limited patrols, one during which a suspected guerrilla was captured spying on the base from a tree. During one battalion-size training operation the Salvadorans changed their minds after leaving the cuartel, deciding to turn it into a combat op where the town of Conchagua, which was a confirmed guerrilla R&R center, was encircled and searched. We had trainers in the field for over 24 hours. All we could do was tell them to go with the flow.”

• In 1985, the regional training center at La Union would be attacked by combined FMLN units whose numbers reportedly totaled nearly 1,000 guerrillas. The cuartel was partially overrun, with at least five U.S. trainers caught on the premises. Fortunately, none were killed or wounded and the story was downplayed by the embassy.

Purple Heart But No CIB?

How extensive has the combat been for U.S. military advisers? At least three Purple Hearts are known to have been awarded to SF personnel. The first went to Staff Sergeant Jay Stanley, the second to SSgt. George Reyes. One was posthumously awarded to SSgt. Gregory Fronius, killed during a mortar attack on the cuartel where he was assigned.

A number of carefully worded citations have been issued, many of these stating “While under great terrorist threat ...” — again, the semantics of the war in El Salvador were at their best.

“We were in a combat zone where over 70,000 lives have been lost,” laughed an SF veteran of Central America. “We drew combat pay, we carried weapons, we were in the field and we were caught up in shit happening where, in at least two cases, our

people died. We’ve lost more U.S. personnel since 1985-86. Take for instance the chopper crew executed by the guerrillas when their bird was shot down. Who’s kidding who about El Salvador?”

Why the excessive concern on the part of the State Department and Pentagon not to acknowledge this war as such for U.S. military personnel?

Some members of the “Double Nickle” fraternity are disdainful of official recognition for their actions while serving in El Salvador. “If you’re in SF, it’s part of the package,” offered a senior retired noncom. “We’re supposed to be silent professionals. Sometimes you get credit for shit, sometimes you don’t. I don’t think getting a CIB or combat patch out of that situation should be too high on one’s priority list.”

Many disagree. Both active-duty and former Salvadoran veterans believe such a philosophy belongs primarily to those who earned their combat decorations in earlier conflicts and can therefore afford to disregard what took place in El Salvador. They point out the broad interpretation of the army regulation covering awarding of the Combat Infantryman’s Badge during the Vietnam War. Operations Just Cause and Urgent Fury bring up other observations.

“I’d just come in off a patrol and was



Lt. Cmdr. Albert A. Schaufelberger, at El Salvador’s La Union naval training base, five days before he was assassinated by FMLN guerrillas. Photo: AP/Wide World

having a beer when news of the invasion of Grenada got to us. Three days later, we heard the Rangers were all getting their CIBs. Now, the Rangers earned it and I’ve got no bitch about that. But they gave over 8,000 awards and decorations away for Urgent Fury. By the time Grenada went down, many of us had been humping El Salvador for months. We thought, ‘What’s the big deal ...?’” commented one Double Nickel veteran.

Many advisers/trainers who served with U.S. MilGroup see the problem as one of recognition. Unless they are veterans of Vietnam, Grenada, Panama or the Gulf War, they are unable to join the most popular veterans’ organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Although they are eligible for the Joint Meritorious Service Ribbon (JSMR), this award is not classified by the Defense

Department as a campaign medal. Indeed, in response to a letter sent to VFW Executive Director Larry Rivers, his adjutant general replied the VFW had no control over authorization of campaign medals.

It’s Gotta Be Official

“Additionally,” offered VFW Adjutant General Howard Vander Clute, “it is necessary that entitlement to one of the recognized campaign medals be shown on an applicant’s military separation documents.” Vander Clute apparently overlooked the fact that the JSMR mentioned was awarded only in 1986. It wouldn’t appear on any entitled service member’s DD214 who left the service prior to that date. Retroactively, the award can be annotated in the service member’s official 201 file with proper documentation provided. As Rivers was asked if the VFW would investigate the possibility of having this particular JSMR authorized by the Defense Department as a campaign medal, Mr. Vander Clute’s response was seen as evasive to the original request submitted.

On 5 March 1990, President Bush was sent a letter in which his support to acknowledge a campaign medal for El Salvador was requested. A portion of this letter reads as follows: “We drew danger pay, we fought at several locations, we died at others. We ask only to be recognized as so many others have been and are today.” To date, the president’s office has not elected to respond to this plea.

Finally, on Memorial Day 1991, yet another letter was sent to General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In it, Gen. Powell was asked to review the efforts of those who served honorably in El Salvador. The only thing asked for was that an official campaign medal be authorized by the Defense Department. To date, there has been no response.

The war in El Salvador is just that, a war. The introduction of American special-warfare experts accomplished exactly what was hoped for. Because of their professionalism, dedication, ability and skills, U.S. conventional forces were never required to prevent “another Nicaragua.” Official recognition of these efforts and accomplishments is due.

Iran/Contra is no longer the issue; party politics and State Department concerns carry less weight today than they might have 10 years ago. Former MilGroup commander Col. John Waghelstein said this of the politics involved:

“You have to remember there was a lot of eye-winking going on between the Congress, the State Department and the Oval Office during that period. Everyone knew what was really going on, but no one wanted to just come right out and say it.”

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Photo: AP/Birbaumer

DOGS OF WAR?

News broadcasts worldwide have been full of the story: A tiny group of Croatian patriots fighting bravely against a well-equipped Yugoslav army; the beautiful walled city of Dubrovnik under attack by steely-eyed Serbs. Like the Spanish Civil War, this is the stuff warriors' dreams are made of, and foreign volunteers from around the globe are rallying to the Croatian cause.

Young Brits interviewed recently in London's *Daily Telegraph* described their reasons for being in Yugoslavia.

"I saw some stuff on the news about how Croatia is fighting for freedom, so I thought I'd come down and see what I could do to help," explained a 17-year-old

Londoner who dropped out of school to join the Croatian national guard. His companion, a former British soldier, said he joined the guard after seeing footage of Serbian guerrillas firing mortars at churches.

International Brigade soldiers go to war with little training. The teenager mentioned above received one week of training with a Kalashnikov before he was thrown into action.

Hotly-denied rumors that the Croatian Defense Association is paying foreign mercenaries up to \$18,000 per month sound too good to be true to us. And we've learned — through painful experience — that when something sounds too

good to be true, it invariably is.

Some of the international press claims any foreigner fighting in Yugoslavia is a mercenary. According to our definition, a mercenary gets paid for his services, and as far as we know, there is no money involved here.

Not every volunteer who fought in the Spanish Civil War was an idealist, nor is every foreign soldier in Yugoslavia. But we believe that most of these so-called "dogs of war" are just people who want to help others fight for a cause that sounds right to them.

— SOF Staff

COMBAT ZONE CROATIA

The Conflict Continues

by Bob Jordan

SOF's front-line coverage of the war in the Balkans (see "Crack-up in Croatia," by Mike Williams (Nov. '91) and "Yanks in Yugoslavia," by Jim Wallace (Jan. '92) continues with this report by Bob Jordan, who linked up with a Croatian militia unit to bring you a story the rest of the press missed. Since this was written, the situation has deteriorated and the area SOF's team operated in is now under control of Yugoslav forces.

Bullets were cracking overhead, others ricocheted howling and screaming from brick walls, as Yugoslavian army soldiers depressed their muzzles to get us before we ducked behind a low wall. Our Banana Republic photojournalist vests and red press badges seemed to be drawing fire, instead of granting us the neutrality so many journalists take as a God-given right.

God seemed to be neither on our right, nor on our left, that morning in the embattled city of Petrinja.

A couple of grenades bounced along the concrete before exploding on the other side of our wall. A Croat militiaman escorting us took a hit and fell against

former U.S. Navy SEAL Fred Turner, dropping his AK-47 at Fred's feet. More bursts of gunfire struck around us, and an army trooper fired at Fred from a window 40 yards away, probably hoping to loot the fancy vest from his body. Missing his first

came as close as the first volley and we were soon in relative safety.

Back at militia headquarters, we shared fresh bread, pate, and 11-year-old Cabernet Sauvignon with members of the patrol who had taken us for a look at

Yugoslavian federal army positions in the middle of Petrinja. We actually got closer than Bob Brown, *Soldier of Fortune* editor/publisher, had asked us to a week before as he gave us the assignment to cover Europe's new war zone. "Get close," he had said, "but don't get killed."

His instructions suited Fred and me, along with Jim Wallace, the third member of SOF's Croatia team, and we had certainly tried to comply. Nearly all of our previous military experience had been in bush or jungle, however, and this creeping around in backyards, alleys and city streets was a new thing. When an advance patrol (or maybe an

observation post) of the federals opened up from only a few buildings away, it had been a bit of a surprise. Good thing they are mostly ill-trained reservists. They probably didn't even have their rifles zeroed.

The present fighting, virtually a full-



shot, he didn't get a second. A Croat raised his rifle and placed a round to the head of the attacker, then joined our other escorts in suppressing enemy fire while we withdrew to friendly Croatian lines. Hand grenades, rifle grenades and small-arms fire followed us down the block, but none



Turner in front of Croatian APC in Petrinja. Vehicle consists of steel plate, welded over flatbed cargo truck by Croatian metalsmiths. Photo: Jim Wallace

scale civil war, is a result of centuries of ethnic and religious differences coupled with the last spasms of a communist regime. Yugoslavia, cobbled together after World War I, is disintegrating into several smaller states based largely on ethnic homogeneity. Those states until recently were provinces of Yugoslavia, but now are bent on controlling their own futures. One of them, Slovenia, is virtually independent. Croatia is fighting now, Macedonia has voted in favor of independence, and Bosnia-Herzegovina is moving in the same direction. The remnants of the communist government are concentrated in Serbia and fighting to maintain control of people who want self-determination.

Lightly armed Croatian nationalists are battling what used to be the Yugoslavian armed forces, who are well-equipped with tanks, artillery and a modern air force. Serbians living in Croatia have also taken up arms against Croatian independence, fearful for their own futures, and now form an auxiliary force to the federal army.

Adding another dimension to the strife is the fact that Yugoslav army, air force and navy ranks are filled mostly with Serbs. At present these remain under control of hard-line generals who have proclaimed that they, not any political leadership, are in control of the country. Still another factor exacerbating the conflict is religion — Croats are nearly all Roman Catholic, while Serbs belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. They all regard each other as non-believers.

Atmosphere Like The Alamo

Croatian forces number about 100,000 men and women, some with a rudimentary knowledge of military matters acquired while serving one-year terms as conscripts in the federal army. Many more have taken up the fight with no previous experience, motivated by a desire for freedom and fear of Serbian domination. They have no aircraft, no ships and only a few tanks, infantry-fighting vehicles and cannons recently taken from captured federal garrisons. They are still trying to find tank crews and artillerymen to operate their new acquisitions.

While Fred, Jim and I were there, some 60 army bases within Croatian territory surrendered, yielding thousands of AKs, tons of ammunition, antitank rocket launchers, SA-7 (Strella) antiaircraft missiles and other badly needed supplies. Even with all their new weapons, many Croatian militiamen are still fighting with shotguns and hunting rifles, bullets stuffed into pockets because there is such a shortage of ammo pouches and other web gear.

Civilian cars and trucks provide Croats most transportation. They live in makeshift barracks, which were recently factory workers' quarters. Their determination is fierce, the atmosphere much like that of the Alamo — massively outnumbered and outgunned, they will fight on until relief arrives or they are destroyed. Croats perceive themselves to be fighting for their homes, their culture and ancestry, and they are resolute.

What relief could they expect? Some members of the European economic community, notably Germany and Italy, are already agitating for diplomatic recognition of an independent Croatia. The United Nations Security Council has called for an arms embargo against Yugoslavia. The United States, which sent its army to Kuwait ostensibly to repel an invasion by Iraq, has not even bothered to denounce the invasion of Croatia by what amounts to the Serbian army, or to protest bombings of civilians by Serbian-piloted MiGs.

Relief could come in the form of uprisings in other provinces still under Serbian control, which would stretch federal forces beyond their capabilities, but spread the flames of war even further. Or it could come with the collapse of the communist government, already torn by internal economic problems. Ultimately though, Croats are not counting on any external resolution and are prepared to achieve independence by themselves.

Battle For Petrinja

Petrinja is a city less than an hour's drive from Croatia's capital, Zagreb. Strategically situated on the Sava River, it also borders a region of Croatia that is home to a large Serbian population and is near federal army and air force bases in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina. Before the war, it was home to some 45,000 people, of whom 60% were Croats and 40% Serbs. Now it is deserted, except for federal-army tanks and troops.

For nearly two weeks, a few hundred Croatian national guardsmen equipped with small arms and a few RPG-7s fought against T-55s, T-72s, air attacks and more than 1,000 federal troops and Serbian irregulars. The guardsmen had lost ground bit by bit — outflanked by armored attacks; bombed, rocketed and strafed by MiGs, blasted by artillery barrages; their thin lines penetrated by army patrols. By the time we got there, Croats held only a

few-dozen city blocks, including the only bridge in the area over which tanks could cross to threaten Zagreb.

Wanting to get as close as possible to the federal positions, we made a deal with the Croat commander. What a deal. If he would give us a briefing and supply an escort to the front (about one mile away), we would teach his men how to improve their defenses by making and deploying platter charges, guaranteed to punch a hole in the bottom or top hulls of attacking tanks. Off we went, only to come under fire as described above, followed by a withdrawal to headquarters.

After the bread and Cabernet — war is hell — it was time to complete our end of the deal. In our absence, the commander had assembled a sizable quantity of plastic explosive, a score of mild steel plates about 3/8-inch thick, detonators and tape; so we went to work. By lecture and demonstration, Jim Wallace taught a class of about 30 guardsmen how to make platter charges, and then I dealt with tactical employment of the completed article.

Since nothing consolidates a lesson better than doing, we next supervised the class while they made their own charges, and took a few of them back to their forward positions for installation in likely avenues of armored approach. By now, having had a rather full day, we bade our hosts good evening and returned to our quarters in a small town about five miles away.

Explosions sounded sporadically all through the night as federal guns shelled Croat positions in Petrinja. Shortly after dawn, air raid sirens wailed as the first of the day's MiGs appeared to add their firepower to the artillery. We manned a makeshift AA tower a few miles from the impact area, hoping to get some good shots

Croat guerrilla leader with MGV 176 .22-caliber silenced submachine gun. This weapon, a copy of American 180 and manufactured in Czechoslovakia, was very quiet. Photo: Jim Wallace





Yugoslav air force MiG-21 was shot down by Croatia militiamen near Petrinja, a crossroads town in Croatia now under Serbian control. Photo: Bob Jordan

(with cameras, of course). Nothing came close enough, though. We could see attacking jets firing rockets and 23mm cannons at the very place where we had conducted lessons and drank wine the day before, but we could only watch.

Shooting Down A MiG-21

A bit later, a single MiG-21 came back for more, and we once again climbed up to our platform. This pilot seemed determined to take out the Croats guarding the bridge, as he brought the plane around time after time. He also seemed rather inexperienced, never varying his attack pattern, apparently unaware of the ground fire directed at him from every Croat militiaman in range. The pilot discovered he wasn't on a gunnery range when a large-caliber round hit him as he dove at the bridge.

Instantly crippled, and only a few-hundred feet off the ground, the pilot should have ejected immediately. He didn't. Instead, he tried to bring the MiG down in a huge field between Croat and Serbian positions. He might have made it with another 10 feet of altitude, but his wing clipped a tree at the edge of the field, and that was it. Out of control, he nosed down and the MiG became a plow. Only for a little bit, though, because then it broke into many, many pieces.

I don't know if the pilot tried to bang out at the last second, or if he was thrown out when his cockpit disintegrated, but when we arrived at the wreckage with a strong patrol, Captain Vlad was dead in a ditch nearby. (MiG-21s have one of the best ejection seats in the world. It's a zero-zero

Author prior to patrol near Petrinja, in south-central Croatia. Urban operations were a new experience for Jordan, a veteran of jungle wars in Africa and Asia. Hunting rifle is typical of weapons used for countersniper operations. Photo: Jim Wallace



Frank Turner, a former U.S. Navy SEAL, inspects ejection seat from MiG-21 downed by Croats outside Petrinja. Turner carries M70 assault rifle, Yugo version of AKM made by Zastava. Photo: Jim Wallace

Pilot of MiG, a senior captain in the Yugoslav air force, didn't survive low-altitude ejection. Photo: Bob Jordan

seat — you can successfully eject on the ground with no speed — and it should have allowed the pilot to escape the crash.) Some of his parachute was out — more of it wasn't.

Part of the seat was still strapped to the pilot's back while part of it lay about 50 yards away, and a boot stood by itself 50 yards further. The captain appeared to be in his mid-30s. He had no visible injuries, but was leaking a good deal of blood from an ear. Even though he had just attempted to kill the same Croats who now stood over his body, they expressed considerable

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Postcards From the Contras

by Glenn Garvin
Illustrations by
Susan Edson



Uncle Ollie
Security Fence Dr. #1
Washington, D.C.
20000

*Added Armchair Mercs,
Mad magazine Spies
and Murderous Mata Haris on the
Road to Managua*



Often it seemed Miss Manners must be the chief supply officer. How else to explain the shipment of 5,000 plastic spittoons? Or the 800,000 tubes of toothpaste? Or the gigantic shipment of foot deodorant?

covered the war in Nicaragua for six years, and a lot of the time I couldn't tell the good news from the bad news. In fact, a lot of the time I wondered if the whole experience wasn't some kind of leftover hallucination from the days before we Just Said No.

It wasn't the kind of war where beribboned officers stood in front of flip-chart maps, gesturing with their pointers. In fact, finding out what was actually happening on the battlefield was nearly impossible, not just because both sides lied so promiscuously, but because neither high command really knew what was happening out there. With only a few exceptions, it was not a war of sweeping offensives and grandiose counterattacks, but a confusing mélange of dirty little ambushes that might not be reported to headquarters for weeks, if ever. But what the war lacked in military majesty, it more than made up for in bizarre sideshows. There were added armchair mercenaries and *Mad* magazine spies. There were sultry Mata Haris who stole secrets and sometimes sent men to their deaths. There were befuddled old Indiana farmers who found themselves managing secret CIA armies. There were intrepid millionaires with fruitcake dreams of empire.



Antiquated C-47s provided most of aerial resupply capability for contras.
Photo: Jim Graves

The Revolution Is Not A Dinner Party

Walter Calderon — Comandante Toño to his men — was desperate. After a three-month patrol inside Nicaragua, his troops were down to a few bullets apiece. The 1,000 new recruits he was taking back to Honduras didn't have any weapons at all. Toño's patrol was still three days from the safety of the Honduran border, but there were Sandinista units surrounding him on three sides. If they should run into Toño's men, it would be a massacre. For three days he had been calling headquarters, asking for an airdrop of weapons and ammo, but nothing had come. Toño had been making war on the Sandinistas for eight years — first as a lieutenant in the Nicaraguan national guard, then as a contra commander — but never had he felt so helpless.

On the afternoon of the third day, they finally heard the monotonous drone of the supply aircraft. Toño barked a confirmation code into his radio to let the pilot know he had reached the drop zone, and then turned to his officers.

"We have to get the guns out of the crates quickly, and then get out of here," Toño warned them. "If the Sandinistas see the plane dropping parachutes, they'll be after us right away."

The men watched nervously as parachutes popped out of the plane's side door, like camouflage mushrooms after a rain. While the chutes drifted lazily down, the men crouched at the edge of a clearing that now seemed preternaturally quiet. Everyone strained their ears for the sounds of boots advancing through the jungle that would signal the Sandinistas were on their way.

Finally the first wooden crate hit the ground. Toño sprinted into the clearing and frantically pried at the top with his knife. Finally he jerked it open and plunged his hands into the — dinner plates. Dinner plates! Hundreds of metal dinner plates, enough for the biggest dinner party in the history of Nicaragua.

Maybe when the Sandinistas get here, Toño mused, I'm supposed to invite them to dinner and reason with them.

Miss Manners Goes To War

Every contra I ever met knows at least one comical supply story. Comical, that is, unless you're hearing it in the middle of the jungle, surrounded by Sandinista troops. Maybe it's because the contras reversed the ordinary army ratio of eight to 10 support personnel for every combatant. And maybe it's because their aerial supply operation was run for a time by Richard Secord, a man with a reputation for unconventional use of air power. In the 1960s, when he was running the logistical side of the secret U.S. war in Laos, Secord once bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail with Calgonite dishwasher detergent. To make it slippery, he said.

Whatever the reason, contra soldiers began to view supply drops as the most exciting part of their existence. You just never knew what might be in there. Often it seemed that Miss Manners must be the chief supply officer. How else to explain the shipment of 5,000 plastic spoons? Or the 800,000 tubes of toothpaste? Or the gigantic shipment of foot deodorant?

The most peculiar supply snafus occurred on the war's southern front, where former Sandinista war hero Eden Pastora — the famous Comandante Zero — had turned against his old friends. One of the Pastora's units got a much-needed shipment of boots — but only left boots. Another group, waiting for bullets, received 15 cases of suppositories.

Nothing, however, topped the time a unit deep inside Nicaragua opened supply crates dropped from a CIA plane and found tens of thousands of sanitary napkins — "many more sanitary napkins than the female comrades needed," one of Pastora's men noted dryly. The sanitary napkin airdrop was so bizarre that several commanders concluded the CIA was offering a commentary on their masculinity and courage. But, a CIA officer told me, it was just a singularly impressive screw-up: "We're not that subtle."

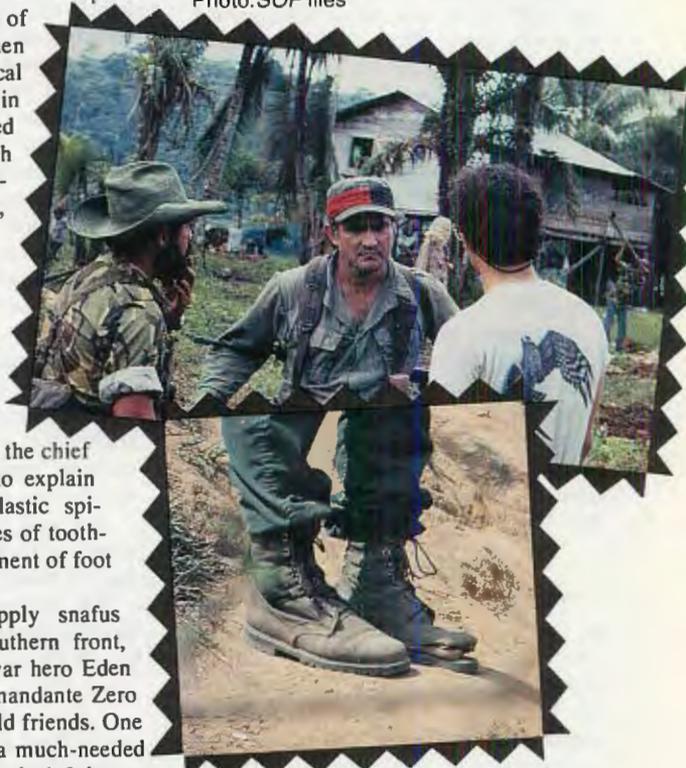
Revenge Of The Grants

Contra patrols on the ground weren't always the butt of the joke. In 1984, a contra unit in Matagalpa province called in for a supply drop. A couple of days later an

ancient C-47 cargo plane wheezed into view. The old C-47s were not only slow, but their archaic side-door cargo hatches were so inefficient that it usually took them three passes; flying no more than 500 feet above ground, to drop their entire load. The contras on the ground settled back for a tedious operation — then they saw, hovering several thousand feet above the supply aircraft, two Soviet-made An-2 biplanes.

The Sandinistas, so high above the C-47 that its pilot couldn't see them, were coming in for the kill. The contra commander started to get on the radio to alert the pilot of the C-47, but another officer

Contra commander Eden Pastora (facing camera), also known as Comandante Zero, believed he had converted female Sandinista spy with super-advanced love-making techniques. He was wrong.
Photo: SOF files



Contra logistics left a great deal to be desired. Because of terrain they needed new boots every three months, and Pastora's group once received a resupply drop of boots, all for left feet.
Photo: SOF files

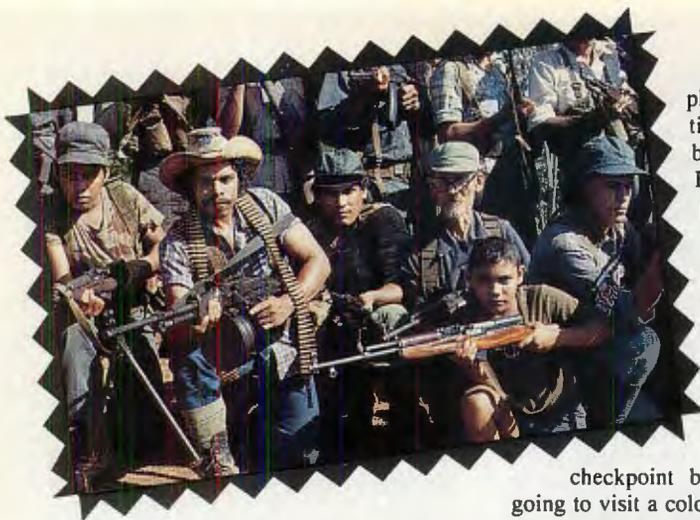
stopped him. "If you say anything," the officer warned, "our plane will leave and we won't get the supplies."

The commander called the C-47 pilot. "Listen, primo, we're in kind of a hurry down here," he said. "Maybe you could step on it."

"Why, is there a problem?" the pilot asked.

"No, no, we're just anxious to get back to the war," the ground commander lied.

The C-47 finished its first pass and came around for a second. "Really, we'd like to get out of here," the ground



It wasn't the kind of war where beribboned officers stood in front of flip-chart maps, gesturing with their pointers. Contras used whatever weapons they could get in a confusing melange of dirty little ambushes that might not be reported to headquarters for weeks, if ever. Photo: SOF files

commander urged over the radio.

"Keep your shirt on, the war isn't going anywhere," the pilot snapped.

Finally he made a third pass, and the final parachutes popped out of the hatch. "Okay, see you later," the pilot radioed, and tilted the C-47 upwards for the first time.

A moment later, the radio crackled to life again. "Son of a beeeeeech!" The pilot kept saying it over and over as he dipsy-doodled his way across the horizon, trying to get away from the Sandinista planes. The contras on the ground calculated it took 192 son-of-a-bitches to get back to the safety of Honduran air space.

Madonna Sent Us

The most vicious hand-to-hand combat of the war took place in a sprawling ranch-style house about a mile from the airport in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital. The house was headquarters for the contra press operation, and it was there reporters had to seek permission to visit one of the base camps, or to go out with a patrol.

During the first four or five years of the war, a reporter who learned the location of a contra camp could simply rent a car and drive there himself. The process was not without risks — Dial Torgerson of the *Los Angeles Times* and freelance photographer Richard Cross were killed on their way to one of the camps when their car struck a Sandinista land mine intended for a contra supply truck — but no one tried to stop you.

Honduran authorities — who always denied that contras were in their territory — got tired of being shown up in the American press every day, and put up roadblocks on the few roads leading down to the border area. That made it nearly impossible to get in, although a few people managed.

In 1986, *Newsweek* photographer Bill Gentile, his hair slicked back with a quart of Brylcreem and a huge pair of silver-lensed sunglasses wrapped around his face, told the border guards, "Soy de la Compania — 'I'm from 'The Company.'" They waved him through. In 1987, a jeepload of us got past the

checkpoint by insisting we were going to visit a colony of gringo missionaries on the border. The Honduran commander let us pass, but he insisted we carry one of his men as an escort.

Our Honduran soldier was only 16, and utterly thrilled to be in the company of a bunch of American journalists who personally knew Madonna, a false impression that we gave him quite advertently. He chattered away, peppering us with questions about the seamy New York disco scene, until we passed a blue pickup truck full of armed men. "Look," the soldier observed conversationally, "... contras."

The reporter at the wheel slammed on the brakes and we all grabbed our notebooks and headed for the truck. Suddenly aware he had been had, the soldier shouted a fabulous oath in perfect American-accented English and sprinted ahead of us. By the time we got there, the armed men were insisting that they were Honduran soldiers too, and no amount of pleading or cajoling could change their minds. We finally gave up and got back in our jeep.

Our soldier apologized, "I thought they were contras because that's a contra truck they're riding in," he explained.

We pointed out that the men were carrying Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifles, which the contras used and the Honduran army didn't.

"Yes," our soldier agreed, "they borrowed those guns from the contras."

And the men had been wearing surplus U.S. Army uniforms, some with the insignia intact, rather than Honduran army fatigues, we said.

"Yes," our soldier concurred, "our men often borrow uniforms from the contras."

And the men had beards and mustaches, which are forbidden in the Honduran army, we noted.

"Yes," our soldier agreed, "we learned that fashion from the contras."

Tom Gjelten of National Public Radio stared at the soldier for a moment. "So," Gjelten said with a sigh, "that was a contra truck, and those were contra guns, uni-

forms and beards — but the men were Hondurans?"

"Si, Si," the soldier gurgled, ecstatic that we had finally comprehended. We turned around and headed back to the roadblock, and no matter how much the young soldier begged, we wouldn't tell him another single secret fact about Madonna's sex life.

Breakfast At The Maya

Once the border was closed, the only way to see contra troops was to get permission from the rebel press office, an operation that hummed along just as smoothly as the D.C. traffic-ticket office on a Friday afternoon. Every application for a trip had to clear half-a-dozen hurdles: The Honduran army could veto it, or the U.S. Embassy, or contra military chief Enrique Bermudez, or the local commander at the base the reporter wanted to visit. And of course the contra press bureaucracy had to approve, too.

It was run by Adela Icaza, a former caterer who got the press job because she cooked a fabulous dinner for a summit conference of contra commanders and CIA officials. Everyone loved Adela, but her skills as a press secretary can be judged by the fact that she got an unlisted phone number, because reporters were always calling her at home with questions about battles and stuff. Once, during a time the Honduran army had ordered no visits at all to the base camps, Adela let a French photographer go in anyway because he spoke Spanish with such a cute accent.

A reporter who was waiting for permission to make a trip with the contras would hole up at the Hotel Honduras Maya on a hilltop overlooking Tegucigalpa, and wait. The Maya, awash in conspiracy, always reminded me of Humphrey Bogart's bar in "Casablanca." It was like a giant anthill of diplomats, spooks, soldiers, mercenaries and out-and-out nut cases. Every afternoon hordes of hookers materialized

Contras received weird airdrops of dinner plates, sanitary napkins and, instead of bullets, 15 cases of suppositories. Here contras retrieve chutes that they later transported back to base camp by dugout. Photo: SOF files



from the dying beams of sunlight and haunted the front entrance. Reporters bounced like pinballs between the bar, the coffee shop, the lobby and the telex room, interviewing, eavesdropping and keeping an eye on their competitors.

The contras themselves always insisted that a reporter who was trying to go in with them not tell a soul. "Otherwise, all the other reporters will know we're planning a trip, and they'll all be over here asking to go, and then we'll just have to cancel the trip and you'll never get to go and your editors will probably be mad," Adela explained to me cheerily one day.

Nevertheless, you could always tell who was waiting for a trip. You could find them every morning in the Maya coffee shop, slumped against a wall, saucer-eyed and mildly psychotic from drinking coffee for five hours since getting up for a 4 a.m. summons from the contras that never materialized.

At night they slouched at the end of the Maya bar, mumbling profoundly obscene threats against Adela and Bosco Matamoros, the oily former Somoza diplomat who was head of the U.S. press office. They started out each day wired from anticipation and caffeine poisoning, and ended every evening morose and suicidal from having to call their editors again. (Since the contras always insisted the word could come at any moment, you were never supposed to leave the hotel; which meant you couldn't work on any other stories, which meant you were running up thousands of dollars in expenses with nothing to show for it. It was a situation calculated to make editors homicidal.)

The vigil ended in one of two ways. Sometimes the reporter would vanish without a trace; no one would have seen him go, no hotel clerk would remember having checked him out. That meant the 4 a.m. summons had finally arrived, and the reporter would resurface in a few days or weeks.

Or, one morning, the reporter would announce he was driving to the town of Danli to do a feature story on the cigar factory there. The man who owned the cigar factory loved American reporters, would always drop whatever he was doing to show them around, and — since he had given several thousand interviews since the start of the war — could deliver perfect quotes on cue.

The cigar factory was a story that could always be done in one day, and that way, when the reporter called his editor to say he was giving up on the contra visit after three weeks and \$10,000 in expenses, he could make a peace offering of the cigar factory feature. The cigar factory was the reporter's white flag of surrender, and it was hoisted many times.

Bond Girls. Nicaraguan-Style

The first thing intelligence officials always tell you is that spying is nothing like James Bond — no glamour, no sexy babes; just a lot of hard, tedious work. But the Sandinistas seemed to have been working from a different manual. In Nicaragua's civil war, "pillow talk" acquired a new and sinister meaning.

The first time Sandinistas linked sex and spying was when they were still guerrillas fighting Somoza's regime. A Sandinista agent named Nora Astorga lured one of Somoza's generals to her bedroom, where he was tortured and killed. Astorga — who subsequently was at some pains to make it clear the general was snuffed *before* sleeping with her — was later made Sandinista ambassador to the U.N. as a reward.

I don't know if anti-Sandinista politics are linked to some kind of hormonal imbalance, but the contras, time and again, fell victim to the same ploy. Just a few months after the Sandinista victory in 1979, one of Somoza's top military officers — Pablo Emilio Salazar, known as Comandante Bravo — was in Central America with several companions trying

I don't know if anti-Sandinista politics are linked to some kind of hormonal imbalance, but the contras, time and again, fell victim to the same ploy.



It was 192 son-of-a-bitches back to the safety of Honduran air space.

to organize remnants of the Somoza national guard into a force that could challenge the Sandinistas. The other men didn't want to go to Honduras, they didn't think it was safe, but Bravo insisted. He wanted to see an old girlfriend from Managua who had promised to meet him there. Her name was Miryam Baltodano, and she was quite beautiful — a very successful cosmetics saleswoman in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua.

What Bravo didn't know was that after he fled Nicaragua at the end of the war, Miryam had taken up with his archenemy, Eden Pastora, then still a Sandinista war hero and several years away from turning against the revolution. One night as Miryam slept, Pastora prowled her house — and, tucked away at the back of an overstuffed closet, found a national guard uniform with Bravo's name on it. The next day, whether through coercion or persuasion, Miryam went to work for the Sandinistas.

So Bravo flew to Honduras, checked into the Hotel Istmania and disappeared with a woman. They found him three days later in an empty house a few miles away, his body covered with cigarette burns, his genitals missing and most of the skin of his face peeled away.

Pastora's role in the operation against Bravo makes it all the more amazing that, later, he would be such a sap. In 1982, after Pastora began military operations against the Sandinistas, a young woman who called herself Nancy showed up at his

Continued on page 77



PHOTOS THE PENTA WANT YOU TO SEE



ABOVE: Damaged Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle No. 3. Hole in frontal armor caused by 76mm depleted-uranium sabot round; turret lifted from hull.

BELOW: Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle destroyed by Aviation Brigade colonel with Hellfire AT missile.



An apocryphal story that made the rounds during World War II concerned the (choose one): government inspector/quality control man/purchasing agent who would take a sample of armor material to the people who made ammunition; they would shoot holes in it, and he'd take it back to the armor people and say "We've got to improve this armor."

They would supposedly improve the armor, and he'd take it back to the ammo people, who now couldn't shoot a hole in it and he'd tell them, "We've got to improve this ammo." They supposedly would, and then he'd take the punched armor back to the armor people and say

"We've got to improve this armor ... " And so on. Except in the wartime press, real ordnance development just doesn't work that way — or that quickly. But it is always of interest to know how our own armor might fare at the hands of our own ammunition. This knowledge came at a high price, but in the Gulf War, we found out.

The 144th Supply Company (Heavy Maintenance) of the New Jersey National Guard was tasked with recovering vehicles damaged or destroyed by friendly fire. These photos were taken in early March, somewhere in Saudi Arabia, by a Coalition NCO.

Department of Defense sources indicate

nearly one-fourth of the 148 U.S. military personnel killed in action during the Gulf War were victims of "friendly" fire. Investigations have confirmed 28 incidents in which our forces fired on each other, killing 35 and wounding 72 (total American war casualties included 467 wounded). In addition, 27 of the 35 U.S. armored fighting vehicles (AFV) badly damaged were hit by U.S. fire, as evidenced by residue from the depleted-uranium AP rounds fired from our M1A1 tanks.

Sixteen intramural ground engagements resulted in 24 American servicemen being killed, with 57 wounded. Army spokesmen said many of these engagements occurred

GON DIDN'T

First-Place Winner SOF Photo Contest



LEFT: Destroyed Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle No. 2. M113A2 APC at right belongs to 501st MI Battalion, 1st Armored Division.



RIGHT: Left front of destroyed Abrams MBT.



LEFT & RIGHT: Destroyed, radioactive Abrams tank No. 1. Radiation-contamination marking sign (white arrow with black "atom" in foreground) is necessitated by mildly radioactive residue left by U.S. depleted-uranium kinetic-energy round.



at night and at long ranges, or during conditions of bad visibility when thermal-imaging sights were being used. In the worst incident, U.S. AFVs were moving through Iraqi lines at night when five M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks (MBTs) and five Bradley IFVs were fired upon by M1A1s — killing six and wounding 25.

Eleven men were killed and 15 wounded in air-to-ground engagements. The worst incident occurred when a USAF A-10 fired a Maverick missile that subsequently "malfunctioned in flight" and targeted a USMC LAV-25, killing seven and wounding two.

Nor did our allies escape our deadly "friendly" fire. In four friendly-fire inci-

idents, nine U.K. combatants were killed and 16 injured. In the worst, nine troops were killed when their two Warrior IFVs were mistakenly targeted by USAF A-10s. In another incident, two Scorpion recon vehicles were fired on by U.S. M1A1 MBTs. The remaining incidents were Challenger 1 tanks firing at U.K. IFVs with thermal-imaging sights at long range, or in bad visibility.

During the planning stages of Operation Desert Storm, concerns were that Coalition armor made in the USSR, such as Syrian tanks, would be especially vulnerable to friendly fire, but no such incidents have been reported.

Test Systems Inc. was awarded a

\$3.2 million contract to supply 100,000 anti-fratricide identification devices (AFID) last February, but by the close of hostilities only 196 systems had been delivered. AFID mounts an infrared beacon on AVFs to provide identification for friendly aircraft, but inverted "V" signs and fluorescent panels were the only devices widely available in the Gulf War.

The Army Training and Doctrinal Command is coordinating efforts to improve technology, doctrine and training to preclude future "friendly" fire incidents.

— Don McLean ✕

IN 1979, two of the four criminal actions listed by the FBI as "terrorist attacks in the United States" were attributed to animal rights groups. In one attack, members of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), working with members of Earth First!, burned a livestock auction facility in California, causing some \$350,000 damage.

welfare of every U.S. citizen.

Laboratories are not the only target of animal-rights extremists. Among the most public and easily attacked of all groups are America's sportsmen, and animal rights fanatics have gone after them with a vindictiveness that endangers the lives of both sportsmen and protesters.

A California group called the Hunt Saboteurs, named after a British group, is

blinking media cameras.

The animal rights issue is mired in the mud of misconception, deceit, lies and media distortion. On the surface, professed goals of animal rights groups such as eliminating "unnecessary" laboratory research, humane treatment of farm animals, neutering and spaying of shelter animals and monitoring treatment of performing animals, etc., are worthy aims — but these

ANIMAL TERRORISTS

In April 1979, ALF members zeroed in on the University of Arizona, stealing over 1,000 laboratory animals, including those used to study the cryptosporidium protozoa, a debilitating and sometimes fatal child dysentery common to Third World countries. The ALF also took animals being used for research into osteoporosis, cystic fibrosis, heart disease and cancer. Animal terrorists then piled combustible materials in hallways, set incendiary time bombs and started a fire causing \$250,000 damage. Within hours another animal rights group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), was issuing press releases and videotapes taken during the raid by ALF members.

Most U.S. animal-terrorist incidents can be tracked to a handful of radical groups spearheaded by the ALF. Besides them, according to Safari Club International's Gray Thornton, there are at least 56 animal rights groups with offices in Washington, D.C. Their combined annual budgets exceed \$219 million, with a cadre of more than 700 people. Additionally, Al Wolter, communications director for the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, points out that animal rights groups raise more than \$100 million annually for their anti-hunting war chests.

dedicated to ending their state's recently restored desert bighorn hunts. The saboteurs ("Sabs," as they like to call themselves) follow hunters while blowing air horns and rattling pans to disrupt the hunt. Although sportsmen's dollars support the entire California sheep population and have rescued it from near extinction, this means nothing to the Sabs, who freely admit their goal is to end all hunting.

Across the country, spoilers in one guise or another are busy disrupting sport hunting, often endangering human lives as well as pets and work animals. On the day after Thanksgiving 1989, members of the South Central New Jersey Wing & Shot Hunting Club discovered they had been "hit" by animal terrorists. Club members were stocking game birds on their private 600-acre preserve when they discovered roofing nails had been scattered around the grounds. Also, 6-inch spikes, their points honed razor-sharp and painted a dull brown for camouflage, were buried like punji sticks to impale hunters and their dogs.

One club member's dog, a German Shorthair, jumped from a truck, raced into the club woods and immediately hit a leg-hold trap set by saboteurs. Later, at the club's sign-in box, a scrawled message

causes originated with "animal welfare" groups of the 19th century, not today's animal rights groups.

Animal rights groups have muddied animal welfare programs with a disinformation program the KGB would have been proud to claim, creating a surge of local splinter groups believing they are saving animals from laboratory chambers of horror, and Bambi look-alikes from being "murdered" in the woods.

A recent *Newsweek* article estimated there are now 7,000 different animal rights groups in this country alone. However, the bulk of these groups take their action cues from a few leadership organizations. At the top of the list are the Fund For Animals, Friends of Animals, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), ALF, Earth First!, Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting, Defenders of Wildlife and the Humane Society of the United States. These groups are most vocal in the animal-rights debate, and set the stage for confrontation by capitalizing on the average person's natural concern for an animal's welfare, then twisting a welfare concept into the notion of animal rights.

According to these groups and the sub-groups they have spawned, animals have the same rights as people. Believed to

Hunters Held Hostage by "Rights" Groups

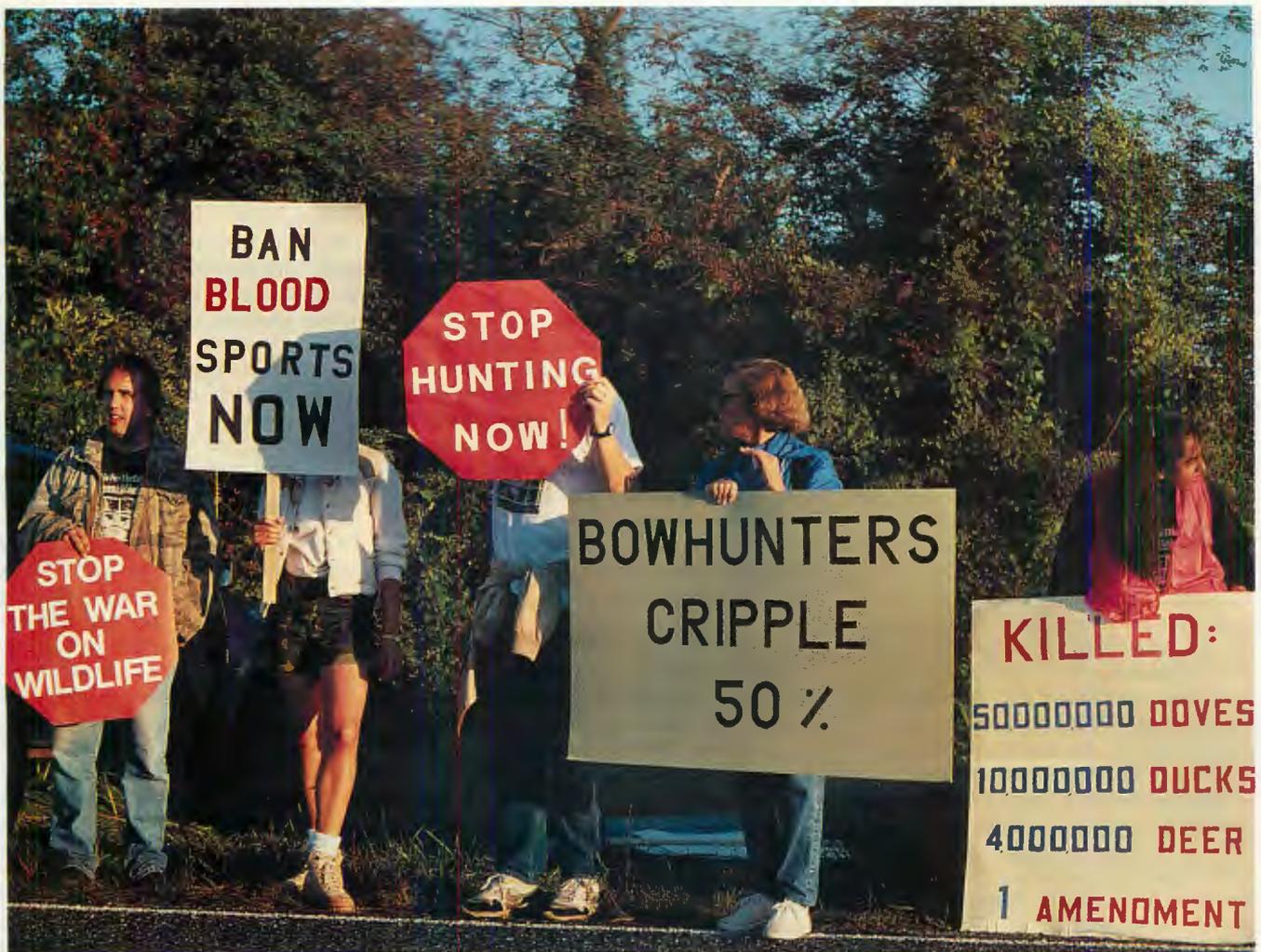
by Galen Geer Photos Courtesy of NRA

The influence of these groups is hyperbolized by a sympathetic media, easily convinced of the "righteousness" of the animal-rights cause and influenced by Hollywood "names" supporting animal rights groups. Alarming, the tentacles of the animal rights movement are reaching into a staggering array of national issues, threatening the long-standing heritage of American sport hunting and the health and

welfare of every U.S. citizen. was found warning members that if hunting didn't stop, their hunting dogs would be killed. Below the sign was a tub of moist dog food containing ground glass and rat poison.

Throughout the nation anti-hunting and animal rights groups are growing bolder each year, engineering more widespread and detailed confrontations with sportsmen, usually within view of never-

be the above-ground ALF front office, PETA is led by Ingrid Newkirk, a native of England and the unhappy child of a British military engineer. She was quoted in *Washingtonian* magazine, August 1986, saying, "A rat is a pig, is a dog is a boy. They're all mammals ... Even painless research (on animals) is fascism. Eventually ... there will come a day when there will be no animals in the laboratories. It



will be a wonderful day for animals and humankind, and only a true extremist would work to prevent such a time."

In *Harper's Magazine*, August 1988, Newkirk said, "I don't use the word 'pet.' I think it's speciest [sic] language. I prefer 'companion animal.' We would no longer allow breeding ... There would be no pet shops ... Eventually companion animals would be phased out, and we would return to more sympiotic [sic] relationship — enjoyment at a distance."

Finally, in the *Washington Post*, 30 May 1989, Newkirk called animal research "... immoral even if it's essential. You just cannot justify the torture and destruction of innocent animals. If my father had a heart attack, it would give me no solace at all to know his treatment was first tried on a dog."

Animals Before Humans

Another "leadership group," Fund For Animals, is headed by nationally known columnist Cleveland Amory, whose fanaticism is legendary. Appearing on the Larry King Show on 29 October 1987, interviewer Rona Barrett (subbing for King) asked Amory, "You have a child ... the child is dying of diabetes. It needs an insulin injection. The only way you can get it ... is from a lamb. Do you kill the lamb to

Hunters at McKee Beshers Wildlife Management Area, Maryland, had to run gauntlet of demonstrators to enter hunt area.

get the insulin so you can save the child?"

Amory answered that neither for himself nor his children would he knowingly have an animal hurt. Ironically, many supporters of PETA and Fund For Animals are the very same Hollywood "names" crying for more AIDS research, which uses animals.

The sport hunting issue, however, is the battle cry of several groups. The Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting (CASH) in particular is out to get sportsmen. Headed by Luke Dommer, CASH is determined to end sport hunting. Dommer uses every opportunity to trash sportsmen in a carefully orchestrated disinformation program. In a *USA Today* editorial, 22 November 1989, Dommer called hunting "... an institutional annual carnage; 17 million sport hunters invade the countryside, our public parks, our national forests, our national wildlife refuges and private properties posted against hunting.

"In addition to shooting family pets and livestock, they [hunters] terrorize, cripple and kill 175 million wild animals for kicks, trophies and other dubious

reasons," Dommer noted.

Contributions made by sport hunting to conservation are dismissed by Dommer as trash, claiming "400 people are killed and another 2,400 are wounded in hunting accidents each year."

In fact, according to Sonny Satre, a recreation safety coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources who compiles statistics of hunting accidents, in 1989 (the same year as Dommer's editorial) there were a total of 1,693 hunting-related accidents in the United States and Canada. Of these, 104 were fatal accidents involving two or more people, 67 were self-inflicted fatal accidents, 1,022 were non-fatal two-party accidents and 499 were non-fatal self-inflicted accidents.

Most-recent statistics from 1990 show a total of 1,564 accidents in the United States and Canada. Ninety-nine of these were fatal accidents involving two people, 47 were self-inflicted fatal accidents, 988 were non-fatal two-party accidents, and 430 were non-fatal self-inflicted accidents.

Another idiotic, unsupported CASH claim made by Dommer is that hunters "... cause the overpopulation of deer by continuously killing off the bucks and few females ... [altering] the natural one-to-one sex ratio of deer ... [leaving] a preponderance of breeding females in the

herd to maximize fawn production.”

Wildlife biologists would like to laugh at Dommer's assertions, if so many people didn't believe him. The fact is, actual herd-ratios range from one buck for 10 females up to one buck for 20 females in a balanced environment. Walter Howard, author of *Animal Rights Vs. Nature*, points out that deer management in California is now governed by politicians and judges influenced from simplistic fantasies of animal rights organizations like CASH, resulting in California deer herds suffering from starvation and disease. The passage of Proposition 117 in California last year is already aggravating the herd-size problem for California's wildlife populations.

How These Groups Evolved

Animal Liberation Front has its historical roots in England. British bird-and-fox hunters were the first targeted by a loosely knit group calling itself the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA). Their early raids were aimed at frightening the quarry, laying false trails in hunt areas, and personal harassment of hunters. The HSA remained an indistinct underground organization, while the League Against Cruel Sports pursued above-ground political and public relations efforts.

Ronnie Lee was a member of HSA who thought their tactics insufficient. In 1972 Lee joined together with Cliff Goodman, another HSA member, to found The Band of Mercy, a splinter group. The Band of Mercy engaged in direct attacks on hunters by slashing tires, smashing windows and other acts of vandalism.

From game animals, the group graduated to laboratory animals and then to using arson as its weapon, targeting the Hoechst Pharmaceutical Co. at Milton Keynes, England. Lee later boasted of how he and Goodman decided to burn it down. The fire caused nearly \$90,000 damage. The Band of Mercy then went on a terrorist rampage, destroying anything associated with hunting, animal research or the raising of meat animals. When Lee and Goodman were finally caught and sentenced to three years in jail, a split between them developed. Goodman decided to stick with lawful protests, while Lee and 30 supporters formed a new and equally dangerous group, the ALF.

Developed along the lines of 19th-century anarchist groups, the ALF was built of "cells," with no clearly defined command structure and only informal meetings. Compromising one cell through undercover work or capture seldom impedes other cells. Also, ALF members were able to infiltrate other animal welfare groups and take over their operations, then use the older, established and accepted welfare groups as fronts and covers for their more militant activities.

Especially important in taking over

these groups were treasuries built with contributions and endowments, which could become available for ALF activities. The first victim was the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, taken over by extremists who bussed more than 200 sympathetic members to an annual meeting and thereby voted their slate into power. The same tactics are used here to gain control of U.S. animal welfare groups, including several on the East Coast.

No one knows for sure when ALF immigrated to the United States, but sometime in 1982 is accepted by law-enforcement circles. In 1980, Alex Pacheco appeared in Washington, D.C., after spending two years in "animal-related experiences," which included raids with Britain's Hunt Saboteurs. Pacheco met Ingrid Newkirk, then a D.C.-based animal disease-control officer, and the two of them founded People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Profitable Propensity

After incorporating in Delaware, PETA retained a professional California fundraiser, later replaced by in-house cash-flow efforts. PETA's treasury swelled through slogans such as "Do what you can, now. And make sure when you've



Animal rights/anti-hunting protesters at the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia.

gone, the work continues." It sounds arcane, but it has generated donations and endowments. PETA T-shirts, seminars, note cards and a recording of a "famous animals rights song" all built the organization.

By 1983, PETA claimed 12,000 members, headquartered in a suburban townhouse — the residence for Pacheco and Newkirk. Last year PETA boasted a \$6,793,809 income, of which just over \$1.1 million was spent on fund-raising. PETA's operations are backed by nearly \$2 million in assets and a staff of 65 employees.

But PETA is not the only wealthy animal rights group. By the end of the 1980s, Fund For Animals claimed an income of \$1,875,268 and assets over \$2 million. The Animal Protection Institute boasted an income of \$2,685,456,

while Friends Of Animals collected \$3,450,553, and the Animal Welfare Institution netted \$403,908, bringing the combined income of just these five organizations to more than \$15 million — plus assets of nearly \$7 million. When the income of traditional welfare groups is added, the total becomes more than \$200 million per year.

One of the most prominent figures in the animal rights movement is Wayne Pacelle, national director of Fund For Animals, formerly president of the Animal Rights Alliance. He left to become the personal protege of Cleveland Amory, Fund For Animals' president and founder. Pacelle is commonly seen around the country at those protests and confrontations which offer the most press exposure.

Encouraging Lawlessness

Confrontations between protesters and hunters are frequently orchestrated by Fund For Animals through choosing locations where hunters must pass through a bottleneck. Pacelle is usually the featured celebrity at such protests, finding his way onto the local news where he can blast hunters, while broadcast footage of sportsmen is limited to scenes of hunters hauling dead deer out of the woods.

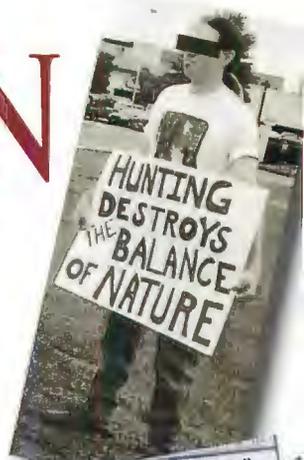
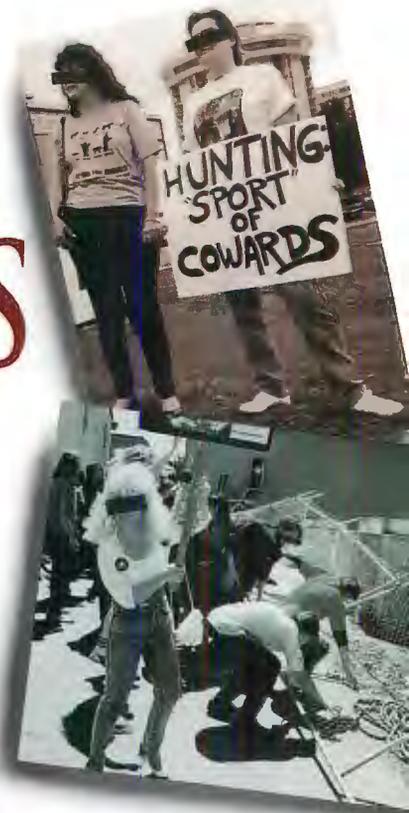
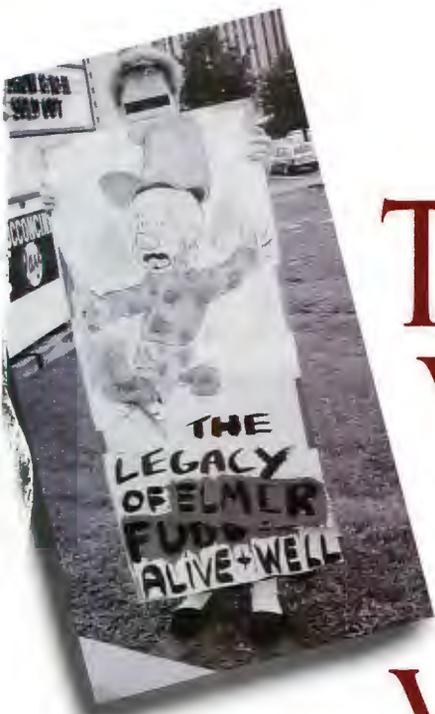
A Western rising star of the animal rights movement is Robin Duxbury and the Rocky Mountain Humane Society, founded in 1986. Duxbury is an apparent disciple of Amory, appearing on Colorado talk shows with him and gushing with praise for Amory in interviews. Her followers have staged confrontations with sportsmen throughout Colorado.

Duxbury's most recent ploy is production of a booklet for anti-hunter activists. It encourages people to openly violate the law by shooting firearms into the air and spraying ammonia vapors to frighten wildlife away from Colorado hunters. Another tactic she advocates is for activists to apply for limited licenses, to prevent them from being sold to legitimate hunters. Like other extremists, Duxbury mouths unfounded ravings in attempts to justify her cause.

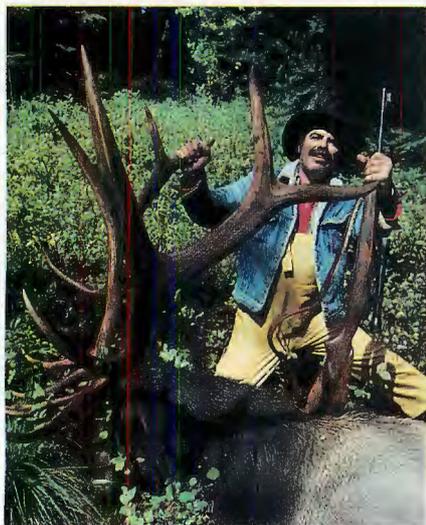
Her most recent claim, that activists saved 20 bears from being killed through snagging 20 of Colorado's limited spring-bear tags was debunked by state wildlife biologists. They pointed out that only one bear is killed for every 10 tags issued. In reality, what Duxbury's group did was remove several thousand dollars from Colorado's economy by preventing hunters from pursuing their sport and spending money on bear hunting.

Every facet of the animal rights movement is a threat. PETA's unrealistic demands for abolition of all animal research is a threat to every infant child in America facing the specter of Sudden

WHEN
THEY HARASS
YOU AFIELD,
POISON
YOUR DOGS,
SPIKE ACCESS ROADS,
CLOSE YOUR
SEASONS, AND BAN
YOUR GUNS,
YOU'LL ASK,
"WHERE WAS
THE NRA?"



AND WE WILL ASK, “WHERE WERE YOU?”



Jim Zumbo

Big Game Hunting Expert; Outdoor Author and Lecturer; Hunting Editor of Outdoor Life Magazine

“It’s coming: You’re sitting in your easy chair instead of your tree stand. Because your favorite deer spot has been closed forever by a bunch of screaming fanatics who’ve found legal loopholes to abolish hunting.

“Just like they’re using the California Desert Protection Act to padlock public hunting lands. Just like a bill by U.S. Rep. Bill Green to turn public hunting lands into non-hunting national refuges. Or a bill by U.S. Rep. Gerry Studds that makes you prove your hunt is ‘compatible’ before you can go afield.

“You’ll wonder how the NRA let it happen.

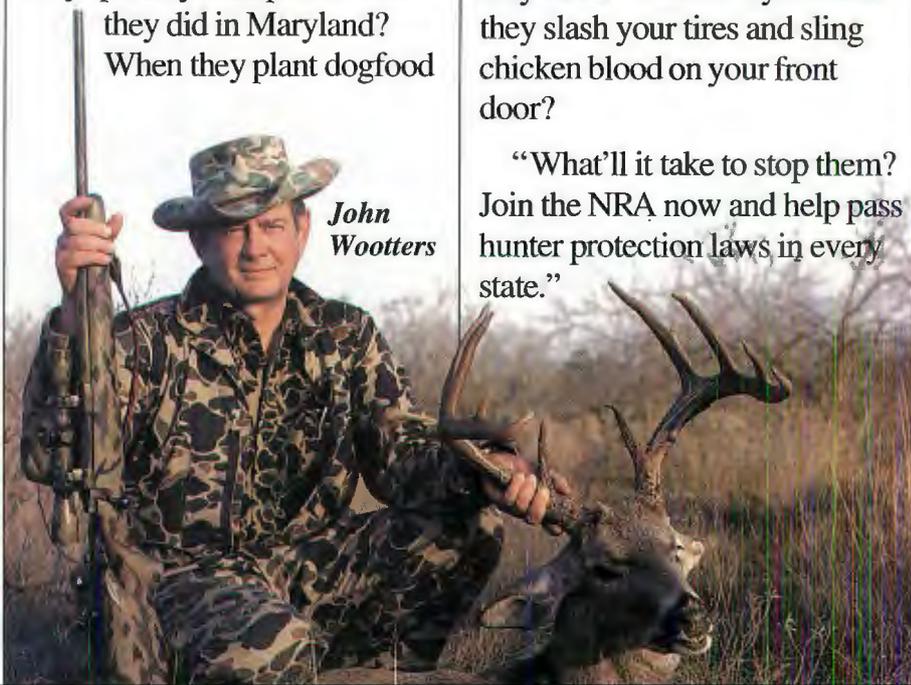
“And it will unless we hunters unite. Our only hope, our only voice, is the NRA. Join now.”

John Wootters

Whitetail Deer Expert; Best-selling Author on Guns, Hunting and Wildlife Management; Photographer; Executive Editor of Petersen’s Hunting Magazine

“Hunters are getting it from all sides. And it won’t stop until we get together and stop it.

“So what’ll it take? When they poke you with ski poles like they did in Montana? When they spit on you in protest like they did in Maryland? When they plant dogfood



John Wootters

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- Opposing anti-gun legislation
- Helping 44 states pass hunter protection laws
- Protecting Pittman-Robertson funds for wildlife management and range development
- Responding to anti-hunting media attacks
- Supporting access to public and federal hunting lands
- Supporting H.R.371, the Marlenee federal Hunter Protection bill
- Providing training in hunter safety, ethics and response to hunter harassment

laced with glass and poison like they did in New Jersey? When they slash your tires and sling chicken blood on your front door?

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Gene Hill

Author, *Shotgunner and Expert on Upland Game Hunting*;
Associate Editor of
Field & Stream Magazine

Paul Newsom
Hunting Expert; Wild Turkey and Game Calling Champion; Hunting Video Producer; Host of National Radio Show The American Rifleman



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Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President of the
National Rifle Association
of America

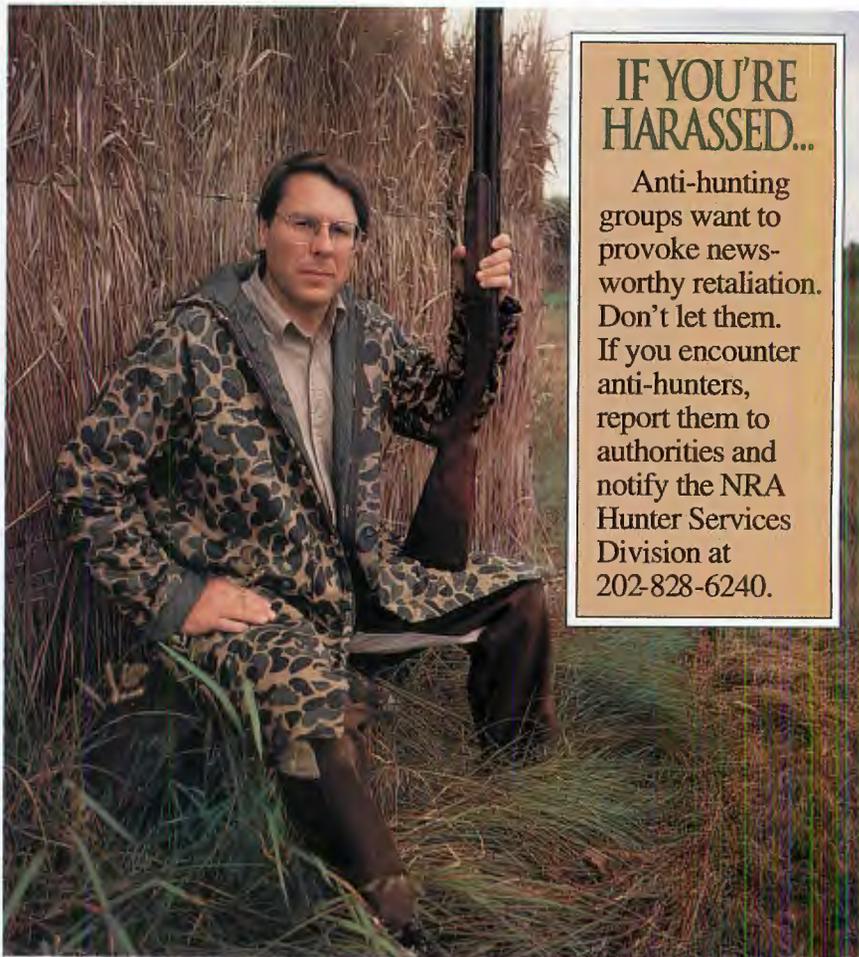
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Infant Death Syndrome. Abolition would also affect hundreds of other research projects, including trauma-wound training by military doctors and medics, who must use goats to learn how to save human lives on the next battlefield.

Who Is Fighting Back?

When animal terrorists don't get what they want, they increase pressure through attacks on sport hunting and research labs; they are now moving rapidly toward confrontations capable of escalating into serious violence.

For example, a hunter was injured by a protester swinging a ski pole at Yellowstone's now-canceled bison hunt. Murder is around the corner. Fran Stephanie Trutt was recently convicted of planting a radio-controlled bomb, with roofing nails wrapped around an explosive, in the parking space of the president of U.S. Surgical Corp. This business was targeted for protest by both Fund For Animals and the Friends of Animals because of its research on surgical staples. Friends of Animals, which ran to Trutt's defense, is also trying to remove funding from a Veterans Administration research program using monkeys to help quadriplegic veterans, claiming the study is cruel and inhumane.

Fortunately, there are organizations fighting the animal rights cults. One of the most visible organizations for sportsmen is the National Rifle Association. The NRA is an excellent source of hunting and conservation knowledge for those

interested in hunting, or it may be used to brush up on information needed to counter the anti-hunters' claims.

A newcomer to the animal rights battlefield is Putting People First, which has 30,000 members and supporters. Director Kathleen Marquet points out that Putting People First is actively working to educate people about the truth behind the animal rights movements, including terrorism, lies, half-truths and distortions the animal terrorist groups use in

March for Animals, Washington, D.C. Such high-profile, media-friendly events — along with a generous promotional budget — bring some \$200 million per year into animal rights coffers.



Another gaggle of anti-hunting dorks show up to demonstrate their foolishness at the NRA sponsored White Trail Super Clinic at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Such silliness did not stop 1,200 hunters from attending.

their disinformation program.

A sportsmen's club battling anti-hunters is Safari Club International. SCI has been a prime mover in the development of the United Conservation Alliance, a coalition of hunting, conservation, industry and resource-use groups. Also, SCI helped establish the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, comprising more than 90 congressmen and senators working to protect fish, wildlife and their intelligent use.

Another program originated by SCI is Sportsmen Against Hunger, encouraging hunters to donate venison to the needy. The program has been a huge success, with tons of meat donated to groups for distribution during winter months, generating favorable press for hunters — to the dismay of animal rights groups.

One of the most important organizations in the battle for sportsmen's rights is the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA). Comprised of individuals and clubs across the nation, WLFA is often in the thick of judicial battles over hunting, filing suits on behalf of sportsmen to counter those filed by Fund For Animals and other groups. The WLFA's newsletter and bulletins keep members informed

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LET'S GO GET 'EM!



"Your job in combat is to lead and keep men alive and to make other people die for their country." U.S. medic tends to wounded teammate in Vietnam.

SOF INTERVIEWS

COLONEL FRED CARISTO—TOP POW HUNTER

BY CHUCK FREMONT PHOTOS BY DoD

Colonel Fred Caristo, U.S. Army, Ret., is a compact, powerfully built man. His black hair is pulled back in a long ponytail, Native American style — Fred is one-quarter Abanaki Indian. He laughs easily and defies stereotypes of starched and proper retired field-grade officers. Fred Caristo is not spending his retirement on the golf course.

Caristo is an activist: not in the noisy high-profile political sense, but in a back-channel, action officer role. He continues

his fight against communism in Southeast Asia by supporting the H'mong Chao Fa fighters of highland Laos, and he has worked behind the scenes for years in the search for leads to the fates of U.S. POW/MIAs in Indochina.

His combat record began in November 1964, when he deployed to the Republic of Vietnam as an ARVN Ranger adviser, and continued through eight tours of duty as a combat leader and infantry officer. Most of that duty was as an adviser and operations officer with Military Advisory Command Vietnam, Studies and Observation Group

(MACV-SOG). Caristo commanded Detachment A, Special Operations Battalion, the organization tasked by USARV (U.S. Army, Republic of Vietnam), the organization tasked by USARV with POW rescue, body recovery, intelligence collection and other sensitive missions. He was also assigned to the Phoenix program as a Phoenix coordinator.

Colonel Caristo was involved with more than 200 POW recovery operations while assigned to MACV-SOG and USARV. He probably knows more about the nuts and bolts of the POW/MIA business in Indo-

china than anyone in or out of the U.S. government.

SOF interviewed Fred about his combat experiences during POW recovery operations, in particular an incident described by General Jack Singlaub in his book *Hazardous Duty*.

SOF: You were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross as a result of your actions during a POW rescue. Can you give us some background on that?

Caristo: A U.S. Army observation plane was downed in Cambodia in December 1966. Soon afterward we captured a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier who told us his unit had just captured two Americans. They sounded like an L-19 Bird Dog crew — pilot and observer; the NVA's descriptions checked out. He described in perfect detail an Army — not an Air Force — flight suit, which the pilot was wearing, and stated that the other American, the observer, was wearing regular jungle fatigues, which he was.

This information was passed to the Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC) at MACV-SOG, and they said "Let's exploit this immediately." The location was just inside Cambodia, and JPRC needed someone who spoke both Cambodian and Vietnamese. So they gave it to me.

SOF: Did you have any other intel besides the POW interrogation?

Caristo: No, there was so much going on that you couldn't get anything. So we put together our team, and I said we should go in at noon — hit it about 1215, and we'll catch everyone with their drawers down, swinging in their hammocks. Because the NVA knew that U.S. and allied troops always attacked at first light, so that's when they were on alert. And everyone else said no, we've got to go in at first light. But finally I convinced them, and we literally caught them in their hammocks and fartsacks, swinging away.

SOF: This was an airmobile operation?

Caristo: Right, we went in low level, flying across the rice paddies at about 8 feet above ground, and the pilots got disoriented.

SOF: They hadn't flown the area before?

Caristo: No. Our own helicopters — "Pony Express" — were up north on a recovery, so we borrowed air assets from the 25th Infantry Division. I used to be a pilot, so I knew these guys were having problems. We finally found the village, and the Command and Control (C&C) ship threw red smoke. We swung around and immediately started our final approach.

We needed to go in on the west side of the village, because the POW had told us about a horseshoe-shaped minefield that covered the north, east and south approaches. But instead of going over the village and back in from the west, our chopper went in to the north. The C&C ship was screaming at them to go around,

but the ship flared and I jumped. Everyone else started screaming "Stay on the ship!" And they munched back out, but by this time I was long gone.

SOF: But you knew right where you were?

Caristo: Yeah, I knew I was on the wrong side of the minefield! But the first thought that hit my mind was that they were going to kill those prisoners. So I just said "Fuck it, go for it," and started running across the minefield. Captain Jack McGuinness, a SOG asset, was in the command ship, and he said I must have been a foot and a half off the ground.

Then all shit broke loose. The NVA woke up and jumped out of their hammocks and started firing at the ships, at me, at everything. I could pick out the hooch that the POW said the prisoners were in, but the back side of it was facing me.

SOF: Were you through the minefield now?

Caristo: Yeah, by this time I had run through the minefield, and I just put my head down and ran through the back wall

of the hooch — I knew how flimsy they were. I blew through the hooch and yelled "Hahhh"; and there was this old man and two kids with big saucer eyes looking at this crazy American with a CAR15 who had just blasted through their house.

I started screaming at them in Vietnamese, "Where are the Americans?" And they didn't understand me — then I realized they were Cambods. Then it was starting to dawn on me that: "Hey, fucker, you might be dead."

SOF: Now, was this the right hooch?

Caristo: Yeah, I could see the ropes on the center pole where the POWs had been tied. I composed myself, switched to Cambodian, and the old man told me the Americans were gone, taken out last night. And the kids are screaming and the gunships are firing flechettes and I have visions of getting shredded by our own gunships, and the NVA has now opened up with machine-gun fire.

The top of the hooch got blown off and I ran outside. I could see our ships inserting, but they were still on the wrong



"You blow people away because it's your job; your buddies get blown away, it was part of their job." Wounded American is lowered from medevac Huey to hospital ship in the South China Sea.



"I could see our ships inserting — on the wrong side of the minefield!" Assault force sprints from UH-1 "Slick" in Vietnam.

side, this time on the south. Six of the assault troops got off and right away hit a mine. The assault force was firing into the village, and the ARVN engineers threw a bangalore torpedo into the minefield to clear a path.

SOF: Threw a bangalore?

Caristo: Yeah, they didn't screw around crawling up and sliding them in; maybe they do that in training. But these guys just raced up and heaved the bangalores into the mines and then ran like hell for cover.

I took out a machine gun with my CAR15 that was firing at the U.S. troops; the NVA didn't know I was behind them. Then the NVA started firing a 57mm recoilless rifle, and I took that out. There were two battalions of NVA, and they started pulling out through the opening in the minefield. I followed them through the opening and started screaming at our guys to follow me. Then someone threw a bangalore and the next thing I knew I was on my ass, looking up at the sky. I was also wounded, hit by shrapnel from the bangalore or mines.

Then the assault troops started clearing the village. Now, every house in every village in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos had a bomb shelter, a hole dug down and in. The holes the NVA were using were all booby trapped, and our guys started tripping these booby traps, so they started throwing grenades down them. But some of these holes were family shelters — there were women and children down there.



So I started yelling, "Hey, you can't throw grenades in there," and they said, "Fuck em," so I started crawling in these holes and yelling in Cambodian. And if women or children answered me, I'd crawl in and escort them out, because they were scared shitless.

We ended with 18 or 20 friendly KIA and maybe 120 NVA bodies. But we never got the POWs; they had definitely been moved.

SOF: Did that happen a lot — prisoners being moved just prior to a rescue?

Caristo: Yes. I've always asked myself, "Why were these people always moved?" And one theory is that the Russians had our key codes and monitored our message

"Then someone threw a bangalore, and I was on my ass." Flames light up faces of GIs in firefight.

traffic and would warn the North Vietnamese every time they picked up on an op. The codes were apparently fed to the Soviets by the predecessor to the Walker spy ring. These were also Navy communications people, and they sold our encryption codes to the USSR.

SOF: Didn't Soviet intelligence have a heavy presence in the western Pacific throughout the war years?

Caristo: Yeah, and that had a lot to do with why our Arc Light — B-52 strikes — failed. When the B-52s would take off from Clark Field in the Philippines or

Anderson Air Force Base in Guam, the Soviet trawlers would broadcast an alert to the NVA, and every major PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) unit in South Vietnam would pick up and move 3,000 meters — east, west, north, south; it didn't matter. Because what's the minimum safe distance from a B-52 strike? Three thousand meters.

So even though the Soviets didn't know the actual targeting, the NVA could still escape. Once in a while the Arflight would be enough off-target, and by coincidence the NVA moved in the same direction and we'd get some. But mostly they failed. And it was because of communications intelligence.

SOF: When the NVA or Viet Cong (VC) were warned by Soviet intel of a POW op, did they always pull out of the area?

Caristo: Not always. Sometimes they

PHANTOM COMMANDOS

Caristo developed the concept of fast, hit-and-run intel and sabotage operations in the North that was dubbed STRATA: Short-Term Recon And Tactical Teams. The idea was to parachute in, do the job, and extract by Air Commando helicopter or, for small teams, by Fulton Recovery System (a skyhook device suspended by a balloon and snatched by a low-flying aircraft). We no longer tried to win any hearts and minds up there; we intended to get specific information, then ambush the enemy and get the hell out, leaving behind the lingering fear that we would come again.

An interesting variant of the STRATA program involved a Vietnamese double agent, whom Caristo discovered. Fred planned a unique insertion for that guy. On the night of the drop, the double agent was issued a tree-jumping suit with a modified helmet that blocked his peripheral vision. The C-130's cargo hold was partitioned with canvas cubicles, ostensibly to protect the identities of the other agents. In reality — after much trial and error — Fred had rigged four big blocks of ice to parachutes. These would be the agent's "teammates." The double was tapped out, quickly followed by the four ice blocks.

The next morning, of course, the enemy agent led an NVA patrol back to the drop zone, where they found four empty parachutes hanging in the tree canopy. They immediately set to work combing the forest for the man's phantom teammates. What they found instead was a series of airdropped booby traps laid down overnight from Air Commando planes.

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would reinforce. But they would not allow us to recover prisoners. On one of the last POW ops I was on, in the Delta in 1973, we must have just missed our man. His footprints were there; a GI mess kit with warm rice and a spoon was sitting on the ground beside the VC's rice bowls.

SOF: Did you lose friends in Vietnam?

Caristo: Yeah, Dick LeGate, my college roommate, for one. He and I were on the same SOG operation; he got blown away. I went over, picked him up, put him in a body bag and never looked back. People say, "How could you be so coldhearted, we watched you, this was your roommate, his brains were all over your lap." Well, it was my job, it had to be done.

SOF: Did you have a reputation for being coldhearted?

Caristo: I was proud that every OER (Officer's Efficiency Report) I got in eight years as a combat leader said, "This guy's

"The ship flared and I jumped." UH-1 lifts away from ground. Small airmobile operations were used to recover POWs held in South Vietnam and Cambodia.



so cool in combat that sometimes we wonder about his sanity." But that's what I got paid for, to be cool in combat; not to lose my head, not to get emotional, not to conduct any personal vendettas.

Your job in combat is to lead and keep men alive, and to make other people die for their country, and that's the bottom line. I couldn't hold a grudge against a Viet Cong or NVA soldier who killed one of my guys any more than I could hold a grudge against myself for killing the VC. You blow people away because it's your job; your buddies get blown away, it was part of their job. You don't get bitter about it.

People with a lot of bitterness, who get emotional in combat, are dangerous. They get other people killed. They are dangerous in the field.

SOF: How many actual POW recovery ops were you involved in?

Caristo: At least 200. When people think of POW/MIA ops they think of the Son Tay-type, involving full-scale raids. But most of the ops were different. They were intelligence operations.

SOF: Can you get into some of those?

Caristo: A lot of the ops we ran took us out of South Vietnam into adjacent countries. We would go into Laos from Thailand; ride into Cambodia on motorcycles and mopeds. We just did a lot of off-the-wall stuff. I was meeting with solo agents by myself in Phnom Penh, negotiating with guys who were supposed to bring POWs out to me, but who refused to go into American or ARVN territory.

These were meetings in a back alley or rice paddy or in a hotel, attempts to negotiate a release or gain some clue as to where Americans were being held. Yet these were true POW ops. The raids were just the peripheral stuff, based on intelligence.

SOF: And much of that intelligence was developed by you?

Caristo: Yeah. I was the only person to ever take a picture from a helicopter of live POWs in captivity. They were in U-Minh forest; I was on an overflight and took the photo with this monumental telephoto lens. We were flying over this hut, and there were some folks sitting outside it, so I shot some film. And when we developed the film and blew up that shot we found they were Caucasians. So we went in two days later on a raid, and of course they had

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WE TRIED SO HARD

POW Recovery Ops in Southeast Asia

by Colonel Fred Caristo, U.S. Army, Ret.
Special Assistant For Southeast Asia, Free World Foundation

With typical American punctuality, I arrived 20 minutes early for a meeting with a Vietnamese source, after being assured his brother was a Viet Cong (VC) camp commander in charge of four U.S. POWs. I was at Room 240 of the Ba Sac hotel, Can Tho, IV Corp, Republic of Vietnam, in the Year of Our Lord 1968.

Someone is in the room; there are voices. I open the door, walk in — oh shit ... here's my primary contact on the bed having sex with some Vietnamese whore. "Sin loi, Anh (Excuse me, Brother) " I stutter in Vietnamese, " ... I'll be back."

My wide-eyed backup man runs flush into me trying to get a good look at the action, so I shove him back out the door. Directly across the hall, Room 239's door opens; there stand four indig (indigenous

Some came home, some stayed behind. U.S. pilot is helped aboard rescue helicopter by pararescue men off the coast of Vietnam. Photo: DoD

INSET: Republic of Vietnam fighter pilot captured by NVA. Captured South Vietnamese officers and aviators were usually executed. Photo taken by author from body of dead NVA. Photo: courtesy author

Vietnamese) with handguns. I do not like the odds. So I scream to my backup to get the hell out of here, and we race down the hall.

I pull a Browning Hi-Power from under my shirt and turn. The indig are exiting their room; I bust four caps in their direction and they scurry back inside. I again scream at my backup to fire, but he cannot get his .45 out from under his Hawaiian shirt, as his belt has become looped over the hammer. Every time he pulls up on the butt of the weapon he merely jacks his trousers up higher — skinny bastard. I stop at the top of the stairs and empty the remainder of the 13 rounds in the 9 mike-mike's magazine back down the hall.

We run down the stairs, past the now-hysterical Indian hotel keeper, and out into the street. My second backup across the street is armed with an M16, and I yell at him to shoot anyone who exits the hotel with a weapon. He cannot help, being surrounded by about 30 screaming Vietnamese children, to whom he has been passing out candy. (Remind me to change my modus operandi next time out.)

I reload, direct the backup guys to follow, and we run to the rear of the hotel just in time to see an old yellow Citroën sedan hastily departing with our five buddies aboard. It appears they wanted to place the "habeas grabus" on us and turn the POW hunters into POWs.



This was just another day POW/MIA hunting in Southeast Asia, circa 1968.

Twilight Zones, Back Alleys,
Secret Agents

My unit — Detachment A, Special Operations Battalion, a U.S. Army, Republic of Vietnam (USARV) asset, — had been tasked with a number of unusual Special Operations (SpecOps) missions. One was the exploitation of



HUMINT (Human Intelligence) in the search for American and allied POWs. We used trained and code-named indigenous agents to locate, and hopefully gain the release of, U.S. POWs in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Other missions assigned to "Det. A" included introduction of intel operations into the "Twilight Zones"— shadowy criminal districts which had developed in the larger Vietnamese cities. We wanted to make sure the large populations of U.S. military AWOLs and deserters in these areas were not divulging intelligence to the VC and North Vietnamese Army. What we found was a tremendous amount of black marketeering and drug trafficking, but no real intel being traded.

A third mission of Det. A was to locate and infiltrate COSVN (Central Office for Southern Vietnam, the mythical North Vietnamese HQ in Cambodia), where all PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) and communist infrastructure operations were planned. We had a number of other missions which are still classified, including working closely with resistance movements external to South Vietnam.

As chief, I organized Det. A into several teams, each responsible for one of these missions. We had civilian documentation and a number of "safe houses" in which we lived and worked from.

People have an image of all POW recovery operations: Helicopters landing with guns blazing in the middle of a rice paddy, and the storming of a compound where U.S. prisoners are being kept. This type of action accounted for a very small portion of the total POW recovery effort.

During eight combat tours in Southeast Asia, I was involved in over 200 POW recovery operations, and only 20% were actual assaults in the field. POW recovery attempts and negotiations were conducted in hotel rooms; in one-on-one meetings on the Cambodian, Thai and Laotian borders; in back alleys as far away as Bangkok, or at rendezvous along the Mekong in Nakhon Phanom, and Nong Khai in Thailand.

Many of our operations consisted of an

MACV-SOG used specially modified C-130 aircraft for operations over North Vietnam. Caristo planned an operation to land a C-130 in North Vietnam and rescue 10 U.S. POWs, but plan was nixed by U.S. State Department. Photo: DoD

intelligence specialist going into a village with only a source, no security; or meeting alone with a VC unit commander. Other missions took us into some pretty large firefights, working with U.S. and ARVN combat units.

God, we tried so hard to recover those guys! And even though a lot of what we did is still classified, I don't want this important part of our Vietnam War history overlooked.

ARVN Ranger Adviser

The first POW operations I was involved with took place in July 1965, in Quang Ngai Province. I was Senior Adviser to the 37th ARVN Ranger Battalion (Biet Dong Quan, or BDQ in Vietnamese) at Thach Tru. This unit was destined for glory — the 37th won two U.S. Presidential Unit Citations, one during my tenure in November 1965, and the other as the now-famous unit *outside*

the U.S. Marine Corps firebase during the siege of Khe Sanh.

Captain William "Ike" Eisenbraun, U.S. Army, was an adviser to the Territorial Forces at Quang Ngai city in I Corps during 1965. On 5 July, Ike and a number of Territorial Forces troops were captured by the VC outside of Quang Ngai. The VC also took two artillery pieces.

The only available unit to follow up the next day was the 37th BDQ. As there was an American involved, the Vietnamese battalion commander, Major Son Thong, requested that I plan and execute the operation.

I knew the direction the VC had departed from the overrun outpost, and I calculated how far they could walk in one day with their captives. Then I planned a blocking position and requested a "Package."

A Package was a number of helicopters configured for a specific mission, i.e., eight UH-1 "slicks" to carry a company of assault troops, two UH-1B gunships to provide covering fire, a Command and Control ship (C&C), also maybe a "Hog" — a B-model carrying large pods of 2.75-inch rockets.

We inserted on 7 July and made a sweep back toward the outpost where Ike was captured. By nightfall, we had met only what appeared to be a VC point element. The next morning we ran headlong into a main VC battalion. We came away from the battle with an impressive body count, but no POWs. It appeared that a small group with a portion of the POWs had outflanked us the night before and escaped.

A continued sweep of the area found Ike's counterpart, a Territorial Forces captain, and his radio operator. Both had

Caristo's language skills allowed him to interrogate captured NVA, Viet Cong and Khmer Rouge in the field. Painting shows VC prisoners being held for questioning by U.S. team. Courtesy: DoD





"Airborne! And we were on our way." Fred and his men used low-level parachute techniques to insert teams in hostile territory. Photo: SOF files

been shot in the back of the head execution-style. Over the next six months we received a number of sightings on Ike; each time we would mount an op, and each time we came back empty-handed.

Early Rescues: Near Misses

The 37th BDQ was decimated at Thach Tru in December 1965, then was sent to Duc My for retraining and remanning. I moved on to advise the 1st Ranger Task Force out of ARVN Ranger Command. I tested the multi-Ranger-battalion operational concept with a number of high-risk missions: We swept the Iron Triangle, and went into the U Minh forest — a nearly impenetrable mangrove swamp and triple-canopy forest in extreme southwest Vietnam. Also, we hit the Angel's Wing and Parrot's Beak. These were all hot areas.

Every op we ran seemed to miss recovering POWs by a day, an hour or even minutes. We would find evidence — footprints, rice-filled GI mess kits with spoons — showing POWs had been there, but "no cigar." I was beginning to realize that maybe a typical raid operation was not the way to go in recovering POWs.

I continually questioned both inhabitants and prisoners regarding POWs. There were numerous reports coming out of this area of Nick Rowe and Rocky Versace being held in U Minh, and of Orien Walker being held in the central Mekong Delta. These Special Forces (SF) and advisory personnel had been captured early in the war. Walker was a buddy of mine at Fort Bragg in 1964. I didn't learn of his tragic fate until 1967. But that's later in our story.

We came close, so close. While I was with Studies and Observations Group (SOG), I read a debriefing report from one of three U.S. POWs released in the Delta during the 1966 time frame. The former prisoner stated that on a specific date, he had heard American voices speaking on a radio to a C&C ship while a combat operation was being conducted in the area. The American was being held in a tunnel near Cu Chi as he heard the conversation through an air vent. But he could not signal, as a Tokarev pistol was held to his head. I was the only U.S.-type on the

ground that day with the indigenous force. I guess I was real close.

Operations In North Vietnam

Studies and Observations Group had a number of sterile "Duck Hook" air commando transports — specially configured C-130s. They were painted black, with no identifying emblems or numbers, and were the only large "slow-movers" allowed to fly over North Vietnam. With a Fulton skyhook system on their front, and large external wing tanks, they were quite impressive. Inside the cargo compartment, to its right front, was a canvas enclosure where the EW (Electronics Warfare) officers sat. We, the operators, were not allowed to look behind these curtains, of course: This area was classified.

Just prior to the parachute operation, we would pull the canvas curtain back and scream something obscene at the "leg" (non-airborne) EW officers, challenging



UH-1B "Hog" with rocket pods was included in Caristo's assault plan for rescue of "Ike" Eisenbraum. Firepower of 2.75-inch rockets was critical to blocking action. Photo: DoD

them to follow, and head for the tail gate — "Airborne!" We were on our way, on another adventure, perhaps attempting to rescue U.S. POWs in North Vietnam.

While serving with SOG in mid-1966, I received my first taste of "POW Politics." Op-34, which ran covert operations into North Vietnam, had a report from a team up north stating they had sighted

Orien Walker, lower left corner, was captured by VC and executed in 1965. Fred Caristo is in back row, right side, in this 1964 graduation photo of the Military Assistance Training Advisor Course. Photo: U.S. Army, JFK Special Warfare Center



10 Caucasians being held in an area west of Yen Bay. I instructed the team to recon the area closely. They reported the men were being held in a "fort-like compound" next to a wide, straight road. I wondered, was the road large enough to land a SOG C-130?

Shot Down By The State Department

I requested a fast-mover, an RF-4C Phantom or similar aircraft, to fly a photo reconnaissance mission over the area reported by the Op-34 team. The aerial photography came back showing a compound adjacent to a dirt road. And the road was large enough to land a C-130 on, and depart with assistance of JATO (Jet Assisted Take Off). I formulated a plan to go in with a combined U.S./indig team. A diversion from the team already on the ground would help us to free the POWs and fly them out in the insertion C-130.

My plan was disapproved by the U.S. State Department before it even left SOG. (How the plan was leaked to the State Department will be the focus of a future article on lessons learned in Southeast Asia.) Their rationale was this: More than two American combatants on the ground in North Vietnam would constitute an invasion, and it was against U.S. policy to invade North Vietnam at that time.

I was irate, and so was my boss, Colonel Juji Hada. In fact Juji, a Nisei (Japanese-American) who won the Distinguished Service Medal in World War II, was furious. Here we had a good chance to rescue Americans, and we were shot down by our own politicians.

Major (later Colonel) Don Lundy was executive officer of the Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC) — later to become the Joint Casualty Resolution Center. I took all my information on this case and turned it over to him, in the hope that he could somehow save those guys.

I worked a number of POW recovery ops with SOG under the code name "Univac," because of my unique language capabilities in Cambodian, Vietnamese and French. I was able to handle intelligence sources without the involvement of ARVN and Khmer interpreters, thus reducing security problems. Many of these operations took me — solo — on cross-border trips into Cambodia and elsewhere.

Positive Identification

In early 1967, JPRC was distributing a picture of a U.S. POW, trying to obtain a positive identification. The minute I saw the photo my heart stopped: It was my buddy Orien Walker. An accompanying intelligence report indicated the photo had been captured during an operation in the Mekong Delta, but no one could identify the Caucasian held under obvious VC guard.

Orien had been captured in May 1965,

Continued on page 81



M-14s were SEALs' weapon of choice during Desert Storm. "The 14 gives us greater range and more punch than the M-16," said one operator. "Plus, it doesn't jam as easily or quickly as the 16." SEALs coated the 14s with graphite before swimming ashore. Photo: D. B. Cooper

SEALing SADDAM'S FATE

Deception Op Traps Iraqi Army in Kuwait

by Greg Walker

“We were told Grenada would be a ‘police action’ ... it was a clusterfuck. Bad intelligence, last-minute mission changes, interservice politics. The operators took all the blame. The media made us look like fools.”

— a Grenada SEAL

“The SEALs lost during the raid on Paitilla airfield were lives wasted, in the sense that the operation was flawed to begin with. What we learned from Paitilla was this: We needed to redefine how SEALs would be deployed in future conflicts, so the mission(s) would be accomplished, yet SEAL lives would never again be needlessly lost.

“Our successes in the Gulf demonstrated the validity of this emphasis. Not one SEAL killed, not one operator injured. This is how we honored our teammates lost at Paitilla.”

— a SEAL commander

The outstanding accomplishments performed by U.S. Navy SEAL operators during operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm are rooted in past tragic events involving SEALs in both Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury) and Panama (Operation Just Cause). Yet Gulf War SEALs conducted 270 missions with no casualties, using five platoons of 16 men each.

SEALs were the first ground forces to:

- Deploy to Saudi Arabia (10 August 1990).
- Request close air support to suppress Iraqi artillery.
- Effect the one (and only) sea pilot rescue.
- Recapture Kuwaiti soil (Qaruh Island).

To fully understand and appreciate these milestone accomplishments by one of the most secretive special warfare (SpecWar) units in our special operations (SpecOps) arsenal, their tragic performances prior to Gulf War must be reviewed.

Misguided Missions

The employment of SEAL platoons during Operation Urgent Fury drew operators from SEAL Teams 4 and 6, both part of Naval Special Warfare Group 2. ST-4 consisted of “blue water,” or conventional SEALs, whereas the newly-formed ST-6 consisted of SEALs specifically trained for counterterrorist operations. Their missions were as follows:

- To attack Radio Free Grenada.
- To assault the governor general’s

residence and remove him from the island.

- To recon the airstrip at Pearl’s airport.
- To recon beaches where U.S. Marines might land.

SEAL missions were split between those planned for the eastern side of Grenada and those set for the island’s western portion. From Urgent Fury’s onset, Navy commandos were plagued with poor intelligence, poor planning and poor weather.

“Everything came down from the Army,” recounts one “Urgent Fury” veteran. “My platoon had no idea of the scope of the operation. Our maps were Xerox copies of tourist maps; the intel was spotty, inaccurate, piss-poor. Communications between forces sucked. In my opinion, we were improperly employed and it showed.”

It did show. Four SEALs from ST-6, parachuting from a C-141 into rough seas, drowned due to grossly overweight equipment loads. As part of an assault element destined to liberate Governor-General Sir Paul Scoon, the raiders “simply hit the surface and kept on going,” according to a SEAL operator.

Conditions at sea were grim. Ten-foot waves were present 1,000 meters off shoreline; short, choppy waves closer-in offered SEAL Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRRC) near-nightmare approaches to the beach. SEAL officers had voiced their desire for vertical insertion by helicopter, but a lack of SpecOps aircraft and crews made the commandos



dependent upon Marine air, which couldn't fly at night over water due to their lack of navigational aids.

Mission changes unhinged the SEALs' plans as well. A combined force of Marines and SEALs from ST-4 were originally targeted to rescue Scoon, but at the last minute ST-6 operators were given the mission as a means of demonstrating their newfound ability to effect a hostage-rescue operation. In the ensuing battle the platoon was surrounded, and being lightly armed soon expended all their available ordnance. With his people heavily wounded and out of ammo, a desperate commander called for help from his teammates waiting offshore.

“We were prepared for a direct-action mission,” a former SEAL from ST-4 recalls. “There were 25 Marines supporting us; they were supposed to act as a security element once we hit the governor’s residence. Each SEAL — there were 13 of us — was carrying two or three antitank rockets (LAWs) and an M-203 with 12 rounds of high explosive. We had 200

NAVSPECWAR deployed five SEAL platoons to DESERT STORM. A total of 14 border reconnaissance missions were conducted, with operators responsible for target identification, location, and damage assessments once the target was engaged. Photo: DoD

rounds per man for our M16s. Our platoon leader knew his shit ... we were going in ‘heavy’ and fighting our way out — if there was anybody left around to fight.”

“The guys from Team 6 weren’t supported or armed like we were. It’s no wonder they got into the jam they did,” the SEAL vet adds. In the end, SEALs from ST-4 were diverted to attack targets at Pearl’s Airport with a force of Marines rescuing the other encircled SEALs at the governor’s mansion the next morning. A total of four operators were lost during Urgent Fury — in sharp contrast to a reported 32 SEALs lost during the entire Vietnam War.

Snags In Panama

Unlike Grenada, Operation Just Cause was planned months in advance of the

actual invasion. Still, the SEALs were again burdened with inappropriate missions and poor planning.

To prevent General Manuel Noriega from escaping in a private jet hangered at Paitilla airfield, SEALs embarked on a mission destined for disaster. They had already successfully shut down canal traffic on the Atlantic side of Panama using carefully placed snipers. After this they conducted Visit, Board, Search and Secure (VBSS) operations in Colon harbor to prevent Noriega’s cronies from fleeing by freighter.

Securing the airfield, normally an Army Ranger mission, demanded several SEAL platoons be used, with air support in the form of an AC-130 gunship providing airborne cannon fire, should the commandos require it.

Launching their 14 rubber raiding craft from Rodman Naval Station near Panama City, the SEALs were probably compromised as soon as the first CRRC was spotted by any one of a thousand “locals” living on the water.

Ordered to disembark at the airstrip’s



far end, the frogmen were forced to patrol up the length of the tarmac, where they were spotted by armed guards who brought them under fire. A radio breakdown aboard the AC-130 prevented the SEALs from bringing the gunship's powerful weaponry to bear, and an all-out assault by the raiders ensued. Four SEALs were killed, seven others wounded.

Nearly 90 minutes would pass before "dust off" aircraft were sent to Paitilla to medevac the wounded. What infuriated commandos involved was that such support was less than 10 minutes away, yet medevac aircraft were either not available or were being held in reserve.

"The seizure of the (Paitilla) airfield was a Ranger operation," offers one Just Cause veteran. "We could have done the mission had we infiltrated differently, perhaps coming in by vehicle, then slipping through the chain link fence which surrounded that shit hole. Those were good operators we lost. Fuck the excuses about some of them not being combat vets. The worst part was, Noriega wasn't even in the AO."

Mortified by events in Grenada and Panama, the SEALs looked inwardly at their program, undertaking a concerted effort to ensure there would be no more Paitillas. The evolution of a unified special-operations command, jump-started in the mid-1980s, was proving to be beneficial to individual SpecOps commands with respect to guidance and mission orientation. The SEALs were no more Army Rangers than Rangers were Marine Recon. Clearly, Naval Special Warfare (NAV-SPECWAR) needed to define how their commandos would be employed in future conflicts, and under what circumstances.

Squaring Away The SEALs

Leading this effort was Rear Admiral George Worthington, who assumed command of NAVSPECWAR in August 1989. As a 1965 graduate of the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) course, Worthington served with UDT 11, going on to assume the duties of executive officer to the commander, NAVSPECWAR Group, Vietnam. In 1972, he took over SEAL Team 1, assuming command of NAVSPECWAR Group 1 in 1985.

Rear Adm. Worthington is dynamic personality whose drive centers on the continued improvement and growth of the Navy's special-warfare capability. The admiral, who recently initiated an innovative SEAL certification program, directed a sequence of criteria for his operators to evaluate their missions. It was this criteria which was implemented during the Gulf War, a framework to



SEAL reconnaissance teams like this one were active along the Saudi-Kuwait border, as well as inside Kuwait, well before the ground war began. Photo: DoD

which senior SEAL operators credit their near-perfect operations record.

It was a "come-as-you-are war" according to Desert Storm SEALs assigned to NAVSPECWAR Group 1 (NSWG-1) in Coronado, California. Platoons from teams 1, 3 and 5 were ordered to begin loading their equipment during the first

DURRAH OILFIELD OPERATION

The initial face-to-face action of the Gulf War occurred at the Durrah oil field in the North Arabian Gulf, where U.S. Navy SEALs also captured the first enemy prisoners of war (EPW). Naval Special Warfare Element mission objectives were to conduct an assault and thereby capture and secure all Iraqi personnel and equipment on seven offshore oil platforms.

As two OH-58D gunships took off from the *USS Nicholas*, a guided missile frigate, they were fired upon from four Durrah oil platforms. The *Nicholas* and the Kuwaiti ship *Istiglal* responded with naval gunfire support, while the gunships fired missiles at the platforms.

Following the bombardment, enemy personnel were sighted on the oil platforms. SEALs boarded all seven and took 23 Iraqi EPWs, seizing all weapons and equipment, including demolition devices. There were no U.S. casualties. Five Iraqis were reported killed during the mission.

week of August, with flights to Saudi Arabia scheduled for 10 August.

"We worked day and night," recalls one operator. Equipment included diving apparatus, parachutes, rubber raiding craft, engines, ordnance, rappelling lines, high speed boats, 37-passenger buses, forklifts

and communications gear. In addition, elements from SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team 1 (SDVT-1) and Special Boat units 11, 12, and 13 were hurriedly assembling their assets to support SEAL-Ops in the Gulf. It would be the first-ever combat deployment of an entire NAVSPECWAR Group.

Landing at the Saudi air base in Riyadh, the SEALs were stunned by the fierce heat. "It was 125 degrees," remembers one commando. "We were told to just grab ground and begin setting up our gear until

WANNA-BE SEALS



Pseudo-SEAL Jason Salerno
Photo: *The Star*

If it wasn't bad enough putting up with phony SEALs from the Vietnam era, the Gulf War has added a new batch of wanna-be warriors to the Navy's growing file on these bozos. The most notable Gulf fraud is Petty Officer 3rd Class Jason Salerno, a 19-year-old sailor whose hoax was good enough to fool Cable News Network.

Salerno, stationed aboard the *USS LaSalle* during the Gulf War, made a \$600 bet with his shipmates that he could successfully pass himself off as a medal-winning Navy SEAL after receiving a questionnaire from his hometown newspaper. His account was published in *The*

Star, of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.

According to Salerno he had —among other exploits — done the following:

- Successfully graduated BUD/S training and was assigned to ST-4
- Lost his best friend during a "training exercise" on the Kuwaiti border
- Infiltrated Baghdad as part of an eight-man team to blow up ammo sites
- Located Saddam Hussein's command bunker
- Followed Hussein into Africa to "monitor his movements"
- Been wounded during an attack on an Iraqi-held oil platform
- Had Saddam Hussein in his sniper rifle's sights
- Been awarded 13 medals for his Persian Gulf tour, to include the Navy Cross

Upon returning from the Gulf, Salerno granted interviews with Madison, Wisconsin, TV channels 15 and 27. Channel 27 was so enthralled with their "scoop" they sent the tape on to CNN, which broadcast it on a Friday evening.

Phil Donahue's staff attempted to engage the phony hero as a guest (an offer young Jason quickly rejected). Besides TV coverage, Salerno visited local schools talking up his role as a Navy SEAL, accepting accolades from students and teachers alike.

Salerno's story paralleled a similar impersonation enacted by Dennis Chapman, of Bend, Oregon. In fact, it is possible Salerno was inspired to place his bet by Chapman's three-year charade as Oregon's most famous phony SEAL. Chapman's fraud was exposed in a na-

tional magazine six months before the Gulf War.

Salerno was finally exposed due to a letter sent *The Star* by Lieutenant Thomas H. Lang, a NAVSPECWAR intelligence officer from San Diego. He was charged and disciplined by the Navy for conduct discrediting the service.

In a final touch of irony, the phony Gulf War hero today finds himself assigned to SBU-24 ... a special boat unit on the East Coast which supports SEAL operations. Jason Salerno is now in direct contact, on a daily basis, with those men whose identity he assumed for 30 pieces of silver. The *SOF* staff sees this as poetic justice.

— G.W.

Phony hero Dennis Chapman. Photo: *The (Bend, Oregon) Bulletin*



a more permanent base could be located." That base would be "Half Moon Bay" on the Saudi coastline. The SEALs set up their own perimeter, manning it with their own people. The threat of terrorist attack was considered a priority concern, and SEALs were not going to suffer the same fate as did the Marine barracks in Beirut.

Desert Shield — as it was now known — saw the SEALs handed the following missions:

- Saudi close air support training
- Royal Saudi SEAL/Marine training
- Strategic recon/early-warning on the Kuwaiti border

• Reconstruction of the Kuwaiti navy
Naval commandos were also tasked to provide night patrols of the Jubayl harbor, hull searches, hydro recons of beaches, and VBSS operations of freighters for illegal cargo and/or personnel. Desert Shield was critical to the SEALs because it allowed them to adjust to the harsh desert environment, as well as to prepare for the oncoming ground war.

"Hussein missed his chance by not coming over the border during the first 30 days of our deployment," offers a decorated SEAL officer. "His forces would have rolled through whatever we had along the border, and our fins would

have been in the gulf heading for oil platforms. We perfected our operations during that period, and continued training."

It was during Desert Shield that SEALs activated their mission assessment loop. Its criteria was:

- A high probability of success
- Operations in a maritime environment or within one evolution of darkness on land
- Operations in support of the central command/components
- Missions that contributed to the overall war effort
- Missions which required no more than a full platoon to undertake successfully
- Tasks which assured high survivability of the operators

A SEAL operations officer recounts his rejection of numerous missions handed the platoons: "There was one where a suspected amount of high-priority electronic equipment was deemed a viable target. They wanted us to snatch it, but time after time we couldn't get verifiable information which satisfied our mission requirements. In the end we rejected the mission and I later found out the 'target' was a dry hole." While operations sifted through mission demands, platoons were diligently

working in the field.

Training of the Saudis was considered a political necessity, with small unit tactics and weaponry the primary class subjects. SEAL operators also worked closely with the newly formed Saudi SEALs, although they never saw deployment during the ground war. "Most of the Saudi SpecOps types drifted back to the rear once the shit hit the fan," says one SEAL. "They used them as border guards, I think. Their SEALs were too new to have a particular mission statement, but they were very good, as I remember."

As the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group arrived in-country, training of the Saudis was turned over to the Green Berets, freeing SEAL assets for other pressing activities.

SEAL Beach Party

Perhaps the most important SEAL operation of the war took place along the Kuwaiti coastline, just below Kuwait City. Tasked to conduct a number of missions in support of the ground war, the concept of deception operations was new to the SEALs. Essentially a means of deceiving the enemy as to what was going (or not going) on in the theater of operations, Desert Storm would prove to be the testing



Photo: Robert K. Brown

SEALs FAST ATTACK/LIGHT STRIKE VEHICLE

Originally developed and tested by the Army's 9th Infantry Division in the mid-'80s, Fast Attack Vehicles (FAVs) caught the American public's eye when appearing in Kuwait City. Low-slung dune buggies featuring high-impact suspensions, massive firepower, and satellite communications, FAVs have long been a part of the SEAL inventory. Tasked to operate up to 50 miles inland, the SEALs required a method of ground transportation allowing them to reach that distance within a single evolution of darkness, or one night. FAVs gave the naval commandos just this capability.

Initially tasked for combat search and rescue in the western Saudi desert, the FAV detachment perfected their tactics to include desert land navigation, while awaiting word if a pilot had gone down within their reach. None did. "The FAVs were to support preplanned air strikes in case a crew had to punch out. They would race in there and get the pilots out, often travelling at 80-plus miles per hour over the desert. As it turned out, they weren't needed in that capacity," according to SEAL command.

What these high-speed, low-drag desert racers did was assist in the retaking of

Kuwait City. FAV teams (there were four such vehicles deployed, along with replacement parts and engines) acted as scouts, point vehicles, and perimeter security around the U.S. Embassy. They escorted the American ambassador upon his arrival in newly-liberated Kuwait, and generally seemed to be everywhere at once. It was the first time the FAV concept was tried in battle, and by all accounts they performed to the SEALs' highest expectations.

— G.W.

For more information, contact: Chenoweth Racing Products Inc., 943 Vernon Way, El Cajon, CA 92020; phone: 619-449-7100. Washington office — 1101 30th St. NW, Suite 302, Washington, D.C., 20007; phone: 202-625-2424.

ground for a concept which before had existed only on the books.

At 0100 hours on 25 February 1990, a platoon of SEALs from ST-5 commanded by Lieutenant Tom Deitz married up with high-speed boats from their support element. The SEALs were armed with silenced H&K submachine guns, grenades and a variety of handguns and knives plus demolition packages. Their mission was to emplace charges along a 200-yard stretch of previously reconned beach on the coast of Kuwait. Facing them were a host of Iraqi troops, heavily dug-in and armed to repel the expected Marine landing.

Deitz's platoon had visited the Iraqis on several occasions, sizing up their defenses and plotting bunker positions while lying in less than a foot of Persian Gulf surf.

"We were never spotted," recalls the SEAL officer. "My men performed exceptionally well."

Slipping onto the coastline after being dropped off at sea, the platoon fixed their preset charges just below the water's surface. The beach was heavily mined, with strands of barbed wire running along its length. Iraqi bunkers were positioned along an enormous trench line; the sounds of men eating and moving about were clearly heard by the waterborne raiders as they worked.

Knowing the tide would go out after they'd left, the commandos were certain their charges would make the most noise possible once detonated. In addition, the platoon anchored blue and white buoys just offshore, marking lanes which might

appear to be guide points for Marine landing craft. According to Deitz, this deception's purpose was to draw Iraqi units to the coast just prior to the ground war kicking off. "We knew it was an important mission," Deitz said, "but it was something new to us and we didn't know how effective it might be. Our job was to get it done, which we did."

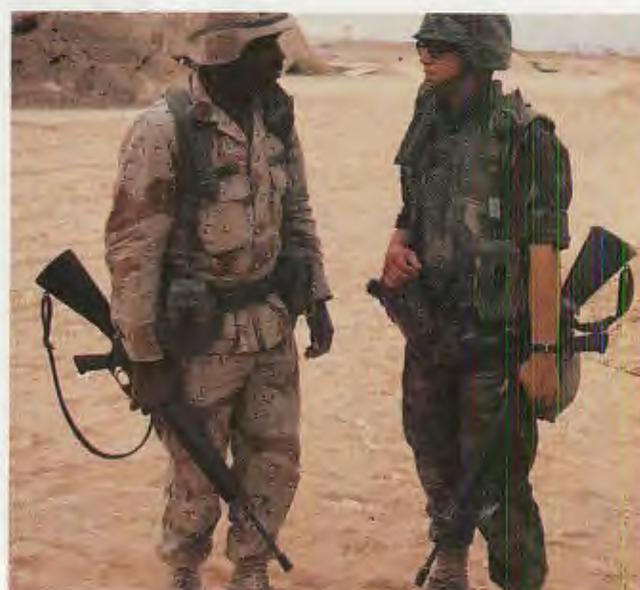
Upon the SEALs' return to their high-speed infiltration craft, a single boat raced toward the shoreline, peppering it with .50-caliber fire and 40mm grenades. For five minutes the crew hammered Iraqi positions, expending their munitions then heading back to sea. Parallel to the SEALs' effort were air strikes meant to

Continued on page 76



GIs in Saudi Arabia just prior to invasion of Iraq. Soldiers weren't even allowed to keep an empty magazine in their weapon, which allowed more dust and sand into the receiver.

Photos: Robert K. Brown



Nice haircut, but can he fight? Not with an empty weapon. According to military sources, boneheaded policies were necessary because of poorly trained troops who were unfamiliar with live ammunition.

U.S. troops with empty M16s guard Patriot missile site near Riyadh in early February. Presumably they were given training in tactfully stalling terrorists until they received permission to load their weapons.

Response to Robert K. Brown's article, "Does the U.S. Army Have a Fear of Firearms?" (Nov. '91) was overwhelming. We can't begin to print all the letters we received on this from soldiers and veterans, but we're devoting this space to excerpts from as many as we can. This is a tough issue. War is a risky business, and efforts to make it safe are often self-defeating. Commanders are responsible for troop safety, and they must make choices not everyone agrees with.

We would suggest there is a definite training problem if commanders honestly feel they can't trust their officers and men with live ammunition in a combat zone. If this is the case, then it's unfair to come down hard on the individual commanders. Perhaps there are some troop commanders out there who would like to comment.

BOGGLED AT BORDER PATROL

I was appalled at the article "Does the U.S. Army Have a Fear of Firearms." It boggles the mind that such attitudes exist, especially in a combat zone.

I'm a U.S. Border Patrol officer, and we have to qualify every three months with our service pistol, Remington 870 shotgun and M16. In addition, we have

HEAVY FLAK

ON U.S. MILITARY FIREARMS POLICY

periodic night qualifications, as most of our armed encounters along the border are at night. This isn't as often as I would like, but apparently it's more live-fire training than the average U.S. soldier gets.

I can easily imagine the feeling of the average foot soldier that served in the Persian Gulf, since his job was more dangerous than mine. The attitudes that you described are similar to those of certain government officials and congressmen who would like to disarm the U.S. Border Patrol.

Albert W. Cummings
Chula Vista, California

SOF LIVE-FIRE

If this country's military rifle training programs were designed and conducted in the same spirit as the SOF Three-Gun Match — an event I feel is on the cutting edge of small-arms training — the combat-marksanship skill of the average soldier or Marine would be an order of magnitude better than it is.

When I teach combat marksanship to military personnel, I always mention that if they want to see how efficient and relevant live-fire exercises can be, they should send a team to the SOF match.

Andy Stanford,
Director,
Martial Marksmanship Institute
Ridgecrest, California

FEAR OF KNIVES

Your article was quite interesting. The U.S. Army also has a fear of knives, as we weren't authorized any "edged weapons" with blades longer than 3 inches in the Desert Storm area of operations!

F. Scott McKown
1st Cav Div.
Fort Hood, Texas

SORRY LEADERSHIP

Your article brought back not-so-fond memories about my deployment to Panama on Just Cause. We were locked and loaded the first week, but after that we weren't allowed to keep magazines in our weapons — even after we were shot at by drive-by terrorists. I think this shows that we have some pretty sorry leadership in the military.

(name withheld by request)
Laurel, Mississippi

BUREAUCRATS AND BLANKS

Airborne Lt. Col. Brown: Your article "Does the U.S. Army Have a Fear of Firearms?" was hot steel on target as far as nailing the U.S. Army's attitudes about weapons, particularly training policy.

I'm sure the Special Forces NCO's comments regarding not even being allowed to buy his own training ammo will piss off the leg weenies at TRADOC who dictate these bullshit policies to us. Screw these uniformed bureaucrats. We need a Night of the Long Knives to clean out that sorry operation.

Something you didn't get into is blank-ammo training. I'll bet this has a lot to do with soldiers that can't get a round into a barrel a foot away. American soldiers do so much blank training that they begin to think of their weapons as noisemakers, and they develop horrible weapons-handling habits.

I've seen troops issued so much blank ammo that they had to dig a hole and burn it because they weren't allowed to turn it back in unexpended, and they had to account for the brass. And sometimes soldiers just hold the ejection port over a box and burn off hundreds of rounds. This is real good for the upper receiver and bolt carrier group. Maybe I'm just a bone-headed

old paratrooper, but I've never understood how a soldier learns to hit anything with blanks.

Keep up the good work!
(name withheld by request)
1st SOCOM
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

STUNNED STINGER GUNNER

Does the U.S. Army have a fear of firearms? Yes, it does. I was a Stinger missile gunner for Task Force Citadel, the 101st Airborne's ground attack into Iraq. I rode in on top of a Humvee, armed with a Stinger, M16, a LAW and a grenade.

We had MP vehicles riding flank security, and these were mounted with M60 machine guns. Just prior to our attack, I watched a senior NCO tell an MP to get his "fucking rounds out of the feed tray," that he was only supposed to load when we made contact with the enemy.

My jaw dropped, and the MP's surprise was evident. I prayed that the air assault that had taken off a few hours before had neutralized the enemy, because we definitely had a head-up-the-ass epidemic on the ground.

You are most definitely right, Lt. Col. Brown: It's bullshit!

Spc. David Akin
2nd Bn 44th ADA

Thanks go out to everyone who wrote SOF about this critical subject. We're glad we sparked some discussion. Check out Major Stroff's article "A Few Good Shots" reprinted from the Marine Corp Gazette, elsewhere in this issue.

—RKBJ



Shooting from the offhand position on a known-distance course does not train soldiers to fire accurate quick-reactive shots required in combat. Photo: courtesy *Marine Corps Gazette*

The Marine Corps has recently undergone a number of innovative changes in its training and education system. The goal is to make its officer, staff noncommissioned officer (SNCO) and noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps as professional and proficient as possible. The commandant has acted decisively. We now need the same decisive action to improve our marksmanship training.

The mission of the Marine rifleman is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver. To accomplish this mission requires deliberate, accurate fire; so let's train gunfighters who can deliver just that. The Marksmanship Training Unit (MTU) needs to become the Marine Corps

"gunfighter school." Once we have addressed this initial challenge, equally aggressive changes are required in the way we teach our gunfighters their trade.

Our public relations program has done an outstanding job of advertising every Marine as a rifleman. It's time we made every Marine an effective rifleman. We are rich in marksmanship tradition and can list a long lineage of some of the great shooters of all time. We need to ensure our competition-in-arms program maintains its competitive edge, but training gunfighters for combat is the real business at hand. In recent years, we have made some inroads with our qualifications programs. Unfortunately, we have missed the mark in developing a school for gunfighters. So where do we start? We need to develop a four-phase marksmanship and qualifications course. By addressing these four areas and restructuring our rifle range detachments, we can get on with the business of training gunfighters for future conflicts.

Mental Conditioning: This is the single

A FE

most important aspect of training gunfighters, and should be the starting point for all Marines. These classes would be directed at the most powerful part of every Marine — his mind. This phase would exploit the hundreds of studies already existing from combat and police accounts of how people perform during a gunfight.

Once a Marine receives classes on the appropriate levels of awareness, stress control and reflexes, we would have a common, solid foundation from which to create a gunfighter. It should be noted here that some of this is currently being taught at Marine Security Guard School because it works.

This focus on mental conditioning would become the single most important factor as we train our Marines. All the other skills and reflexes develop from their foundation. At the same time, mental conditioning would foster proper weapons-handling techniques. The same mental training that enhances your ability as a gunfighter directly affects your safety during training. The main benefit of the mental-conditioning training is that it is an inexpensive method to enhance confidence, individual security and, ultimately, your Marines' performance in a gunfight.

Basic Principles Of Marksmanship: Once we have completed mental conditioning, we would introduce a Marine to the basic principles of marksmanship. From here we expand our training to include techniques for bringing both a rifle and pistol into action so that it becomes a reflex action. These techniques become the basis for actions that occur once Marines are in combat.

Night Marksmanship: During the next phase, we would train for night qualifications on a course that must be realistic, involve targets at close quarters and reinforce the Marine's level of confidence. Remember, most of our fighting is done under limited light conditions. It got dark in the last war, and it will get dark in the next war, too.

Qualifications Course: The last phase of training would be firing for qualification. The course should be designed to test long-range shooting skills at 300-500

W GOOD SHOTS

MARINE CORPS NEEDS "GUNFIGHTER SCHOOL"

BY MAJOR MICHAEL J. STROFF III

meters and close-combat reaction shooting at 25-100 meters. Designing a course of fire to accomplish this is achievable on all rifle ranges existing on our major bases and stations.

In addition to annual training, the "gunfighter school" would lead the way in innovations to enhance mission-unique marksmanship requirements. It would establish, develop and be the conduit for improvements in gunfighting techniques, equipment and training. The gunfighter school would be directly tied into the Marine Corps Research, Development and Acquisition Command, so its efforts would be focused, cost-effective and responsive to the Fleet Marine Forces.

Manpower for these changes currently exists within our MTUs throughout the Marine Corps. Once such a school is established, the rifle ranges would no longer have range officers, NCOs and coaches. Each range would have gunfighter training teams to concentrate on teaching skills. The units firing would then be in charge of the range. NCOs would direct the training, and the over-management system currently used on most ranges would fade away. The school would develop targets that are realistic and functional. The scoring system would be changed to emphasize the importance of hits and not "X"-rings.

Handgun training would stress practical pistol craft, much like the techniques taught at Gunsite Ranch in Arizona. We would no longer have scoring rings, and the course of fire would be designed to reinforce the defensive use of the handgun in combat. The entire qualification course would consist of 10 rounds and would be fired starting with pistol in holster. Two rounds would be fired at each of the 5-, 7-, and 10-yard lines; four rounds would be fired prone from the 25-yard line.

Many will contend that because we've done it right for so long, there is no need to change. My contention is that we've built our entire program around the interests of a few shooters on our marksmanship teams. Inflicting casualties with our rifles is a large part of our business. It's time our training focused on gunfighting techniques

that win. One also has to remember that shooting skills are perishable. As a result, our training should be designed to bring a Marine up to effective standards rapidly. As a particular mission evolves, then specialized training should be developed to support Marines prior to deployment.

As we continue to stress cost-effective mission-oriented training, I am amazed that we have not taken such drastic measures long before now. My 13 years associated with training Marines has proven to me that we're afraid to teach gunfighting. Our concern for safety overrides many good ideas, based solely on the opinion of people who have little practical expertise with small-arms training, gunfighting and mental conditioning.

Our "business as usual" attitude does not increase the confidence level of a Marine on a post who has to memorize rules of engagement, employ a half-loaded weapon and make split-second decisions that can have strategic consequences.

Our final efforts at reorganization should standardize range safety procedures. Only four safety rules are required when handling weapons. I challenge any Marine to quote the rules of each

rifle range on our Marine Corps bases. In addition, we need to standardize our terminology during gunfighter training. There is no such thing as a "safe" weapon, yet this is one of the Marine Corps' favorite terms.

Let's give our Marines every advantage. If it means a total restructuring in the marksmanship community, then so be it. We are not training to please a few; we are training to win. In a gunfight, the first accurate round normally decides the encounter. As our weapon calibers and killing power continue to decrease under the guise of lightening the Marine's load, it is even more critical to hit your opponent decisively.

The "spray" technique of gunfighting is not going to win in future engagements. As the budget tightens, we need to get the most out of every training round we fire. A Marine Corps-wide gunfighter school is long overdue. Our corps has the experience to develop a first-class program designed to meet the threat on future battlefields and win. Without additional cost, manpower or facilities, we can create a school for gunfighters that will be a model for the military forces of the world.

Major Michael J. Stroff III is assistant director of academics at the Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, Virginia. This is a reprint from the Marine Corps Gazette. ✕

Marine riflemen need training emphasizing deliberate, accurate shooting while under fire; not marksmanship in static positions. Photo: courtesy U.S. Marine Corps



NO SHOOTING

M-40 Firestar Doesn't Shine

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



To those of us committed to the .45 ACP cartridge, the recent frenzy generated by the popular gun press about the .40 S&W round is both ironic and irritating. Winchester's new .45 ACP 230-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) bullet clearly outperforms anything available in .40 S&W. Had it been available during the FBI's highly publicized test and evaluation of handgun ammunition several years ago, they probably would not have adopted a down-loaded 10mm Auto cartridge, and the short-case .40 S&W car-

tridge would not have been developed. But it was, and we are now faced with a bewildering array of pistols rechambered for a round midway in performance between the 9mm Parabellum and the .45 ACP.

First introduced in 1990 chambered for the 1904-vintage 9mm Parabellum round, the M-40 Star Firestar is a highly-touted example of the ease with which designers have transformed 9mm envelopes to accommodate the .40 S&W, with little more than a wave of their magic wands. Manufactured in Spain by Star Bonifacio Echeverria S.A., and imported by Interarms

A ground swell appears to be building for the .40 S&W cartridge, as manufacturers rush to rechamber 9mm envelopes for a round that falls well short of the .45 ACP. Star's M-40 Firestar is one of the most compact of the .40 S&W lineup.

(Dept. SOF, Number Ten Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22313; phone: 703-548-1400), the M-40 Firestar is a curious blend of some excellent features with often mediocre execution.

The method of operation is locked-breech, short-recoil, and the means by which this is accomplished is almost

STAR

exactly that of John Browning's Model 1935 High Power pistol. A lug on the barrel's underside has been cut with a kidney-shape cam way. As the barrel and slide travel rearward in recoil — mated by three locking lugs on top of the chamber-end of the barrel engaging three recesses in the slide — this "barrel nose" cams against the slide stop's axis shaft, which drops the barrel away from the slide and terminates its rearward movement.

This outwardly good-looking, single-action semiautomatic pistol is sure to grab the interest of all those trained to carry a handgun in "condition 1" (a round in the chamber, a full magazine seated in place, the hammer fully cocked and the thumb safety engaged), sometimes referred to as "locked and cocked."

The frame is constructed from a mill-finished steel investment casting, while the slide is a milled steel forging. The trigger guard of our test specimen had a casting defect that was cosmetically unappealing, but did not interfere with the pistol's operation. Two finishes are available: blued and that chosen for our test specimen, an electroless-nickel process called "Starvel."

Hyped as a compact, the M-40 Firestar is only slightly smaller than Glock's .40 S&W Model 23 compact, and significantly heavier. Dimensions of the M-40 Firestar and Glock Model 23, respectively, are as follows: overall length — 6.5 and 6.97 inches; height — 4.61 and 4.92 inches; width (at the grip) — 1.1- and 1.18-inch; and weight with empty magazine — 30 and 22.43 ounces. The M-40 magazine holds only six rounds, while 13 can be stuffed into the Glock Model 23 magazine.

The Firestar's slide was a non-glare matte top surface, with an integral serrated rib running full-length and interrupted by only the front- and rear-sight dovetailed slots, and polished sides with rear-cocking serrations.

Sighting System

The forward-sloped, blade-type front sight (0.124-inch wide) has a single white dot, and can be drifted in its dovetailed slot in the slide for adjustment of windage

zero. The open square-notch (0.132-inch width) rear sight cannot be adjusted for either windage or elevation zero. It has a white dot on either side of the notch, both of which are supposed to be aligned with the one on the front sight. Those firing under stress and employing a so-called "flash front sight picture" will be totally oblivious to this all-too-prevalent gimmick, no matter what the color or geometric shape.

The rear sight is held in place by a European-type allen-head screw with a conical polymer washer. A tool with an odd star-shaped tip at one end is provided for removal of the sight to gain access to the firing pin and its safety. Guard it well. The screws keep loosening after every 20 to 30 rounds fired and must be constantly re-tightened.

Mechanical Data

The barrel measures 3.39 inches in overall length with six-groove rifling of unspecified twist. The reverse-tapered barrel has a muzzle swell which takes the place of the Colt M1911A1-type barrel bushing. This is a direct copy of the system employed by the Colt Officer's ACP pistol

introduced in 1976. In theory, this barrel swell mates in close alignment with the hole in the slide and should provide enhanced accuracy potential. In fact, the M-40 Firestar exhibited only barely acceptable accuracy with occasional and totally unexplained wild fliers. On our test specimen — purchased on the open market — the barrel's feed ramp was slightly off-center and deeply scored with milling marks.

The coiled recoil spring is wrapped around a full-length steel guide rod. The spring-loaded claw extractor is large and ample. The spring-loaded, inertia-type firing pin is equipped with a now all-too-common, three-piece, spring-loaded firing-pin safety.

This blocks the firing pin's forward travel until the trigger is pulled and a lever in the frame rotates upward to push the safety shaft in the slide upward, to permit the firing pin to fly forward after it has

Star's M-40 Firestar is an appealing package, but weighs too much for its size and provides a limited magazine capacity. Other blemishes preclude its selection by professional pistoleros.



THE "GUNNY SACK"

Some have suggested that the Firestar is small enough to be carried in an ankle holster. It may be, but I think it's far too heavy for that. Much superior is the increasingly popular DeSantis "Gunny Sack" belt-pouch holster (DeSantis Holster & Leather Goods Co., Dept. SOF, 149 Denton Avenue, New Hyde Park, NY 11040, phone: 516-354-8000, catalog \$3). First introduced in 1989, it has already proven so popular that, although patented, several others have attempted unsuccessfully to infringe on the DeSantis design.

Fabricated from nylon pack cloth, the Gunny Sack is available in black, blue, red, neon green, hot pink, woodland and desert camouflage. Suggested retail is \$49.95. In addition to the holster compartment it features two separate outer zipper pouches for credentials, handcuffs and other small equipment. The holster is included and is interchangeable for other sizes — all held in the inner compartment with adjustable retainer straps. Suede and soft black leather versions of the Gunny Sack are also available for \$99.95 each.

The Gunny Sack employs a unique Velcro tear-away release system. With the weak hand, grip the outside corner of the pouch and pull away from the body to expose the weapon and holster. The holster's pull-through retention system eliminates the need to release thumbbreaks. I use a suede Gunny Sack and can recommend it without reservations.

But then, I carry a Glock Model 23 in my Gunny Sack. Significantly lighter, with twice the ammunition capacity and none of the Firestar's irritating blemishes and idiosyncrasies, the Glock costs only a few dollars more.



The DeSantis "Gunny Sack" belt-pouch holster is an ideal concealment rig for medium-size handguns, such as the Star M-40 Firestar. Available in nylon pack cloth, soft black leather or suede, the Gunny Sack employs a unique Velcro tear-away release system, and features two separate outer zipper pouches for credentials, handcuffs and other small equipment. Suede version is illustrated.

been struck by the hammer.

The ringed Commander-style hammer rides in a notch cut into the tang on top of the frame's backstrap. By this means the possibility of hammer bite is completely eliminated. The ejector rides on the same axis pin as the hammer. Both the backstrap, frontstrap and the curved front-portion of the trigger guard have integrally-cast checkering.

Curved or squared-off trigger guards are further nonsense. Those firing from the Weaver position do not place the index finger of the support hand on the trigger guard, as it prevents wrapping this hand completely around the firing hand and, in any event, does nothing to steady the grip.

The slide stop lever, magazine catch/release tab and the ambidextrous, frame-mounted thumb-safety levers have large, sharply-checked sloping surfaces. The thumb safety can be rotated upward only with great difficulty to the "safe" position to block the hammer, with either the

hammer cocked or forward. Due to interference of the rubber grip panels, the location of the safety levers far aft of the operator's thumb and their resistance to upward rotation, it is impossible to place this pistol on "safe" while maintaining any kind of firing grip.

Those with large hands will also have difficulty rotating the thumb safety downward to the "fire" position during the final stage of the draw stroke as taught at Jeff Cooper's American Pistol Institute and by many others. There is no grip safety.

Another undesirable feature of the entire Firestar series is a magazine-disconnect safety, which blocks the trigger after the magazine has been removed. While possibly acceptable for those who want to store a pistol and magazine in separate drawers of a nightstand to inhibit tampering by small children, every professional gun handler, almost without exception, would prefer a

single-shot pistol sans magazine over an assemblage of steel parts that do not function as a firearm without the feeding device.

This said, with the magazine inserted and the thumb safety rotated down to the "fire" position, the unaltered factory-trigger pull weight on our test specimen was an altogether satisfactory and only mildly creepy 5.25 pounds.

The magazine-well is beveled to ease insertion of the six-round, single-column detachable box magazine. Of all-steel construction, all components except the follower spring also feature an electroless-nickel finish. The floorplate can be easily removed for maintenance and cleaning (which should be performed with the same regularity as the rest of the pistol). Magazines do not fall freely away when the magazine catch/release is depressed.

While they undoubtedly dampen perceived recoil, the Firestar's sharply-checked rubber grip panels will also hold little attraction for those pistoleros who carry firearms in the performance of their duties. Rubber grips are invariably tacky, and should you withdraw the weapon incorrectly from the holster during initiation of the draw stroke, it's almost impossible to correct your grip while presenting the pistol onto the target.

Each M-40 Firestar pistol comes packaged in a sturdy plastic storage box with one magazine, dual-tip screwdriver, cleaning rod, nylon- and brass-bristle bore brushes, a bore "mop" and an excellent instruction manual. Suggested retail price is \$510 for the blued version and \$540 for electroless-nickel finish.

Disassembly and Assembly

Those familiar with Browning design will find no mysteries in disassembling the Firestar. First, remove the magazine and clear the chamber. Then retract the slide just enough to align the white index marks on the left side of the slide and frame. Withdraw the slide stop. Push the slide group forward and off the frame. Remove the recoil spring and guide rod. Lift the barrel up at the chamber end and away from the slide.

Remove the rear sight to withdraw the firing-pin safety and then the firing pin from the slide. When removing the rear sight, hold one hand above the sight to prevent the firing-pin safety plunger and spring from sailing into the sunset. Remove the rubber grip panels before cleaning the frame group with solvent. No further disassembly should be required. Re-assemble in the reverse order.

Evaluation Firing

SOF's test and evaluation of the M-40 Firestar was conducted with 180- and 155-grain Jacketed Hollow Point ammunition supplied by Black Hills (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 5070, Rapid City, SD 57709; phone: 605-348-5150). The second and third rounds fired stubbed

against the feed ramp and failed to chamber. There were no further stoppages of any kind.

A total of 500 rounds were fired. There were no visible signs of excessive or accelerated wear on any component. However, after 100 rounds had been fired, the slide would jump forward into battery from the retracted position whenever a new magazine was inserted and hit smartly.

All firing was from 21 feet, from the Weaver position at YFA (Yavapai Firearms Academy) "option"-type targets, which have a squared-off head and torso. Their camouflage pattern inhibits shooters from looking over the gun for their hits, and in so doing throwing the weapon downward after the trigger has been pulled, causing low impact.

At this distance, the preferred 180-grain bullets consistently impacted 3 inches high. Nothing can be done to correct this, as the rear sight cannot be adjusted for elevation zero and filing the front-sight blade would only serve to raise the point of impact even further. We have no indication that front sights of greater height are available. Three inches could be the difference between striking the brain or merely parting your opponent's hair. This aside, as previously stated, accuracy overall was no more than merely acceptable.

Ejection borders on the violent, and empty cases are propelled up to 20 feet away and to the right of the pistol, albeit without damage — matters of no small concern to reloaders. Although it weighs almost a half-pound more than the Glock Model 23 and has soft rubber grips, the M-40 Firestar has noticeably greater recoil and considerable muzzle climb. The Glock barrel's axis is lower and more in line with the shooting arm, so recoil is perceived more as a rearward push than muzzle-jumping torque. Nevertheless, the Firestar pistol in caliber .40 S&W whips about no more than any .45 ACP hardball handgun. Those with large hands will find the grip portion of the frame to be a bit small. A magazine with a finger extension would be of benefit.

Black Hills loads Hornady XTP bullets in their .40 S&W ammunition. At this time, the 180-grain Hornady JHP XTP bullet provides the best performance available in this caliber. Velocity averages about 950 fps in the Firestar's 3.39-inch barrel. Expansion in soft tissue is stellate-shaped, with points averaging .68 caliber and the flats at about .64 caliber. There is usually no fragmentation and this bullet will penetrate about 14.2 inches of living tissue.

Light bullets traveling at high velocities should usually be avoided in all handgun calibers. The .40 S&W is no exception, and I cannot recommend the 155-grain bullets. They leave the Firestar's muzzle at about 1,150 fps and will invariably over-expand, fragment and under-penetrates.



Star M-40 Firestar, field-stripped.

STAR M-40 FIRESTAR SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:**40 S&W.
Operation: Locked-breech, short-recoil, semiautomatic, single-action trigger system with frame-mounted, ambidextrous thumb-safety levers. Also has firing-pin safety and magazine-disconnect safety.
- Weight empty:** 30 ounces.
Overall length: 6.5 inches.
Height: 4.61 inches.
Width: 1.1-inch (at the grips).
Barrel: Six-groove rifling with reverse tapered exterior and muzzle swell, which takes the place of a conventional barrel bushing.
- Barrel length:** 3.39 inches.
Magazine: Single-column, detachable box-type with six-round capacity.
- Sights:** Forward-sloped, blade-type front sight (0.124-inch wide) with single white dot; adjustable-for windage zero. Fixed, open square-notch (0.132-inch width) rear sight with a white dot on either side of the notch.
- Finish:** Salt-blued or electroless nickel (Starvel).
Price: \$510 (blued) or \$540 (Starvel), complete with plastic storage box, cleaning tools and one magazine.
- Manufacturer:** Star Bonifacio Echeverria S.A., 20600 Eibar (Guipuzcoa), Spain.
Importer: Interarms, Dept. SOF, Number Ten Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22313; phone: 703-548-1400.
- T&E summary:** Reliable. Too heavy. Mediocre accuracy. Thumb safety exhibits defective ergonomics. Lacking quality control. Undesirable magazine-disconnect safety. Shoots high at gunfight ranges and cannot be adjusted. Surpassed by competing designs costing little more.

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 4. CETME C3
 5. Colt AR-15 series and CAR-15 series
 6. Daewoo K-1, K-2, Max 1 and Max 2
 7. Fabrique Nationale FN/FAL, FN/LAR and FNC
 8. FAMAS MAS223
 9. Heckler & Koch HK-91, H-93, HK-94 and PSG-1
 10. MAC 10 and MAC 11
 11. SKS with detachable magazine
 12. SIG AMT, SIG 500 Series, and SIG PE-57
 13. Springfield Armory BM59 and SAR-48
 14. Sterling MK-6 and SAR
 15. Steyr AUG
 16. Valmet M62, M71S and M78
 17. ArmaLite AR-180 Carbine
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19. Calico M-900 Assault Carbine
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 4. INTRATEC TEC-9
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 7. Calico M-900
- C. All of the following shotguns:
1. Franchi SPAS 12 and LAW 12
 2. Gilbert Equipment Company Striker 12 and SWD Street Sweeper
 3. Encom CM-55

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE MAGAZINE

BATTLE BLADES

Continued from page 23

Benchmade's future indeed looks bright as it finishes its best year to date. With several new models to introduce at this year's SHOT Show, the company sees its ability to produce a multitude of blade-ware coming to maturity by the end of 1991. With the bulk of America's cutlery manufacturers content to maintain their status quo, Benchmade sees itself occupying a niche where only the most concerned designers will turn to when enhancing their own lines.

"We will always place the appropriate emphasis on our own line," decrees Les, "but our pride lies in making the best blade-ware possible, whether it be for ourselves or a valued client."

Battle Blades heartily encourages those of you looking for a truly field-worthy combat folder to contact Benchmade Knives for ordering information. The Brend Combat Talon is a premier piece of bench-made blade-ware as well as a pristine example of what this exciting Oregon knife company can do. Ask for one of their brochures when you order, the rest of their inventory is mighty fine as well.

For further information contact Benchmade Knives, Dept. SOF, 15875-G, SE 114th St., Clackamas, OR 97015; phone: 503-655-6004.

EL SALVADOR

Continued from page 37

On 31 March 1986, General Order #11 awarded the JSRM to those assigned to the U.S. MilGroup in El Salvador for more than 60 days. This award is currently the only recognition given the men who served under the most challenging of circumstances as the "Double Nickle." Certainly the successful execution of the war on their part is indeed service "superior to that which would normally be expected during combat." Further, it supports Major Jose Rodriguez's (J-5, South-Com, 1986) statement that those assigned to the unit participated directly in furthering vital national-security interests and foreign-policy objectives of the United States. It is an award which says everything by saying nothing.

It would seem our veterans of the war in El Salvador deserve more than such a mute accolade.

Greg Walker is a former Special Forces NCO who served in Central America during 1982-85. He is currently executive editor of Fighting Knives magazine and is a long-standing member of the Special Operations Association. Walker is pres-

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ently working on a book concerning U.S. special operations, for Ballantine Books.✕

CROATIA

Continued from page 41

sympathy for the pilot.

"He should have stayed home with his family," one militiaman said. "He should not have been fighting for those communist bastards in Belgrade." As we were in no-man's-land under some Serb-occupied hills less than a klick away, we didn't stay long at the crash site and soon returned to Petrinja with the MiG's flight recorder and a few papers recovered from the pilot.

At our base again, we passed a few days giving a group of Croats the benefit of our accumulated years of experience in small-unit operations. Desperately keen to learn, our students were typical of Croatian militia. About half had no military training at all.

One Croat had served in the French Foreign Legion for about a half-year, but had returned home when Serbians attacked his village. Another was a federal army soldier with several years' service, who deserted rather than fight his own people. Motivated by the desire to defend their homeland and stay alive in combat, our

group absorbed everything we could teach them in the short time available. Some minor tactics, weapons handling, simple demolitions and sniping techniques formed the bulk of our brief curriculum, then our students were called away to join the intensifying fight in Petrinja.

Two days later, as we were on our way out of Croatia, a drive led by 20 tanks pushed Croat defenders out of the city and back across the bridge. They still hold one end of this vital road link, which they have prepared for demolition should a single Serb approach it. We didn't hear if any tanks came within range of our platter charges, nor if any of our students fell in the fighting.

Zagreb At War

Normally, only 600,000 people live in Zagreb. Refugees displaced by battles to the south and east swelled the population to nearly 1 million, but even so, life in the city had been little-affected. A curfew kept people home at night, camouflage uniforms were much in evidence and police roadblocks slowed traffic on several main roads; but stores were full, and people seemed to be going about their business as usual.

The day SOF's team arrived coincided with the first air raid on Zagreb, and as we stood at a sidewalk cafe watching a pair of MiG-21s buzz the city center, we knew a few things would change in the inhabitants' lives.

Happily, the quantity and quality of the superb local beer was not impaired. It was harder to get, though, because every time air raid sirens went off, people ran in all directions trying to get into the nearest bomb shelter. Most pub owners locked up and ran after them. Once, a cop with a scoped hunting rifle, not recognizing we were adults and capable of deciding our own fates, even chased us out of our comfortable seats in the town square. Usually, they didn't bother.

Within minutes of the sirens, Zagreb's streets would be deserted, to stay that way two or three hours until all clear sounded. Federal jets, if they appeared at all, would usually just fly around a few minutes at low level and then go away. A few times they unloaded rockets at TV-transmission towers with no effect other than making noise, but they did keep the city shut down for several hours each day. An after-dark blackout of all lights visible from outside was a bit of a nuisance, but must have saved a bunch of money on the city's electrical bill. More of a problem was the stopping of all elevators, requiring us to climb four flights of stairs (after a few beers) to get to our rooms. Altogether not quite London during the Blitz.

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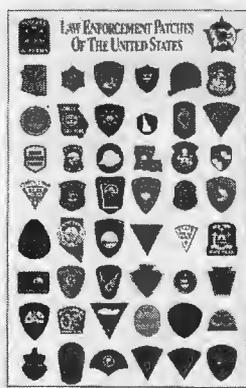
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This quote, from Lord Macaulay's "Horatius," well describes attitudes of the Croats. They view the present conflict as an attempt by Serbs to destroy them as a people and erase their history and heritage. Deliberate destruction of 1,000-year-old Catholic churches and other monuments by federal forces has greatly strengthened that view, along with Croatian determination.

Yugoslavia no longer exists as a country. What will emerge from the wreckage is still open to conjecture, as well as influence. For reasons best known to George Bush's administration, the United States has not used its great moral weight to resolve the political or military conflict — you might ask your congressman to find out why.

Bob Jordan, an Irishman, has fought in Southeast Asia, Africa and Central America. He has previously written several stories for SOF.✉

ANIMAL

Continued from page 51

about anti-hunter's activities nationwide and the WLFA's "Protect What's Right" public-education program has 750 sportsmen's clubs promoting hunting to local schools and civic organizations.

The Future

Groups fighting for sportsmen's rights do not use terrorism to promote their case. SCI's Sportsmen Against Hunger is an extension of the tradition of sportsmen caring about others and wildlife. The programs of the WLFA and NRA are bringing the truth about hunters and conservation to urban Americans, while Putting People First battles to expose the animal rights movement as a fraud blowing up university research facilities and condemning American veterans to wheelchairs.

There is a real threat to America from the Luke Dommer-types and their organizations, who want more and more to see hunting go into Dommer's dust bin of history. When that is accomplished, the next step is the disarming of citizens, a very real goal of America's militant few who want to dictate how we live.

Galen Geer is SOF's Contributing Editor for Outdoor Affairs.✉

SEAL

Continued from page 65

support the facade. At 0400 the ground war commenced; Deitz's platoon safely back at their base having breakfast when the

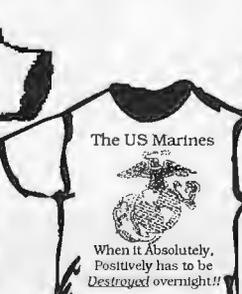
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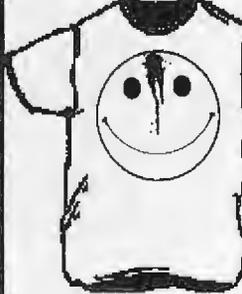
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first tanks rolled into Kuwait.

"We were happy to have pulled the op off," recalls the young officer. "But when the word came down the Iraqis had immediately ordered elements of at least two divisions to the area we'd been in, well, that news made our day." Indeed, the Iraqis were completely unnerved at the massive explosions and clearly marked boat lanes, not to mention the furious machine-gun and cannon fire. It was an enormously successful operation for NAVSPECWAR as a whole; more importantly, it proved the worth of the deception program as a viable tactic for future operations.

Aftermath Of Desert Storm

The SEALs performed over 270 missions during their deployment to the Gulf. What was the difference between Desert Storm and earlier, less successful engagements? "We learned from our mistakes and were smarter this time around," a senior enlisted SEAL said.

Commander Tom Campbell, currently executive officer for the NAVSPECWAR Center, offers this insight: "The admiral demanded SEALs be used as SEALs, in a maritime environment with land-based operations well within the criteria set. We demonstrated there is no better maritime/riverine special-warfare package available than ours, which I believe is a priority consideration for the future of SEAL operations within USSOCOM."

Despite setbacks of earlier campaigns, and in spite of often inaccurate assessments and attacks by media military "experts" on their credibility, the SEALs proved their worth in the SpecWar arena of Desert Storm.

"We're not resting on our laurels," an ST-5 operator comments. "To us, the only easy day was yesterday. Once we got back from Saudi it was business as usual. The teams have gotten better, smarter, more effective. It's good to be a winner again."

Greg Walker is executive editor of Fighting Knives magazine and SOF's Battle Blades columnist. His next book, available in 1992 through Ballantine Books, is a historical review of special operations to include their role and impact during Operation Desert Storm.

CONTRAS

Continued from page 45

headquarters in Costa Rica.

Nancy was a slim, dark young woman who said she was willing to type, work the phones, anything. Pastora quickly installed her as his official mistress; she even traveled inside Nicaragua to base camps alongside him. She began to control his appointments: who Pastora would see, what favors he would grant, what initia-

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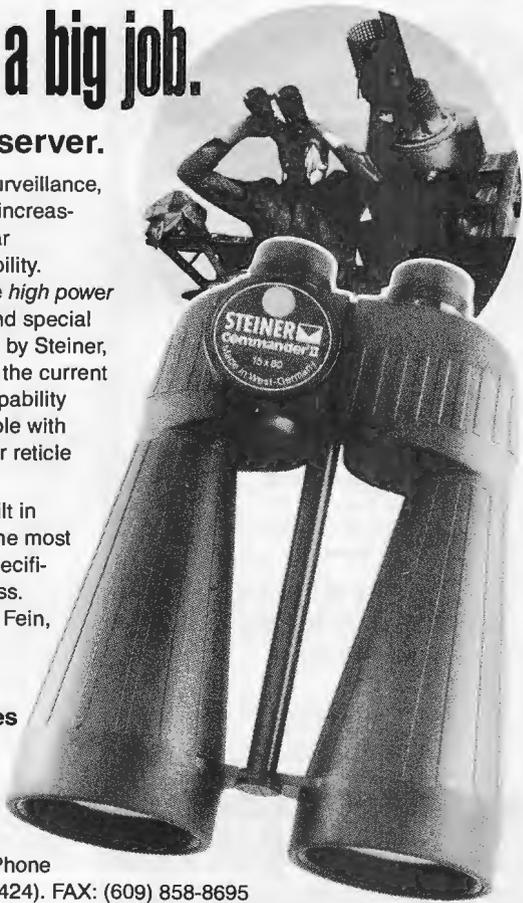
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tives he would undertake. "It was very feudal," recalls one of his aides.

It was not unusual for Pastora to have a mistress. He had 22 children by God-knows-how-many women. Even among Pastora's men, steeped in Latin machismo, his behavior seemed excessive. Some of the men whispered that Pastora was trying to compensate for his diminutive genitalia, so small they were known to his troops as *el frijole* — the bean. Such was Pastora's ego that he knew about the whispers, and was delighted.

But Nancy seemed to be different than the ordinary starry-eyed peasant girl Pastora usually shackled up with. Many of Pastora's advisers began to suspect she was really a Sandinista agent. Nancy was worming her way into too many things — like contra efforts to establish an internal front of saboteurs inside Managua, for instance — that were really none of her business. And much of her advice to Pastora seemed so bad, so disruptive, that it had to be calculated.

For Pastora's Eyes Only

Finally a group of the men confronted Pastora. "She's a spy," they told him. "You've got to get rid of her."

"No, no, you're wrong," Pastora insisted. "She was a spy. But since I have been making love to her, she has abandoned the Sandinistas." Pastora had craftily deprogrammed her with his super-advanced libidinous technique.

It seems that Pastora should have studied *The Joy of Sex* a little harder. Two years later, Nancy flew back to Managua. Her real name was Marielos Serrano Guillen, and as so many of the men had suspected, she was a Sandinista state security agent. She told the Sandinistas what Pastora's monthly CIA aid was, gave them addresses of all his safe houses inside Nicaragua and turned over all his radio codes. She was the star witness at a series of spy trials.

Many of Pastora's advisers wondered if she had managed to tip Sandinistas off earlier about several contra operations that mysteriously failed — particularly a sabotage ring that contras and the CIA had labored mightily to set up. The ring, equipped with an impressive arsenal of the CIA's top-of-the-line espionage tools — firebombs, tapeplayers and megaphones to broadcast recorded firefights and panic neighborhoods, even an FM radio transmitter that would enable the ring to break into government programming with a prerecorded Pastora speech — was busted without warning in February 1983.

Glenn Garvin's book, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo: The CIA and the Contras*, will be published in March by Brassey's. Garvin covered the war from 1983-1989 for the *Washington Times*.

(Next Month: "Postcards from the Contras" continues, bringing more rebel ro-

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mance; contras on Fantasy Island; the Texas millionaire, Indiana rancher and other colorful gringo eccentrics; messages from "the Garcia family" [better known as the CIA] and more ...)✕

CARISTO

Continued from page 55

been moved.

SOF: Can you get into some of your ops in Phnom Penh?

Caristo: I was advising the Khmer Serei, the democratic Free Cambodia movement that overthrew Sihanouk and also fought the Khmer Rouge. We had intelligence assets in Phnom Penh, one of whom was a relative of Sihanouk who was in the Royal Cambodian Ballet and was one of our best assets.

These agents were very distrustful, especially of other Cambodians. So the only way I could get the intelligence was to go into Phnom Penh and talk to them alone. And I felt confident enough about my language skills that riding back and forth along that road didn't bother me. I just didn't give a rat's ass. I'd spend three or four days in Phnom Penh, hang out at the ballet, eat lots of good Cambodian food.

I would ride from Tinh Bien on the Viet-Cambodian border into Phnom Penh on my moped, using French documents that were made up by our tradecraft people. I'd just ride back and forth at will, meet my contacts, do all kinds of exotic stuff, chase Cambodian women — I had to do something at that end to make risking my life worthwhile — half the time the intelligence sure wasn't worth it!

SOF: Didn't you run into Khmer Rouge roadblocks?

Caristo: Sure, I'd get stopped any number of times by Khmer Rouge. I'd tell them I was French, on my way to Phnom Penh from my plantation, that they were doing a great job kicking the Americans out, that the rubber business would be back to normal soon and we could get back together. They'd give me food, and we'd eat sticky rice and shoot the shit. I'd tell some ethnic jokes about the Vietnamese, and they'd laugh. Then I would head on down the road.

SOF: And they just made you for a French planter?

Caristo: Yeah, just an ugly old Frenchman. French was my first language, because my Indian grandmother, who was raised in Quebec, spoke French and she raised me when I was a kid — both of my parents were in the service during World War II. But this almost got me in trouble once; I ran into some Frenchmen in Phnom Penh, and they told me I spoke funny French, and asked if I was *Canadienne*. And of course I'd just said I was French, so I told them "*Je suis separatiste*," that I had

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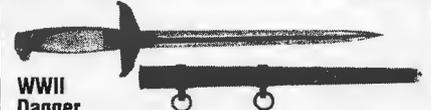


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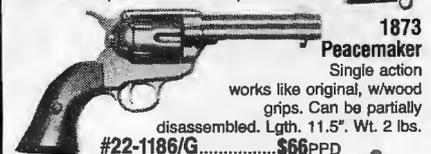
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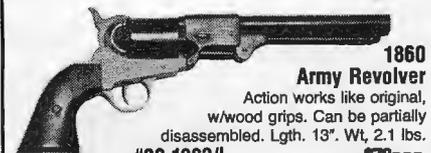
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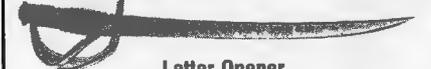
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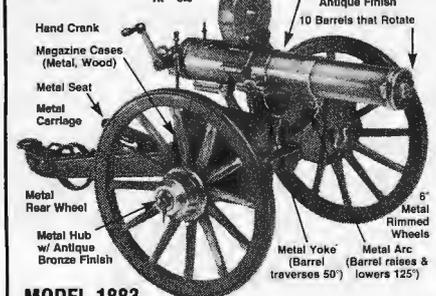
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been in Canada working with the separatist movement, and they thought that was cool.

SOF: Did you carry a weapon?

Caristo: No, if I'd been caught with a weapon, that would have really exposed my ass. The only thing I carried was a knife — I always carried a knife.

SOF: You couldn't make that trip in a day could you? Did you just bivouac, or stay in a village?

Caristo: No, I'd stop at Wat Phnom, the main Buddhist temple in the area, I knew all the monks there — this is another story, but I went through a real fascination with Buddhism and spent a couple of weeks there as an apprentice monk once, shaved my head, the whole works.

But all this Cambodian business was pretty crazy, because at the time I was also heading up Det. A at USARV, so I had responsibilities in-country that I had to deal with.

SOF: It amazes me, having spent most of my military career in the peacetime Army, that the Army would let you operate in such a creative fashion.

Caristo: Yeah, we were creative. I honestly feel I was unique because I was willing to take these chances and do this stuff. I'd been over there so long and knew the system so well that I had literally no "adult supervision." I ran my ops and I got away with my ops and I had a reputation, so no one bothered me. When you were in true special ops no one bothered you if you were producing.

The problem with a lot of the other folks was they couldn't produce. They were structured, they couldn't speak the language, or they spoke very poor Vietnamese — just enough to get into trouble — and they couldn't speak Cambodian, they couldn't speak French, and so on.

I had my problems with the military bureaucracy, because I was so individualistic. I went for a year without getting a haircut once. My boss at USARV, when I was leaving, told me "You're the finest combat soldier I've known in 27 years in the Army — but Major Caristo, your hair is too long and your pants are too tight, and that will go against you when I write your OER." But I knew the languages and the system so well that I could get results. I could tell you stories — but I won't. Gen. Singlaub would be really pissed if he ever found out about some of the stuff we did, not so much ops but just crazy things.

At this point, Caristo asked me to turn off the tape recorder, and he told me an anecdote that we can't get into, but it didn't involve anything seriously illegal. In fact, it was fairly civilized by Special Operations standards, though it took a gutsy guy to pull it off. He was just worried his old boss, Jack Singlaub, would be angry. Somehow, I doubt that Gen. Singlaub would mind.

Chuck Fremont is a Special Forces NCO and frequent contributor to SOF.✕

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POW OPs

Continued from page 59

while serving as an adviser to an ARVN unit in the Delta. He had been kept alive until just prior to a local election. Then he was paraded into a large village, where the population was assembled and his tongue was cut out as a form of intimidation to keep the populace from voting.

Rest in peace, Orien — you were a good friend. I'll never forget our last jump at Fort Bragg. It was the first time we jumped a chopper and we had heard about "chute inversions." We flipped a coin to see who would die first — I lost — Airborne! But I guess I won in the long run.

Legionnaires Talk to CIA

Another report came into my hands in early 1968: a CIA document that originated in Paris. In 1954, following the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, a large number of French Foreign Legionnaires and colonial troops chose to remain in North Vietnam. These "stay-behinds" married Vietnamese women, had families, and some were employed as engineers in the mining regions of North Vietnam.

Around 1967, the North Vietnamese Politburo was becoming increasingly paranoid about the vectoring of U.S. attack aircraft into North Vietnam. Finally their paranoia and ethnocentrism overcame their rational thinking and they expelled all the French stay-behinds from North Vietnam.

A large number of the repatriated troops were debriefed by the Paris CIA station on their return to France. The debriefings, summarized in the report, focused on a number of topics, one of which was the returnees' knowledge of U.S. POW/MIAs in North Vietnam. But they produced little information as to where POWs were being held or their final disposition. The only common thread mentioned by all returnees was the mutilation of captured airmen by local villagers.

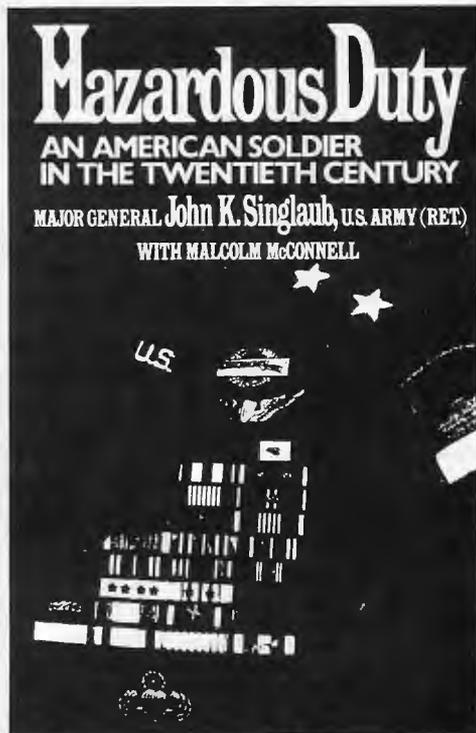
Many times, according to the report, prior to the arrival of PAVN troops at the site, U.S. airmen were held down and fingers, hands and arms were severed in retaliation for bombing which had killed a relative or friend. When I read this, I turned to Colonel Hada — who was also reading a copy of the report — and we both stated simultaneously, "These guys will never come out!"

They never did.

Colonel Fred Caristo spent eight combat tours in Vietnam. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry during a POW rescue operation in Cambodia in 1966.

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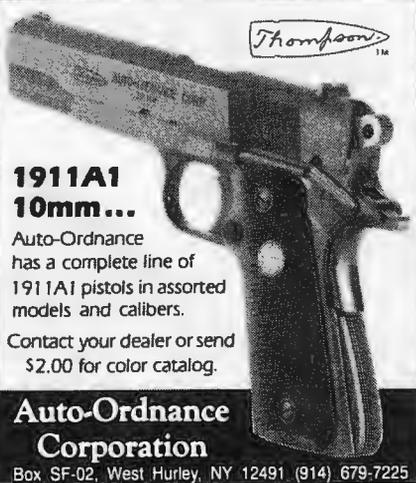


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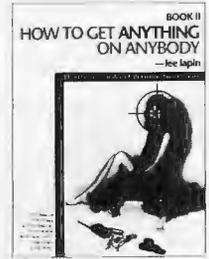
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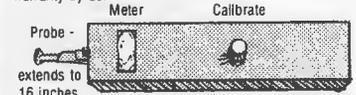
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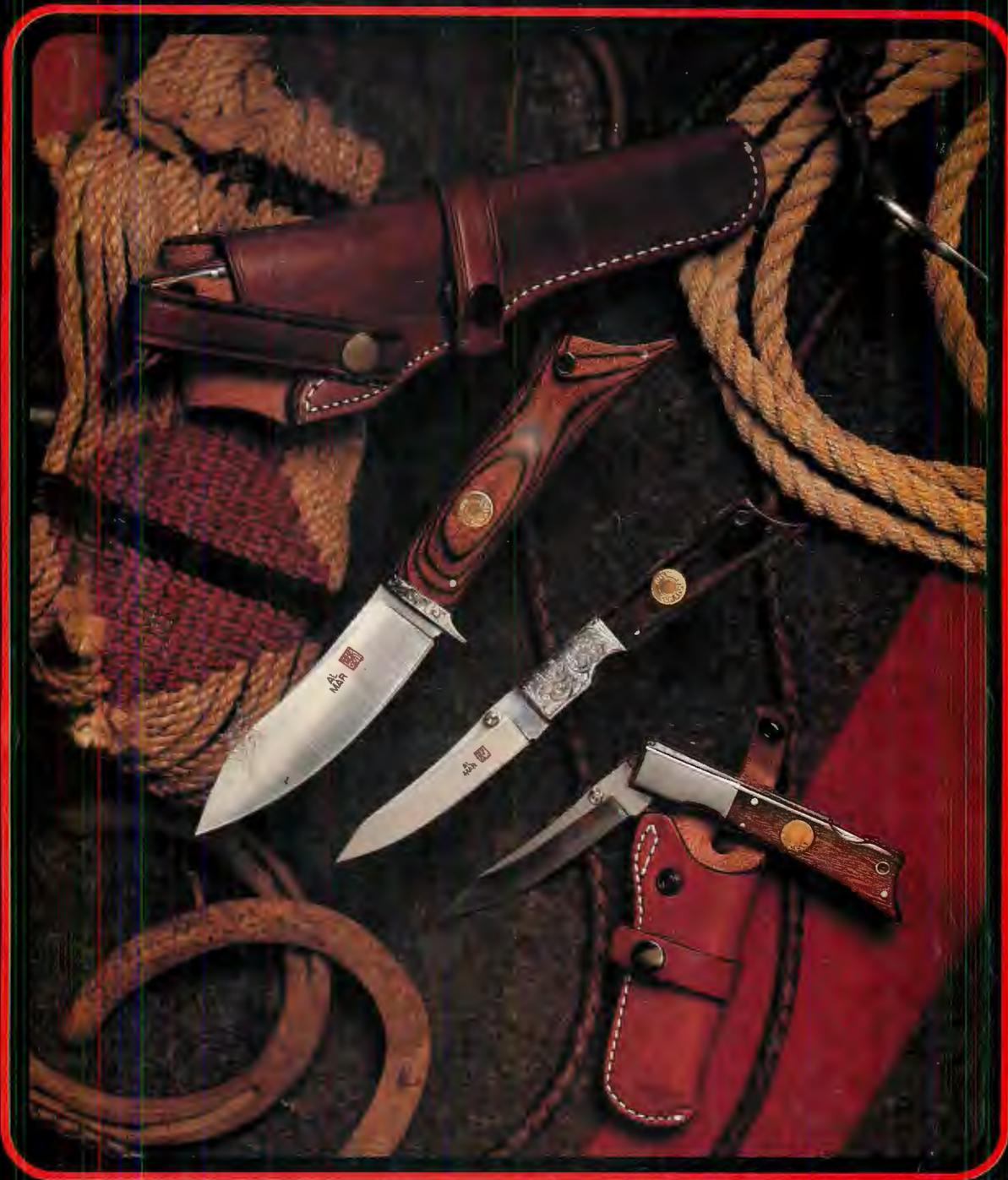
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