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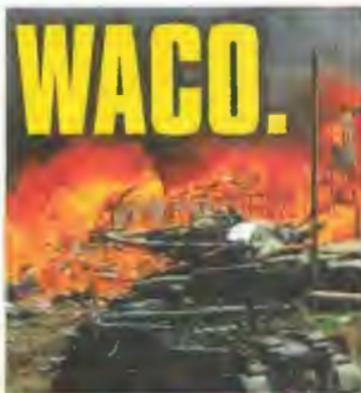
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# SOF

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2000 • VOL. 25 NO. 9



Crown Copyright/Cpl. Jim Elmer, RLC  
Inset: Al J. Venter

### On the Cover

A British Para scans a riverbank in war-torn Sierra Leone. Even with Foday Sankoh in custody, his punk warriors continue the bloodletting. SOF is there flying Hinds against the rebels. See story, page 58.

## FEATURES

### OMEGA PROVING GROUND by Clint Smith

#### THE GARANDS

Forerunner of the M14 and M16, the durable and reliable Garand still holds a place — not only in history — but in today's firearms bazaar. \_\_\_\_\_

39

### THE ULTIMATE HANDGUN COURSE by Peter G. Kokalis

The Team Tactics course at Thunder Ranch is off the scale when it comes to mental/emotional/physical stress, advanced techniques, and battle-site choreography. \_\_\_\_\_

40

### COLOMBIA IN THE RING, Part II by Dr. Tom Marks

Colombia jettisoned the southern region (where the U.S. will assist with counter-narcotics ops), while in the remainder of the country the Colombian military opts to go it solo in COIN operations. \_\_\_\_\_

44

### FROM MY COLD, DEAD HANDS by James L. Pate

Like running with the bulls in Pamplona, Al Gore's White House juggernaut will find it tough to stay ahead of the NRA's "horns." Get the story on the NRA's Charlotte, NC, Convention — its fervor, its record-breaking attendance and its welcome new militancy. \_\_\_\_\_

50

### THE NO-NONSENSE .45 by Peter G. Kokalis

The Les Baer 1911 Thunder Ranch Special, designed by Clint Smith and Les Baer Custom, Inc., is a no-frills weapon for no-nonsense confrontations. \_\_\_\_\_

54

### MERC GUNSLINGERS IN SIERRA LEONE by Al J. Venter

Fly to picturesque Sierra Leone, see a show, catch a hop on a Hind Mi-24 — and cap some *very* deserving rebels. \_\_\_\_\_

58

### THE TEST OF BLOOD by John J. Culbertson

Every combat troop faces his, or her, first time under fire. The author lost his cherry as a Marine, with a blocking force at the Song Thu Bon River. \_\_\_\_\_

64



Dr. Tom Marks



Peter G. Kokalis



Al J. Venter

## COLUMNS

### Command Guidance 4

Gore's Anti-Gun Agenda

### Flak 6

Love The Mag And RKB

### Bulletin Board 16

Criminals Love Trigger Locks

### Combat Weaponcraft 26

Let There Be Light

### I Was There 30

Louie the Rat

### World Sitrep 32

### Adventure Quartermaster 34

Knives For Dress-Up

### Supply Depot 75

### Classifieds 78

### Advertisers' Index 81

### Product Index 81

### Sound Off 82

A Right Worth Fighting For

# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Dave Kopel

## Gore's Anti-Gun Agenda

What's in the future for the anti-gun agenda should Al Gore be elected president? Just drop by the web site for Handgun Control, Inc. to find out.

There's only a short interval from the keyboards at HCI to the lips of the President and Vice President. On their site, you'll find details about what comes next — but not what comes after that. Nor will you find any details on what HCI Chair Sarah Brady says is her long-term objective: a "needs-based licensing" system, in which gun ownership is allowed only when the police determine that the would-be owner "needs" the gun.

What would the Gore Administration push for, if it achieved the current items on the anti-gun agenda?

Perhaps the best guide is the 1994 report of the White House Working Group, a secret memo which was uncovered by *U.S. News & World Report*. Here's the long-term strategy.

First, attack the nonexistent "gun show loop hole" is only a warm-up. The ultimate objective is to abolish all firearms privacy. Every firearms transfer — including a Christmas gift from one's cousin — would have to be routed through a federally licensed dealer, and recorded by the government.

A government license would also be needed to purchase ammunition.

All currently owned firearms would have to be registered with the federal government, and a non-registration would be a federal crime. During the Democrat primaries, Bill Bradely called for national gun registration, while Gore rejected Bradely's plan as politically unrealistic. Gore was correct; for registration to be politically possible, it needs to be built on an existing system of licensing. Salami tactics are the essence of successful gun control.

The Clinton/Gore proposal for a national ID card for handgun purchasers is a sensible "moderate" and "common sense" step toward the goal of total licensing and registration for all guns. Politically speaking, it

is best in the initial stages of gun licensing can be implemented liberally (as rifle licensing was in Britain in the 1920s and 30s) so that most people can get the license. Once licensing is in place, the bureaucracy can take care of gradually tightening the licensing process (without ever needing to ask the legislature to change the law), so that hardly anyone qualifies for a license (as rifle licensing is enforced in Britain).

While the White House licensing and registration system would apply to all guns, especially strict rule would be imposed on owners of handguns and self-loading long guns (such as the Marlin Camp Carbine or the Ruger .22 rifles). Appropriating a term of art from Canadian gun law, the White House would designate all handguns and all self loading long guns as "restricted weapons." Owners of "restricted weapons" could possess them only at home, at work or at a target range.

In other words, it would be a federal crime to go bird-hunting with a Remington 1100 shotgun. Handgun hunting, which is legal in every state in the union, would vanish.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore strenuously insist that none of the laws which they have signed, and none of the regulations they have created, have interfered with hunting. Although Clinton and Gore are not correct in their claim, their "restricted weapons" agenda would remove their pro-hunting mask, and take away the primary sporting arms of millions of American hunters.

It would also be a federal crime to carry a handgun in public for protection — even for people with state licenses authorizing them to carry.

The White House memo also recommends consideration of a federal law to outlaw "the carrying of firearms in ... work sites." The White House proposal would override current laws in many states, which allows a person running a dry cleaning shop

*Continued on page 72*

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# SOG A Photo History of the Secret Wars

**SOG: A PHOTO HISTORY OF THE SECRET WARS**  
by John L. Plaster

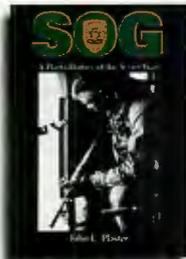
In 1972, when the top-secret Studies and Observations Group was disbanded, the U.S. military ordered its thousands of photos and documents burned so that a book like this would not be possible. But

some SOG veterans had brought back with them personal copies of "official" photos of SOG in action, as well as snapshots, and kept them secret for more than three decades. While writing his history of SOG, John Plaster contacted his secret-war comrades and uncovered this wealth of never-before-seen photos. More than 700 photos bring to life the stories of the SOG heroes whose names had only been whispered before, as well as all 10 Medal of Honor winners. See for yourself what really happened

behind the lines: Operation Tailwind, Son Tay, Hachet Force operations, Bright Light rescues, HALO insertions, string extractions and much more. Includes first ever photos of U.S. forgeries of enemy documents! 8 1/2 x 11, hardcover, photos, 496 pp.

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Far left: Hachet Force troops advance along a Ho Chi Minh Trail side road, 1967.

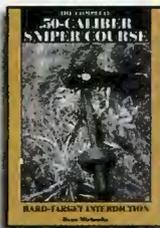


Upper left: U.S. Navy SEAL Barry Enoch during a raid in the Mekong Delta. SOG employed SEALs on numerous POW rescue attempts in the Delta.

Lower left: CCC RT members ride ladders after emergency extraction from Laos.

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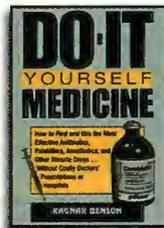
Nowhere are the big guns covered in more detail. Michaelis, a former sniping instructor with U.S. Army Special Forces, has developed a comprehensive course to teach every aspect of the sniper's art. Includes the author's exclusive program of instruction and details on the history, equipment and training of hard-target interdiction. 8 1/2 x 11, softcover, photos, illus., 576 pp. #10011336

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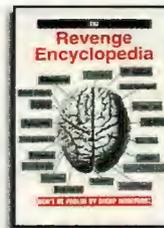
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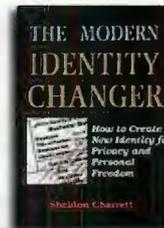
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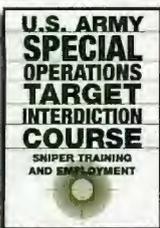
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# FLAK

## Love The Mag And RKB



Love your magazine. Congrats R.K. Brown on re-election to the NRA Board. You're a good man. I took your advice and upgraded my NRA membership to life, joined a shooting range/ gun club and became active in the fight to keep the Second Amendment alive.

Gary A. Swain  
Manahawkin, NJ

## Leatherwood Scopes



I found an article in one of the *SOF* magazines in the "Adventure Quartermaster" section where you had tested and given a good report on a rifle scope by the leather works [sic] corporation. I now can't find any information on this particular scope? Any help in the matter would be greatly appreciated. I enjoy reading *SOF* every month.

Janett McGary  
via E-mail

*The writeup you refer to was probably the recent mention of Jim Leatherwood's new Leatherwood Sporter™ Self-Ranging rifle scope, which is an automatic-ranging scope that accommodates a variety of calibers and loads by the use of a precise quick-change cam ring. An innovative design engineer, Leatherwood's name became well-known relative to rifle scopes when he invented the Leatherwood ART (automatic ranging telescope) scope mount before serving as an infantry officer in Vietnam; the Army issued the Leatherwood ART-TEL, and Leatherwood subsequently developed the ART II and MPC (Military Police Civilian) scope.*

*His new Leatherwood Sporter™ scope is a novel and unique departure for rifle scopes — news because one scope serves a variety of calibers or loads without switching cams. For further information you can contact local dealer or check his web site at leatherwoodoptics.com .*

## .25 You Have With You

I really enjoyed Dick Culver's article "Front Sight ... Press" and it made me think of another officer's favorite handgun — a .25.

I had 15 months of combat in Korea as an intelligence officer. In March 1952 I was loaned to the Korean Army for three months to work on their intelligence capability. One

day I noticed a major in Korean Intelligence carefully cleaning and lubricating a miniature .25 auto. I was wearing my .45 in a shoulder holster.

I pointed to his little .25 and shaking my head said, "too small." He smiled as he lovingly patted the .25 and said, "a very nice little gun."

Then he went on to tell me that the previous month he was on a mission behind the Chinese lines and was captured. Two Chinese soldiers were escorting him farther to the rear. The preliminary search failed to find

the little .25 hidden between his shoulder blades. His guards were a bit careless and he was able to get his .25 and after shooting both his guards, returned to our lines. I had to agree that it was a nice little gun.

Oscar Stroh  
Harrisburg, Pa.

## Vote, Vote, Vote

I would like to know which of the candidates would *Soldier Of Fortune* recommend for President, Bush or Gore? I now you can only suggest, but I read your magazine every month, and like the editorials the best, thus trust your judgment.

Constance A. McClusky  
Haddonfield, NJ

*Based on their Second Amendment stands if nothing else, we feel it is crucial that George W. Bush be elected over Gore. And to do this we have to get out the vote: Make sure you are registered, then make sure your friends and family are registered, and that they get out of their chairs and get to the polls on election day. Never before has the entire Bill of Rights been so vulnerable: This election is absolutely crucial.*

## Heh, Heh, Heh

So, what do you think of a president who can't even be an Arkansas lawyer?

Fred Devins  
via E-mail

*Same as we always did: not much.*

## Readers to the Rescue



In response to a reader question in your June 2000 issue, concerning a manufacturer of outdoor equipment named London Bridge, here is the mailing address and phone number of the company:

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## How Much Power?

I am a young college student giving a research paper on gun control in America. I would like to ask how *Soldier Of Fortune* stands on gun control and how much authority the government should have (if any) over the buy and sell of guns. Thank you.

Chris  
via E-mail

*Our position is that "gun control" per se has very little effect on keeping the guns out of the hands of criminals, since, being criminals, they do not abide by the law. As for how much authority the government (we assume you mean the federal government) should have over the buy-and-sell, we think it should have no more power than granted it by the Constitution. The Constitution clearly states the federal government cannot even infringe upon the right of the citizens to keep and bear arms. However, the federal*

*government is authorized to regulate interstate commerce, and it has the ability to tax. It is under the interstate commerce provisions, and tax laws, that existing federal gun regulations have been written. Whether or not existing federal laws and regulations are within the intent of the interstate commerce provisions is open to debate; it certainly seems they are not within the spirit of the Bill of Rights, and the power to tax is not being used to raise revenue as was intended, but to prohibit.*

## Bash Bashing



I feel compelled to speak out on behalf of the many women who serve honorably and credibly in our Armed Forces. Fred Reed's article took our hard-won respect down a few notches. Although his point is well taken

that certain people are not cut out for certain jobs, a few bad apples can spoil it for the rest.

Over the years I have worn the uniform of three different branches: Army, Vietnam-era; Navy, with much duty at Camp Pendleton with the Marines; and now in an Air Force tactical aerovac squadron. I have encountered many impressive men and women in the military. On the other hand, I

have also met various jerks, wimps, and wussies of both genders who range from the useless to embarrassing burdens. The letters printed in Reed's article lament how women strain the "social welfare system" within the military. May I point out that many a First Sergeant has had major headaches dealing with male soldiers "with attitudes," for fighting and brawling, drunk and disorderly, refusing vaccinations, not to mention international headline-grabbing reports of rape.

We all understand that this represents only a small percentage of the troops, and that the majority continue to serve professionally day in and day out. This includes the vital resources of the female component of today's military.

For those of you who still object to women in uniform, I apologize for being such a nuisance to you, but hold your disdain. If you ever get injured out there in some far-flung AO it might be me who flies in, risking my own neck to save your sorry macho ass!

Captain Debbie Golden

*Of course, physical courage is not gender-based, nor did Reed say it was. Physical strength, however, in very sweeping terms, is. The objections were to troops who do not have the physical ability for a specific MOS*

*Continued on page 12*

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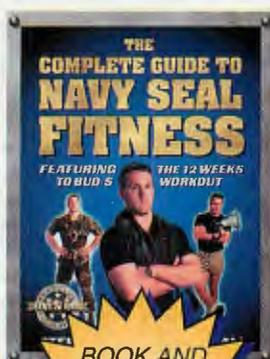
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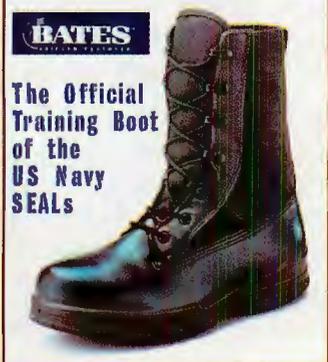
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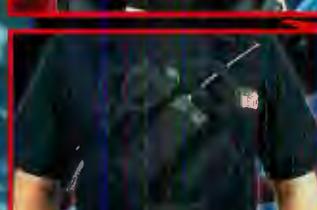
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to be assigned to that MOS because they are women, and we have to pretend all abilities are equal, when they are not. Everyone seems to agree that gender should not make any difference: One standard should apply — ability. Can you imagine a skinny guy wanting different standards to apply to him because he was skinny? Nothing in Reed's article was an objection to women in uniform. The objection was to inability in uniform, when gender is used as the basis for a double standard to excuse it. As for the rapists you mention, any sexual predator — from the Commander in Chief on down — ought to be behind bars.

When this old coot was in uniform, if a person couldn't hump a 4.2 he became a truck driver; if he couldn't see well enough to be a pilot he became a maintenance officer. And if some troop brought in a string of DRs the first shirt would either square him away or get him a 208. The perception is, however, that now there are excuses. And among incompetent females the gender card is an easy one to play. They are not incompetent because they are female, but these particular incompetents have this particular card, and when they play it, I am really surprised the squared-away troops who happen to be female don't really jump them.

But then, I'm also surprised when some jerk (usually male) harasses a female troop and his buds don't shape him up, on the spot. In short, Reed's story had to do with female incompetence, not female troops. Anybody with any wits would want everybody in uniform to get a fair shake, but when some get a fair shake with kid gloves, it's hard on morale. Maybe SOF should do a story on male incompetence? We could probably do a series!

Shame On All of Us

I am a first-time reader of your July issue and I am incredibly disgusted, but not shocked, by the woman-bashing you allowed weak-minded men to do [in] your magazine. I went through Army basic training and AIT and I have run across a few lazy female soldiers who are there only to find a husband, but there are thousands more like myself who are clean, moral, tough, confident and competent at their jobs.

Now I have run across many male soldiers, or should I say little boys, who have the same woman hating, Neanderthal, sexist, immature attitude and most of them were at Aberdeen Proving Ground and half of those are now serving time at Leavenworth for kidnapping, sodomy, and rape of their fellow soldiers.

The attitude toward competent women in the military needs to change because we are not going anywhere and instead of taking your ill placed frustrations out on ALL of the women in the military, try standing up to those few who are ruining it for the rest of us. We all know that ignorance, incompetence, and laziness is the sole blame of the female soldiers, right?!!

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Now on to the real point of this: Let us never forget the women of WWI, WW2, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm who gave their all at the horribly bloody M.A.S.H. units, flew supply planes and got shot down, lost their lives, went to be trained at all sorts of industrial jobs to help support the war effort and the boys.

I find it disrespectful and hateful to the memory of those women and to the women of today to make a generalized statement based on a select few. Furthermore, I do not give credence to all male soldier who bash women in the military and then show their lack of true commitment to their views by not printing their names.

Shame on all of you.

Natalie Ellie

*Well, at least we share an admiration for the women of courage and accomplishment you mention. Do you think many of them would share your thoughts? If you are competent, why do you take such offense at our criticism of the incompetent? Shouldn't you be critical of them also? You know, like our condemnation of our gender who are now in Leavenworth where they belong?*

## More Home Defense

I am an American of African-Amer-

ican descent and a USMC Vietnam veteran who has enjoyed for years your magazine. I'm glad of your position on the 2nd Amendment and America First. I would like to see more input from other minorities in your mag. I know you have before. I would just like to see a little more.

I know your magazine has always been open and fair about American issues and concerns especially about Slick Willie and Hillary. I would also like to see more reporting on weapons for the civilian community, like more on home defense and semi-autos, ammo and the like. Please continue this great magazine for those on duty and the many vets of all races who enjoy your mag.

Semper fi.

Jaao A. Dobbs  
Via E-Mail

## Remember Fallen Warriors

I have been one of the people who has been with *SOF* since the beginning of the magazine. I even wrote some stories about my adventures in the RLI and SADF. Perhaps for the 25th anniversary *SOF* could reprint some of the bios of our fallen friends: Bob MacKenzie, Barry Sadler, Lance Motley, Mike Echanis, George Bacon and Craig Nunn. I am sure there are some readers of *SOF* who have never heard

of the exploits of our friends.

Take care, Bob. I look forward to the next 25 years.

Youre aye,  
Ken Gaudet  
173D Abn, RLI, 44 Para SADF

## Products for Review

I enjoy your magazine. I've been an avid reader since the late 1980s. I live in Canada and sometimes I've had problems finding your issues at the newsstand but now things seem better.

I'm writing to you in regards to the products my company manufactures. I was wondering how do I go about having your magazine make a review on my company's products. We manufacture custom-made Ghillie suits.

Andy LeBlanc, UCD Industries  
www.ucdindustries.com

*Products for editorial review can be sent to either Don McLean or Dwight Swift at SOF, 5735 E. Arapahoe Rd., Suite A-5, Boulder, CO 80303. Food products should be addressed only to Don McLean. A phone call is a good idea beforehand, so we can discuss whether the subject product would be of interest to SOF readers. Ghillie suits would be, of course.* ✕

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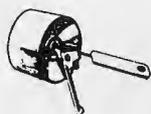
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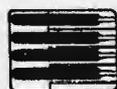
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## Ivan In Afghanistan, Again?

Russian presidential spokesman for the Chechnya war, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, said in late May that Russian intelligence sources had evidence that Afghanistan's *Taliban* regime is giving the Chechnyan rebels weapons and troops. Because of this, he said, he could not rule out "the possibility of preventive strikes [against Afghanistan] if a real threat to Russia's national interest develops."

## MPIM Tips Scales ... Toward Common Sense?

At 24.5 pounds, the Army Materiel Command's newest projected gee-whiz — the Multipurpose Individual Mmunition (MPIM) — may be rejected by the Army Training and Doctrine Command. Willing to put up with troops having to hump a 20-pound weapon, the ATDC has balked at the 24.5-pound weight of the MPIM, driven up by the weight of the ammunition it is supposed to fire.

The Army Infantry Center originally wanted the new weapon to weigh between 10-12 pounds when it drew up the requirements in 1994, but congressional guidance required the Army to merge its new weapons program with the USMC Predator program, a new shoulder-fired munition designed to defeat armor. Using a common flight module with the man-portable version of the Predator, the MPIM short-range assault weapon is designed to defeat double-reinforced concrete, triple brick walls and lightly armored vehicles.

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SOF Staff

SOF senior foreign correspondents Mike Williams (left) and Rob Krott pause to pose with H. Upmann Coronas on the beach at Cayo Largo, Cuba, after water jump with Cuban paratroopers. Jump was from Antonov-2 with modified Soviet D-6 chutes. More than 30 Yank airborne vets have earned Cuban jump wings in last three years. Those interested in jumping in 2001 can contact ParaTours, Suite 3344, 11215 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 0L5, Canada.

## Birds Of A Feather?

According to the Russian press, Yugoslav Defense Minister and indicted war criminal Dragoljub Ojdanic visited Moscow the second week in May to discuss Balkan and Kosovo security with Russian defense officials.

Ms. Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, in the Hague, said that if these reports were true, she would ask Russian authorities why they had welcomed an individual indicted by the tribunal and had not arrested him.

## Nookie For NATO?

A report by Radio Free Europe focuses on the fact that the sex-slave trade in Eastern European women, one of the major crime scourges of the post-communist era, is becoming a serious problem in Kosovo. As a former war zone with disrupted infrastructure, Kosovo is a prime location for the burgeoning slave trade, as existing law enforcement is either ineffective or corrupt, and there has been a major influx of foreign troops, who have no roots there and are among the few people with a steady income.

The location of Kosovo, adjacent to former communist countries where organized crime runs rampant, and where borders are not

effectively policed, makes it an ideal operating theater for the organized crime networks which have grown largely unfettered since the fall of the communistic police state.

In the past six months, UN peace keepers and police have rescued women from Balarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania and Albania who had been forced to work as prostitutes in Kosovo's underground brothels. Police told RFE that most of the women and girls — some as young as 15 — were transported from their home countries to Macedonia, which borders Kosovo to the south.

They were held there in motels and sold at auction to ethnic Albanian pimps for \$1,000 to \$2,500. Their passports were taken and the women were told that before they could keep any of their earnings

*Continued on page 22*

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No Questions Asked!"**

Ninety-percent of the streetfighters and punks out there now know how to put you down with nasty and painful submission holds, after studying the groundfighters who dominated the Ultimate Fighting Challenge.

What almost NO ONE in the world has figured out, however, is how to quickly ESCAPE from these "impossible" submission holds. It's a secret skill the professional groundfighters want to KEEP HIDDEN, but I will reveal it to you (for FREE if you choose)... and... if you aren't 110% convinced I'm right...

**I will pay you \$10 just for checking it out for yourself!**

I want you to do something that I would never ask *anyone* not on my "hot list" to even consider.

First, I want you to call my office, right now, and have the amazing "Escape From Impossible Holds" video I've set aside in your name rushed out to you. Next, I want you to watch it, and "get" the secret fighting information that's on it.

Then... I want you to go to your nearest dojo that teaches grappling... find the *biggest, meanest and most skilled groundfighter* there... and...

**Taunt Him Into Putting You  
Into His Nastiest And Most Painful  
Submission Hold!**

Preferably, this guy will be *at least a hundred pounds heavier* than you, strong enough to crush rocks in his bare hand, a black belt in Ju Jitsu or Judo... and be a little bit of an *asshole*. The kind of jerk who actually *enjoys* hurting people. (Think of thick-necked Tank Abbott from the *Ultimate Fighting Challenge*.) This way, when he has you in his most impossible-to-escape-from submis-

sion hold, there will be *no doubt* about what happens next.

Because, next, I want you to *use* what you've just learned to...

**Totally Humiliate Him By  
Immediately Escaping,  
Unharmed And Smiling,  
From His "Impossible" Hold!**

However... do NOT, under any circumstances, use any of the "Ground Zero" finishing moves you also learn in this package. You don't want to *permanently destroy* this guy... you just want to prove a point to yourself. Those megabrutal "Ground Zero" moves (just thinking about them makes me a little afraid) are ONLY for when you're in a situation where your life... or the life of a loved one... is at risk. They're too deadly to use any other time. (You'll see exactly what I'm talking about when you get your tape package!)

Sounds almost too amazing to be true, doesn't it? (It's true, though.) I mean, the Brazilians, the Ju Jitsu experts, the Judo and the Russian Sambo artists have been absolutely DOMINATING the fighting world for almost ten years now by using



*Known throughout the industry as the "Professor of Grappling", Mark Hatmaker has spent the last NINE YEARS studying the BEST groundfighters in the world... and picking apart their favorite holds until he discovered the secret of escape for every hold. Now his hard-won secrets to escaping "impossible holds" can be yours!*

complex submission holds to *choke opponents out*. Once they get you into one of their holds, you're *completely helpless*... and... if you don't "tap out" immediately, you're *toast*. (In the street, you'll be unconscious or *dead*.)

*Everyone* has been trying for years to find a way OUT of these deadly submission holds. Boxers, Muay Thai experts, kung-fu black belts, JKD streetfighters, every martial artist in the book has *unsuccessfully* tried to steal the "secrets" of escape from the "groundfighting elite". It's humiliating for a guy, trained in martial arts and undefeated against "normal" fighters, to suddenly be taken down and *choked out* by a scrawny fighter half his size just because the squirt knows grappling holds.

But that's the way it is. When a decent grappler meets ANY other kind of fighter, you better bet on the grappler, if he's able to get ahold of his opponent. It doesn't seem fair... but that's the way it is. If you come across some bad-ass who wants a piece of you, and he knows even a *little bit more grappling* than you do... you may as well just say goodbye.

Because you're going down and *out*.

*Unless...* unless you *learn the secrets of escaping* from those holds. And, until about twelve days ago...

### **NO ONE Outside The "Inner Circle" Of World-Famous Ground Fighters Had A Clue What These Secrets Of Escaping Were!**

But I know. And I have the secrets on *videotape*. And you know what's *really cool*? What's cool is that...

These Secrets Are Actually

### **Very Simple To Use... Once You Know What They Are!**

Look. I know that you know something about fighting. You know that the fighting world is *constantly* changing, and **ONLY** the guys who are hip to the latest secrets have a chance at winning a real "win or die" fight in today's mean streets.

That's why **THESE** secrets are so important. Today, you could train for *twenty years* in a vicious martial art, lift weights until your arms are big as trees, and toughen yourself up by living for weeks in the wilderness eating raw squirrel meat and drinking mud... and you would **STILL LOSE** a fight against a grappler who knew how to put you in an "impossible" hold!

But that's all about to change forever... now that the "insider" secrets have finally been revealed by my company. And you're among the **FIRST NINETY GUYS** to know about it!

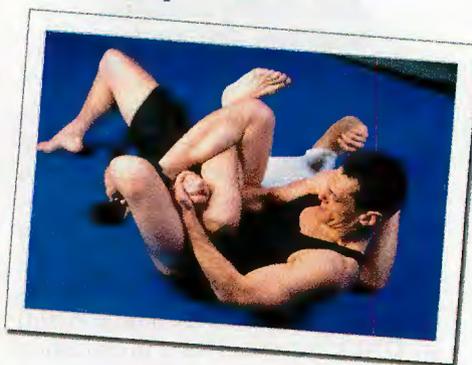
**Here's what happened:** I got a call (about a month ago) from this guy **Mark Hatmaker**, who said he'd discovered how to **BEAT** grapplers. I doubted him, of course — I'd just watched, for the eighth time, my personal copy of the video of that Russian Sambo expert dismantle Tank Abbott in the **Ultimate Fighting Challenge** final. For me, and for every other fighter in the world, going up against a good groundfighter is like charging a **machine gun nest**. *Certain failure.*

But this Hatmaker guy insisted he'd figured it all out. How? By spending **NINE YEARS** studying the **BEST** groundfighters in the world... and picking apart their favorite holds until he discovered the **secret of escape** for every hold. I met with Hatmaker... and guess what?

### **He Really Has The Secrets!**

And you'll see him *prove* it, over and over, in your video. (He shows you how to quickly and easily bust out of more than **3 dozen holds** — all of them previously labeled "impossible". That's way more holds than you'll *ever* see used in the street.) This Hatmaker dude is just 5'8" and *maybe* 150 pounds soaking wet... and yet he **CANNOT** be held down by even the most painful and complex hold, no matter how much bigger and stronger his opponent is. After all those years of learning the *tricks* of the grapplers... he has single-handedly *dismantled the advantages of all groundfighters!* (Hatmaker's been a professional martial artist for twenty years, and has spent every second of that time challenging *everything* that other fighters called "impossible". Just give him **ten minutes** of your time... and you'll be convinced, too.)

This is just amazing stuff. **NO ONE** outside the "elite inner circle" of the Brazilian groundfighting "royalty" has **EVER** been allowed to know the secrets of escaping "impossible" holds. **NO ONE!** They know all too well that, once the secrets of escape are known...



### **The Advantage That Groundfighters Have Over "Normal" Guys Is GONE Forever!**

To tell you the truth, I'm almost *sorry* to be revealing these secrets. But it has to be done. I can't in good conscience keep this critical information away from you, or from any of my favorite clients. It's too important.

And it's going to *change the fighting world* — again — **forever**.

However... because this is such an amazing story (and a little hard to believe, given the absolute *dominance* of groundfighters for so long)... I am **NOT** asking you to *risk any money here*. I have constructed an offer that will allow you — if you so choose — to see **ALL** of these astonishing secrets for **FREE**.

What's more... if I can't convince you these escape secrets are the **REAL THING...**

### **I Will Pay You \$10 From My Own Pocket Just For Your Trouble!**

*So here's the deal:* I hustled Mark Hatmaker down to the film studio to get all his escape secrets on videotape. We filmed this fighting expert for several days, and condensed only the **BEST** stuff onto two hour-long videos. These "escape" secrets are easy to learn, and simple to use once you know what to do.

In fact... once you see this tape package... I **guarantee** (with my *own* money) there will be no grappler **ANYWHERE** who could take you down and **KEEP** you down!

But you need to see all this for *yourself*. To do that, just call my office at **1-800-899-8153**. Ask for **Department IH-15** and tell whoever answers you want the **"Impossible Escapes"** package.

You will be *rushed* the special 3-video package we've set aside for you. (I'll tell you about that **third** video in just a second — it's gonna blow your mind!)

You don't risk a penny... because you have my special **"Total Satisfaction Plus An Extra \$10 In Your Pocket Guarantee"**... though you need to pay the \$69 this package costs up-front. I *have* to do it this way to weed out the guys who aren't **SERIOUS** about learning these amazing fighting secrets. You can use your credit card on the phone, or — if you prefer to pay by check or money order — just fill out and mail the **Priority Order Form**. (By the way, I was offered — and turned down — ten *thousand* dollars **NOT** to let this video package out to guys like you — just because there's so much at stake for the grappling experts! You can't learn these secrets *anywhere* else, not for a million dollars — not even in a Brazilian "war" studio! This is the **FIRST TIME EVER** anyone's revealed these astonishing secrets, to *anyone* outside the **"Top 20"** groundfighting "royalty"! Think about that.)

**Here's why you don't risk a cent:** Once you get the tape package with, I insist that you take a *full 6 months* to

look it over. Watch it, train with it, use what you've learned. Most importantly, **test it out** by getting that big asshole to pin you, and then *humiliate* him by quickly escaping. **Prove** that these secrets work, for yourself.

If, at the end of 6 months, you aren't **110% happy** – for *any* reason, or for *no reason at all* – just return the videos (in *any* condition) and we'll immediately refund your \$69. What's more, just because you trusted me enough to give this package a "look-see"...

**I Will Send You Another \$10 From My Own Pocket!**

That means, not only do you *not risk a cent...* but you'll actually come out **ten bucks ahead**, just by checking this deal out. You won't find a more fair or generous offer in the entire fighting world. I can make this "bank-breaking" offer **ONLY** because I know these secrets are the **REAL THING...** and I am only offering this stuff to the serious fighters from my "hot list", who *know* the real thing when they see it.

**There's just one "catch":** You *must* call and order the videos we've set aside in your name **within the next 11 days!** Why? Because I've only duped a small number of videos – this stuff is *too advanced* and *too dangerous* to lose control of.

**So don't delay.** Call right now (or mail the order form, or fax it), and we'll **rush** your package out to you by return mail. Once you see what all the fuss is about, you'll realize just how *important* this fighting knowledge is. **NO GRAPPLER WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD YOU DOWN AGAIN!** That's just an amazing "secret weapon" to have whenever you're attacked or forced into a fight (especially against a larger, meaner and more skilled opponent!).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Bob Pierce

**P.S.** Almost forgot. There's a *third* videotape in this package, and it's called "**Ground Zero**". This amazing bonus tape is crammed with balls-out "survival fighting" secrets... and it's yours to **KEEP, free**, as my gift to you for checking out the "**Impossible Escapes**" videos. In this **free bonus video**, you'll learn

incredibly vicious and *nasty* fighting secrets that will **instantly demolish critical bones and damage vital organs** in your attacker. (These are the most bloody fighting secrets I've *ever* witnessed – yet, I'd use them in a heartbeat if my life was on the line!) These simple techniques instantly "trump" *any* advantages in size, strength or skill your opponent has... and immediately allows you to **END** the fight by **inflicting blinding pain and completely dismantling his ability to fight back**. You'll also learn how to tell if your attacker is about to **pull out a weapon**, and what to do in the next half-second to *make him wish he hadn't*. Plus – how to use everyday "blunt objects" that are *always* within reach as weapons he *cannot defend against*. (You'll finally know the world's top fighters secrets of using *anything*

*handy* as a **deadly weapon**.)

These vicious secrets are **NOT** for use unless your life is in danger, and you must put your attacker down for **GOOD** in order to survive. **You'll be astonished at the amount of pain and damage you can inflict in just TWO SECONDS with these brutal secrets...** but that's what is needed when you're up against the wall.

Again, this free bonus tape is yours to **KEEP**, even if you decide later to send the "**Impossible Escapes**" tapes back for a refund (and your extra \$10 from my pocket). It's my gift to you, for trusting me and giving this information a "trial run" yourself. But you must get back to me right away. Call **1-800-899-8153 (Dept. IH-15)** and get this show on the road.



**GUARANTEE**

"I want to make this as easy on you as possible, so I've insisted that this entire package be **100% RISK FREE** to you. If you are not completely satisfied for *any reason*, just return the package to TRS and they will refund every penny of your purchase price -- *no questions asked!* You won't find a more generous guarantee anywhere else!"

-- Mark Hatmaker



**Priority Order Form!**

**For fastest service use your credit card and Call Toll-FREE**

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**YES! WOW!** I can't believe you've finally discovered the secrets to escaping "impossible" grappling holds! Knowing these secrets mean I can NEVER be taken down and out by an attacker who knows groundfighting, and that means I have the fighting secrets known by only a handful of the best fighters in the world! Amazing! Plus, I don't risk a penny, with your 6-Month Double Guarantee... and, if I do decide to return these videos, I get my money back, no questions asked, PLUS another \$10 just for my trouble. **AND**, I get to **KEEP** the bonus video on "Ground Zero" fighting secrets! That's just an *amazingly* great deal. Please rush the package you've set aside in my name. Here's how I want to pay:

I prefer to pay by credit card; Please charge my:  Enclosed is my Check or Money Order for \$74.00 (\$69+\$5 S&H) (Make payable to TRS)

Visa  MasterCard  Discover  AmEx

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other facets of Americans lives, as this man was from all accounts dedicated and experienced — but he was from the federal government and he was there to help us ...

## General Dynamics To Buy Saco From Colt

General Dynamics and New Colt Holdings have agreed that GD will buy Saco Defense, now owned by New Colt Holdings. Saco currently makes a variety of armaments and components including the Mk19 grenade launcher and 20mm barrels, and has recently developed the new Striker Advanced Lightweight Grenade Launcher (ALGL). General Dynamics Armament, formerly owned by General Electric and more recently by Lockheed Martin, makes completed 20mm cannon systems, 2.75-inch rockets and is involved in demilitarization projects. The acquisition of Saco Defense is one of many similar acquisitions by General Dynamics Combat Systems.

they had to repay their "purchase" price and the cost of their travel. Those who resisted being forced into prostitution were beaten.

Ms. Jill Thompson, an adviser on trafficking issues for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) estimates the number of trafficked women throughout the former Yugoslavia in the "tens of thousands." Mr. Rolf Welberts, the OSCE human-rights director in Kosovo, says his organization has helped some 50 women, but believes the number in bondage to be much higher, and that the "internationals" — foreign KFOR soldiers and aid workers, are very often the brothel patrons.

## Los Alamos Official Resigns

The official responsible for approving the disastrous controlled [sic] burn at Los Alamos, New Mexico that cost taxpayers millions of dollars and hundreds of families their homes, has retired. The incident has raised questions over the wisdom of bureaucratic control of

## Wallet-Weary Uncle Sam Wants Cut

Uncle Sam, the UN's biggest contributor, has asked for a reduction in the USA's contributions for "peacekeeping" from the current 30% of the total UN budget for peacekeeping, to 25%. American Special Envoy Richard Holbrook told the UN's Administrative and Budget Committee that the schedule of assessments for peacekeeping was created more than 25 years ago during the Cold War and is out of date. "The world has changed dramatically since 1973 but the ad hoc peacekeeping scale has hardened into stone." At the time, the scale of assessments was for a single \$30 million dole for peacekeeping expense in the Sinai.

The request, of course, is adamantly opposed by the Third World ("emerging nations") coalition called the Group of 77, comprising a majority of the 133 emerging nations. The UN's budget for peacekeeping for next year is expected to be about \$2.6 billion, twice the regular UN budget (of which Uncle Sam now pays 25%. New

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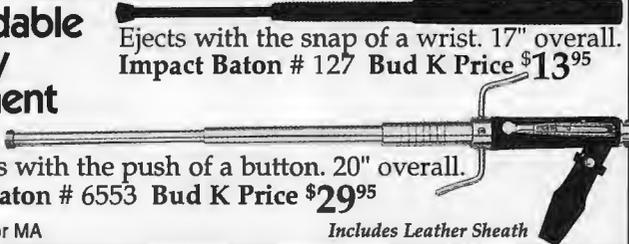
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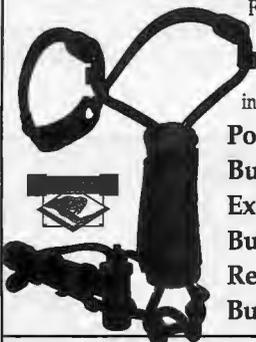
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peacekeeping operations expected for next year include Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, and possible the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On a second front, the U.S. Senate voted last May to withdraw troops from Kosovo starting in 2001 unless the President can certify that European members of NATO increase their support. A Senate proposal to whack funds for Kosovo starting July 2001 was narrowly defeated.

## Pentagon Packs In PACM

According to a leaked secret report to Congress, the DoD says it does not plan to continue development of the Patriot Anti-Cruise Missile being built by Raytheon. Although the system has conducted two successful intercept tests, DoD said it cannot afford another missile system. Other existing Patriot missile systems will adequately defend against cruise missile attacks, the report stated.

## FARC Fires Up Hostage

President Andres Pastrana said he would block a visit by foreign delegations to a FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) area, following the death of a civilian woman when an explosive collar put around her neck by a FARC group as part of an extortion attempt. An EOD man was also killed in the explosion.

In a related development, two Gs were killed and four captured in Ecuador's northern Amazon region last May, in a punchup with Ecuadorian troops. The captured men claimed they were members of the Ecuadorian Revolutionary Armed Forces, a new leftist organization with links to FARC.

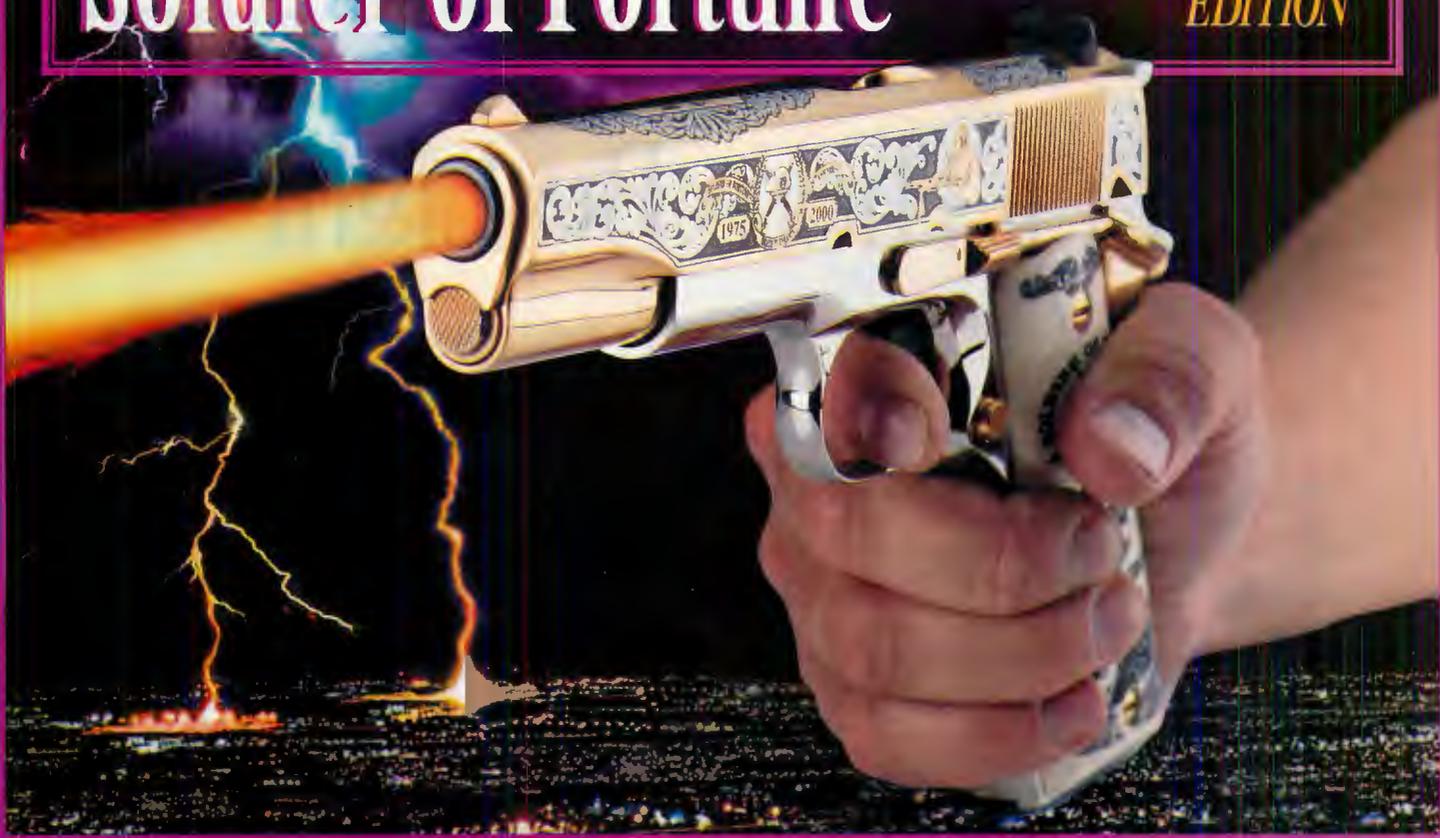
## Eritrea Pulls Back

The government in Asmara, Eritrea has announced it is withdrawing to positions originally held before their offensive of May, 1998 in which Eritrea attempted to regain areas it regarded as Eritrean, based on old colonial-era borders. In what turned out to be a pivotal battle in the Horn of Africa war, on 24 May Ethiopian forces broke through Eritrean defenses in the strategic Zalembessa region, after a 12-day assault. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had requested that all parties withdraw to the positions they held before May 1998, and Asmara announced that "Eritrea has decided, for the sake of peace, to accept the OAU's appeal for de-escalation."

The Ethiopian offensive, which was initiated on the second anniversary of the war, changed a war that had become a static war of the trenches into a mobile war. Eritrean President Issais Afwerki has said the war cost some 70,000 deaths on both sides. ☒

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## Let There Be Light

A great majority of conflicts occur in low, no, or altered light environments. Many criminal activities occur at night or in low light to help the criminal mask their dastardly deeds. In military applications, this same low light or better yet, no light conditions, can create a situation where air cover and supporting fires' effectiveness can be reduced. In Korea the Chinese Communists Forces routinely sat out daylight hours in hiding only to attack in human waves under the cover of darkness.

Since the goal of all conflict in its final stage is to win, then some of the variables could become lighting, weather, disparity of size and numbers, weapons, morale and human will.

In today's society individuals or small teams operating in defense of themselves may have to "light up" opponents with artificial light sources to clarify weapons or the validity of the perceived threat.

This use of lights can be very dangerous as it can lead to self-illumination, which could in turn lead to return fire on the light source. Dangerous as it can be, it yet may be a requirement to clarify the justification for us to shoot.

There are many ways to use lights, some are technique based, some are speculation based, the old "I think this would work" concept. In reality the best approach would probably be to have several "tools" in the toolbox to respond to a myriad of potential problems.

### Doctrine

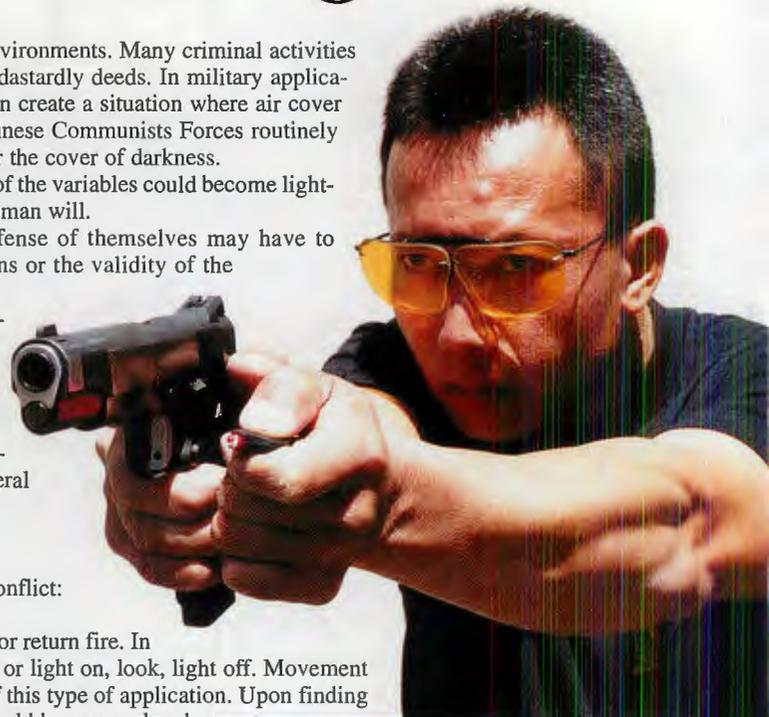
There are many thoughts about the application of flashlights to conflict:

1. Use the light as little as possible to reduce exposure to incoming or return fire. In this format the light is used conservatively, generally in sweeps; or light on, look, light off. Movement away from the last place the light was deployed is usually part of this type of application. Upon finding the threat the light would illuminate the threat area, the target would be engaged and the light turned off accompanied by movement away from the place of deployment.
2. Use the light as much as possible to blind or impair the opponent's ability to see the location of the light source. In this application the flashlight operator "blinds" the threat with the light and could if needed move to or away from the threat. The light could also be used to cover or mask a movement to protective cover or concealment.
3. Use the light to "hold" a threat either already engaged or about to be engaged. I doubt I would look for a bad guy, find him, shoot him, and then turn the light off of him.

As a point of interest remember that you are going to shoot the threat with the sights, not the light. The light is only used to confirm that the threat is armed and not responding to your request for verbal compliance. Many operators spend a lot of time trying to collimate the light to the sight. Today's powerful lighting systems are more than powerful enough to light up the area in question. Look at the sights and shoot the threat if required.

### Weapon-Mounted Lights

It is easy to comprehend the advantages of weapon-mounted light systems. The alignment of the light on the weapons system helps deliver accurate fire while eliminating the bulk of a hand held light from the operator's hands. Most people consider a light "failure" as one where the light doesn't come on. Please consider a failure where the light doesn't go off, and I need for it to be off because someone's shooting at me. Not generally a problem you say? Owners of light-mounted weapons systems should also practice the use of a secondary or back-up light in a non-mounted mode in case the primary light mounted on the weapon fails. I just taught an Urban Rifle class where 50% of the rifle-mounted lights failed in one 3-hour night fire session. You had better know how to use a secondary light. In that vein part of your training should address the deployment of a secondary weapon using primary light source attached to your primary weapon. If your



(top) Micro lights are an amazing source of illumination in a small package. (above) Can you deploy your secondary weapon and utilize your primary light source?

No other Martial Artist has dared to reveal this kind of information.

## Finally Revealed To Civilians By The First Black Op Agent To Ever Break Silence On...

# Forbidden "Lethal Arts"

## How to put down any attacker with your bare hands in 2 seconds!

If you've got the guts to learn it, I've got the guts to send you a mega-secret **Black-Op** video on the dark art of how to "neutralize" an opponent quickly and quietly with your bare hands and improvised weapons!

Other martial artists will go right to the edge with eye gouges, shattered limbs and even broken necks but they go weak in the knees when it comes to teaching the "lethal arts".

Most fighters don't know this stuff. Unless you have endured the most savage training in the world and put your ass on the line in real combat and actually felt the life slip out of your opponent's body as you finish the fight then you don't understand about real fighting.

There's no holds in this, no submissions, no grappling **just instant death moves**. The ones learned and used only by the most elite combat "spec-op" soldiers until now! (We're talking about single move techniques that destroy an opponent in a blink. You can take out three guys in under a second without breaking a sweat, and be on your way out before they hit the ground. "Neutralized".)

This is ugly stuff. Some people just won't accept that there is a whole underground of covert or "black" operatives moving around the globe. Usually, you never know that they exist (and they want it that way) but when the government wants some dirty work done, well let's just say this -- they take out the trash very efficiently.

The guy behind these revealing How To Kill **Black-Op** tapes is a former elite covert operative who has personally killed more men than most modern regiments of US soldiers. I will not

reveal his name in this letter for obvious reasons.

This "Mr. X" revealed his killing secrets here for the money and I respect that. He doesn't care about legalities, moralities or ethics. He needs the cash.

I'm releasing this from an entirely different standpoint. I did 2 front-line tours in Vietnam. I killed and risked my life for every mother and son back here in the U.S. I've earned the right to enjoy the freedom and liberty afforded me under the constitution. Anyone who wants to question my rights to release this video can reach me in Idaho.

I'm not hiding.

I am however trusting you to handle this powerful "high risk" information with the respect it deserves.

You can't get this material anywhere else. Unless of course you care to join the military, wait 10 years for a shot at joining the Black Ops (they only take the best) go through the worst year of your life surviving your training and then go try your luck at international espionage; assassination; kill-everyone assaults against heavily armed opponents; smuggling of drugs, body parts, weapons; and surrounding yourself with the most dangerous men on the planet. The rare chance to even see these techniques is priceless. "Mr. X" thought we should price the tape at \$499 at least.

But that's bull. I don't want to gouge anyone on price. Therefore, because I'm calling the shots here, you can see this tape for just \$69. AND, you get a **lifetime guarantee**, backed by TRS. Order it, and if you don't like what you



You won't find these chillingly efficient "black arts" anywhere else.

see, return it and get your money back. No hassles.

When you get this, you'll want to take a look as soon as possible. It's the most shocking how-to-kill-with-your-bare-hands information you will ever see. But I don't care *when* you look at it. If at *any* time you look at it and you are convinced it's NOT what I say then send it back for a full refund of your purchase price.

I've seen the tape. I know this guy. I know the "lethal" arts. This is the real thing.

Regardless, if you decide for any reason that you want your money back, it scares you too much, or its something you decide you can't allow in your house... then send it back and TRS has agreed to refund your entire purchase price, no *questions* asked. (I'm handling everything here, but TRS is still backing the tape with the guarantee - because you don't know me from Adam, but TRS has a 10-year reputation with treating customers honestly. Any guarantee from them is gold.)

Further, you will never be bothered again with anything like this.

Here's what you need to do right now. Call **1-800-899-8153**. Ask for **Dept BK-33** and tell the operator you want the **Black Op** video package. (You have to use this code because none of the operators know what this package is about.) It's a two-tape package consisting of over 135 minutes of brutally easy "official" instant-death moves. Proven stuff, used currently by the highest "kill ratio" Black Operations soldiers anywhere. Again, fully backed by a lifetime money back guarantee. Or, just fill out the Priority Order Form and mail it in along with your check or money order. (Make it out to TRS - they're handling the financial crap I'm not set up to do.)

I would encourage you to call though. Both TRS and I have been stopped before by "higher up" forces who don't want you to ever see this kind of secret material. You never know what's going to happen or how long material like this will be available.

I had to twist TRS' arm just to allow me to notify you of its existence. If you have any interest at all, don't delay. Acting now is the only way you can ensure a chance to get your personal copy.

Don't blow this,



Bob Taylor

PS: I do want you to listen carefully here

YOU. Don't take this opportunity for granted or take it lightly. All orders will be taken by TRS staff, and truthfully, I'm not even telling them what they're selling. Many of TRS' staff live modest, humble and unassuming lives and their personal spirit would be internally bothered by this material. So you need to call right now - in a few days they won't even have this code on their computers. The number again is **1-800-582-2083**.



*These are astonishing skills most civilians don't even know exist... and don't want to know!*

PPS: The other thing I had to agree to was that each buyer would sign a personal responsibility waiver. It's listed below, and to get your video TRS requires that this be signed and delivered by fax or mail before they will ship the video to you. I know it sucks, but that was the deal I made. Trust me, it's worth your trouble. I promise.



## Priority Order Form

For fastest service use you credit card and Call Toll-FREE

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**YES!** I want to take advantage of this incredible opportunity while it's still available... I'm ready to take responsibility for my own safety and the safety of my family! I understand I have an overly-generous 3-month No Questions Asked 100% guarantee; If after viewing this video for months I am unsatisfied for any reason at all, I can simply return it for a full refund of my purchase price. That means I can decide for myself if this really is the most amazing self defense course ever created! It's a fabulous deal, and I don't risk a dime by ordering! So please rush it to me by return mail!

Here's how I want to pay:

Enclosed is my check/money order (payable to TRS) for \$74 (\$69+\$5 Shipping & Handling)

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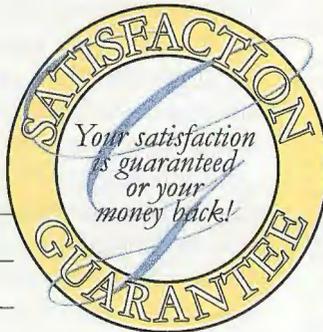
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I attest to the following fact and conditions in consideration of purchasing material containing information of a sensitive nature. 1) I am at least 18 years of age. I am not a convicted felon, nor am I any form of criminal prosecution, indictment, or judicial process of any kind. 2) I understand that the information presented within this video production is for demonstration and education purposes only. I further understand that the use, practice, or further dispensation of this material could possibly result in serious injury or death. I also understand that the individuals involved in the production and distribution of this video, TRS, and those demonstrating the skills, assume no responsibility for any injury or damage resulting from the execution or practice of the techniques presented. I hereby state that I shall indemnify and hold harmless all parties involved in the production, marketing and distribution of the video material and I individually accept any and all responsibility for my use of the knowledge. 3) I am aware that I should, whenever possible, avoid any physical confrontation. In the event of a hostile or life threatening encounter I understand that I a legally allowed to use force to stop the threat or remove myself from danger, I understand that the legal definitions of what actions constitute "reasonable force" and "excessive force" may vary in each state and that I am capable of contacting my local law enforcement agency for further information.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

rifle mechanically fails but the light is still working I need to be able to use my secondary weapon (handgun) to defend myself while illuminating the threat with the rifle-mounted light.

### Technique

The two main shooting styles, Isosceles and Weaver, help dictate the techniques used with handguns and flashlights. Both styles are acceptable and in conjunction with using a flashlight both may be needed to solve the problems you encounter. Craftsmanship is determined by the ability of the operator to use all the tools available to them. Have a good toolbox.

### Harries

Favored by the Weaver people, this technique has the operator place the back of the wrist to the back of the wrist. One hand holds the light while one hand holds the pistol. It works best with a slightly bladed body angle, weak side forward, and firm pressure between the backs of the wrists. It can be a tiring technique if the operator has not trained in it. It can also be replaced with a better technique when clearing tight right hand corners.

### Uncrossed Harries

With the advent of the rear-mounted pressure switches on flashlights such as the Sure-Fire Millennium Combat Light model M3 and the 6Z the ease of operation for the handgun and flashlight combination has increased. In the uncrossed technique the operator using the light hand thumb to activate the flashlight simply uncrosses the wrists and places the flashlight hand next to the pistol hand, the closed fingers of the two hands touching. This technique allows the Weaver/Harries people some latitude in deployment. It cures the leading with head/muzzle in a right hand corner problem quickly, and yet the operator can reinstate the conventional Harries as soon as the corner is cleared. In the uncrossed mode the operator can also convert to several other options as needed.

### Rogers/Syringe

Named after Bill Rogers, who does not claim to be the inventor of the technique, the Rogers/Syringe method works best with a rear pressure switch light. The drum of the flashlight is placed between the first and middle fingers of the flashlight hand. By using compression, as in closing the hand, the drum presses rearward forcing the heel of the hand to activate the light. The hands are simply placed together with the drum of the flashlight and the muzzle parallel.

### Ayooob

Massad Ayooob's technique works for most flashlights but was probably originally designed to address older style long drum lights like the Streamlight aluminum lights that were at the time a great leap forward. This technique has the operator holding the light in the hand with the pressure switch

*Continued on page 72*

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# I Was There

by James H. Warner

**In** October of 1967, as a first lieutenant in the Marine Corps, I was flying a mission in an F-4B Phantom fighter/bomber just north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Vietnam, when we were hit by small-arms fire. It doesn't take much to bring down a modern jet — we went down, were captured, and made the long trek 350 miles north to Hanoi and the infamous Hilton. In July 1968, I was transferred to a new prison camp near Son Tay — the camp that was raided in November 1970.

In order to prepare the camp for Americans, the windows of the cells were bricked up until there was only about 14 inches from the sill to the top of the window. This, we decided, was probably done to limit our vision but it had the incidental effect of limiting the circulation of air in our cells.

Now there is an unwritten code to guide the conduct both of the torturer and his victim which probably goes back to the time when governments first used torture. The torturer, if he really wants to get information, must tell his victim up front what he wants. The victim then makes up a lie to fit what was requested, then takes the torture long enough to make it seem as though something significant has been done.

Unfortunately for me, Louie the Rat was not like the Communist sadists whom one might imagine when thinking of Marxist-Leninist style interrogation.

We believed that he must have been Ho Chi Minh's nephew, because no army would deliberately give Louie a commission, much less make him a political officer, unless it was forced upon it.

## Louie the Rat

USAF photo



F4 Phantom fighter-bomber releases its load of 2.75-inch rockets against a communist target in North Vietnam.

The bricks in the windows were done after the camp was built, and was a typical socialist job — under socialism, nothing is done well except avoiding work. Early in the year I had noticed that the mortar in the windows was of such low quality that if water were poured on it, the water would be absorbed. Winter in North Vietnam is very cold and humid. Once the window bricks were wet, they stayed wet. Soon, moss began to grow on the mortar. I called it my garden, and began to pour a little water on the mortar every day, since I felt that this helped further demonstrate the failure of socialist production.

On 3 May, when I poured a little water on the mortar, I was spotted by our political commissar, whom we called "Louie the Rat" because deformed teeth gave him a rat-like appearance, and he had the personality of a rat. He had the cell door opened and came in to inspect the window. He loudly accused me of trying to destroy the wall so I could push it down and escape.

On 5 May we began a serious interrogation, as he tried to elicit from me the details of my "plan of escape." I explained to him that since the bars in the window went all the way through the bricks, and into the wall as it was originally constructed, that I could not escape that way. He wouldn't listen, so we got down to business.

Louie would have failed, by a significant margin, the intelligence test to be a rifleman in the Marine Corps. Since he couldn't get straight what it was that he wanted me to tell him, I decided to make up the most fantastic and unbelievable story I could, confess to this, and let him turn it in to his superiors. I figured that his commander would recognize that Louie was a moron, and punish him for accepting my "confession."

Thus, on 15 May, I told him that I was tired of his questions. I told him I would tell him the "true means of escape," but that I could not confess to the escape which he believed I had planned, since his superiors would read it and think that I was stupid. So I wrote a memo entitled "The True Means of Escape." In it I said that the only way to escape was to steal an entrenching tool, chop a hole in the ceiling of the cell, and go out by moving aside the heavy roofing tiles, and go out through the roof at night. Since the roofing tiles were heavy, and any movement would be easily heard at night, I thought that this was improbable enough to alert his superiors.

Louie the Rat was pleased with the fact that, at last, I had given him the details of my "plan of escape." Later, still 15 May, I was put back in my cell, after being absent for 10 days. I thought that I was off the hook, and had played a dirty trick on the Rat.

On the 19th, at first light, I heard noise outside my cell. The door was opened and Rat stood there, along with several armed guards. He pointed at me and the guards rushed into the cell, got me, and took me to the interrogation room. There I was forced to kneel on the concrete floor, with my arms over my head. I stayed there for the rest of the day, and all that night. No one asked me a single question. I had no idea what was going on.

The next morning the Rat came into the room. He indicated for me to sit on a small stool. He stood, looking at me, silent, for several minutes.

Then he shook his finger at me and demanded that I tell him how I communicate with "the criminals" (the North Vietnamese Communists, and their friends in the United States, refused to recognize our legal status as prisoners of war). I asked him what this meant. He laughed and said, "Don't be surprised." I realized, now, that I was in trouble. There was no lie that I could make up that they would believe.

After all, if I made something up, they would go to other camps and try to corroborate the story.

Therefore, there was nothing which I could do to get out of the coming ordeal. However, if I started making up stories, others would be dragged into the ordeal. Therefore, I decided that I would not answer any questions, or even talk to him. I told him that I had nothing more to say. This

made the Rat angry — Rat, like all the Communists we met there, had what we would now say was an anger-management problem. He told me that he would "punish me very severely." I told him he was already doing that.

The next 10 days were spent in the interrogation room. I was kept awake the whole time, and Rat tried to get me to remain kneeling. However, after a few days of kneeling on the concrete, I told him that I would not do that any more. If he wanted to really torture me, he would have to do the work. I refused to kneel any longer.

A few days after I refused to kneel, despite any effort they made to force me down, I was taken out to a little concrete box. This box sat in the sun, and was hotter inside than your car is after sitting in the sun on a summer day. In the box I went various periods without being allowed to sleep. On one occasion I was kept awake for three straight weeks.

Eventually, when my continued refusal to explain how I had communicated with "criminals" in the other camps, I was put in leg irons — two horseshoe-shaped pieces with loops in the back to pass a heavy iron bar through. With the iron bar resting on my achilles tendon, and the horseshoes on my feet in front, the bar was wired to a small stool. If I sat on the stool, I had to flex my legs so much that the horseshoes bit into my feet. I could not stand because I was watched constantly. This lasted 10 days.

When the leg irons were taken off my feet, they had swollen to the size of footballs, and hurt like hell. I tried to walk and promptly fell on my face — I did not realize that my achilles tendons had been paralyzed by the weight of the bar, and I was hamstrung. It was several days before I could stand.

On 2 September the interrogation was suspended for the North Vietnamese "independence day." The next morning the radio announced that Ho Chi Minh had become a good Communist. The interrogation was now suspended during the mourning period and the funeral. It never resumed. I stayed in the box until 10 November, the birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps, when I was put into a solitary cell.

For two years I was puzzled by Rat's interrogation.

Why was he asking about communications with another camp? Then I learned that on 10 May 1969, five days before I revealed the "true means of escape," two men — Ed Atterberry and John Dramesi — had escaped from another camp. Their means of escape was to make a hole in the ceiling and going our through the roof. I must confess that this is a lot more humorous in retrospect than if I had been told this while still in the box.

*James H. Warner is an intellectual property attorney who frequently contributes to SOF. ✕*

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# WORLD SITREP

1

## UNITED STATES

**Missing Files:** Is Los Alamos jinxed? First the fire, then ripped-off hard-drives containing nuclear secrets. Wonder who's the beneficiary? • **Mole Still At Large:** Recall during Clinton's first term (and even before) rumors of a mole lurking inside CIA? Then, remember mention in "The Starr Report" of Clinton telling Monica that he was afraid his phones were tapped (a matter never explored by Barbara Walters and other exalted newshounds)? Now rumors abound that perhaps Israel somehow was involved in the nasty business of setting up Monica & Bill to blackmail the chief executive from further pursuing the mole. • **More On Forced Vaccines:** Pentagon claims that vast majority of personnel are stepping-up to voluntarily take their series of six shots — but many have their misgivings. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees have approved measures which will grant Congress increased oversight in this medical dilemma. • **A National Embarrassment:** Retired U.S. Army Colonel George Trofimoff, 73, was taken down in an FBI sting op for spying for the Soviet Union and Russia. His reward: He was paid \$250,000 and a Russian medal. • **Lockheed Martin Takes A Hit:** While admitting no wrongdoing, the defense contractor agreed to pay \$13M following government accusations of rules violations in sharing satellite technology with China. Wonder if China gave Lockheed's CEO a medal? • **Waco Trial:** The \$675M wrongful-death suit launches in Texas. Branch Davidians contend that government used excessive force in causing more than 80 deaths during 19 April 1993 holocaust.

4

## UKRAINE

**Power Plant To Close:** Chernobyl nuclear power plant will shut down, leaving fuel-starved Ukraine susceptible to pressure from fuel-rich Russia.

5

## ZIMBABWE

**This Land Is Your Land ...** Violence continues, and President Mugabe shows no sign of halting the confiscation of white-owned farms. We speculate that this bloodlust will spill over into South Africa, where attacks on whites are frequent. Mugabe, you recall, honchoed the ZANU guerrillas, whose atrocities were numerous.

9

## CHINA

**An All-Time Low?:** Barry McCaffrey, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, met with senior officials from the Ministry of Public Security, China's national police force, to discuss cooperation between China and U.S. to "share information to crime and drugs." McCaffrey said that "there is no question in my mind that they're capable of keeping a secret and seeing this problem for what it entails." Mac, the only secrets the Chinese are keeping are *ours*.

3

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## PERU

**President Is This His Final Term?** Alberto Fujimori will begin his third term, following claims of fraudulent balloting.

11

## KOSOVO

**NATO's Failure:** Alliance has failed to fulfill its chief objectives, both in waging the war and keeping the peace. When are our men and women coming home?

12

## IRELAND

**Shoot, Don't Shoot** Northern Ireland's largest pro-British paramilitary group threatens to break its nearly 6-year-old ceasefire unless Catholic-based groups stop attacks on Protestant homes. The Ulster Freedom Fighters said in a statement to news media that it would end its ceasefire.

2

**RUSSIA**

**Putin Takes Charge In Chechnya:** Irksome as it may be, President Vladimir Putin has claimed direct executive control of the Chechen republic. *SOF's* Mark Milstein mentioned sometime back that many bodies of Russian KIAs actually exploded in their caskets en route by train back to Moscow. (A sure morale-booster). Fresh paratroopers are pouring in so a shooting war still exists. • **Iran On The Move:** Putin has trouble rumbling on other fronts. Iran is making overtures to Georgia to make itself a more important regional player. • **Pipeline news:** A Russian-built pipeline around Chechnya is operational.

3

**COLOMBIA**

**U.S. Aid Could Kill Colombia Peace Plan:** The \$1.3 billion emergency aid package for counter-narcotics ops would *also* be used to fight Colombian rebels, and thus will likely kill any peace deal between the Gs and the government, and (shock of shocks) increase U.S. involvement. • **Don't Forget Panama:** 12 December 99 raid by Colombia Gs on a naval base near Panamanian border might result in calls for more U.S. aid by both Colombia and Panama.

6

**SOUTH KOREA**

**We're All Friends:** South Korea's President Kim Dae Jung returned from his historic summit with North Korean leaders. Expect the U.S. to be sniffing around for a favorable market-expansion deal.

7

**NORTH KOREA**

**Joy No Doubt Reigns:** Leaders in Pyongyang are likely yukking it up over probabilities of South Korean investment bail-out of its anemic economy and of Sec. Of State's Albright's crowing over North Korea's emergence from the isolation of the past.

8

**SIERRA LEONE**

**War Continues:** With RUF's leader, Foday Sankoh, safely off the streets, his butchering minions are carrying on his bloody legacy. See Al J. Venter's article, "Merc Gunslingers," in this issue for the scoop.

12

11

4

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13

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13

**PHILIPPINES**

**No To Ransom Demands:** Philippine government has warned foreign governments not to give in to ransom demands of the Abu Sayyaf, which has held 21 international hostages since April. • **Media Get Out!** Word has it that media access to part of the group's home turf on Mindanao is being curtailed and that a hot conflict is going to spread throughout the island. • **bin Laden Connection** Muslim guerrillas receive \$3 million from suspected international terrorist Osama bin Laden to buy new weapons, according to a top military official. Bin Laden sent the money through a rebel emissary in a Middle Eastern country last month. Separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels plan to purchase arms, including anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, from North Korea. Rebels met a North Korean official in a hotel in Malaysia last month to discuss a deal.

World Sitrep is compiled by the *SOF* staff with information from various media and correspondents.

# ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER

## Knives For Dress-Up

The line of Harley-Davidson brand knives by United Cutlery now includes three solid knives unabashedly designed to look good, all designed by custom knife maker and Harley aficionado Fred Carter. The Classic Legend HD-37 (top) features a channeled linear lock and lightweight cast aluminum handle. The 440 stainless blade is fully heat-treated, and has been given a "Cryoedge" temper at -300 degrees for longer edge life, and has a thumbstud for easy opening.

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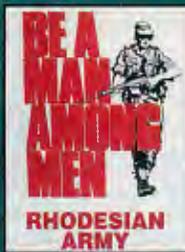
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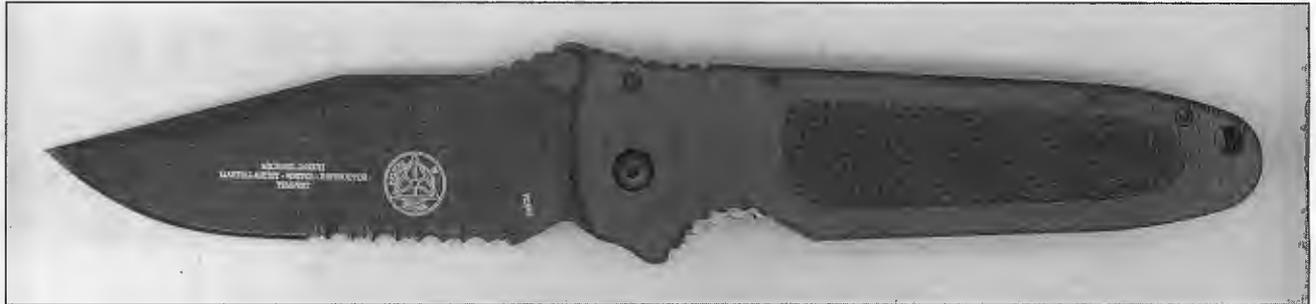
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# Omega PROvingground

## The GARANDS

I have been fortunate in dealing with the editorial staff of *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine in that they often allow me the latitude to go on “fishing” trips. In a discussion with them recently I expressed the apparent fascination of some of my students in gadgets and technology. When I say fascination what I really mean is total mental and financial immersion in technology. Students come to rifle school with carbon-fiber, flashlight-mounted, muzzle-suppressed, nylon-strapped equipment and technology of unbelievable size and configurations. The truly stunning thing is to watch their shock and disbelief when the carbon-fiber forearms come off, the light bulbs break and the muzzle suppressors whiz down-range.

The greatest point is made when a 200-pound man is being strangled by his tactical sling on the fire pole in Thunderville. Nylon is

## How Good Were They?

Text & Photos by Clint Smith



great in pantyhose but not always perfect for rifle slings. Two hundred pounds is not long in giving up to gravity. When 200 pounds of “Tommy Tactical” meets the concrete walk, now there is contact.

Least someone get their flaps in a roar, I didn’t say I didn’t know how to use all of this stuff, I just personally don’t have a use for all of it. Based on your occupation or requirements you may be mandated to enter a dark room, find and confirm a potential threat by using a gun-mounted light and so on.

In reality, most people really *aren’t* warriors and many don’t want to be. Maybe what they need is a rifle they can have safely in their home that is functional, simple to operate and which has a



*Continued on page 68*



by Peter G. Kokalis

Photos by Chris Mayer

**“Don’t** be a liner for a bodybag and don’t lose visual contact with your partner.” That’s Clint Smith talking and I and *Soldier Of Fortune* staff photographer Chris Mayer are in the midst of one of fabled Thunder Ranch’s most fascinating and real-world-relevant courses: Team Tactics. Clint’s admonitions as usual are well taken, as there are, unfortunately, numerous instances in both the military and law enforcement of personnel shooting their own people.

The purpose of Thunder Ranch’s Team Tactics course is multifold and, as usual, deadly serious. First and foremost the focus is on teaching and applying the “team” concept. With that in mind, there are three things “we” must do: 1) shoot effectively, which requires proficiency at arms and their proper manipulation under stress; 2) movement, either to cover or to engage or to protect our partner; 3) communicate, what you see, know, think and speculate. To accomplish these goals we need to perfect our programmed marksmanship and manipulation skills, our shooting and tactical skills, and promote and reinforce our mental conditioning. As Clint says so often, “You will do in a fight, what you have learned in training and if you cannot do it in school, you cannot do it in a fight.”

There is, in my opinion, no more appropriate place to acquire the programming required to accomplish these skills than Thunder Ranch. Thunder Ranch’s highly respected, and well-known honcho, Clint Smith, is a Marine Corps veteran with two infantry tours in Vietnam. His experience includes seven years in law enforcement, during which time he served as head of his department’s FTU (Firearms Training Unit), as well as the senior countersniper on the SWAT unit. He was Operations Officer for Jeff Cooper’s API and both started and served as director of Heckler & Koch’s training ser-

# The Ultimate

vices division. Together with his wife, Heidi, he runs the Thunder Ranch Training Facility with its busy 34-course schedule and still finds time for off-site training through International Training Consultants, Inc., a highly regarded mobile training program.

Thunder Ranch has a guest staff of about three dozen instructors. The five, including Clint, who taught the Team Tactics course, brought an impressive array of experience to the table. Jack Furr, former Senior Rangemaster at Gunsite, spent many years as a homicide detective in Louisiana and as an instructor at CTA (Central Training Academy of the DOE). Jack is one of the most highly respected firearms and tactics instructors in the country. Rob Rathburn is a 20-year veteran of the Denver Police Department and is currently assigned as an instructor at the Denver Police Academy’s Firearms Training Section. Prior to this assignment, Rob worked for eight years in vice/narcotics and four years in the homicide unit. While assigned as an academy firearms instructor, Rob was responsible for the development and implementation of the Denver Police Department’s Urban Rifle Program. Rob was also responsible for revamping the department’s Basic and In-service Handgun Training Programs. Bill Black, a 16-year veteran of the Littleton, Colorado, Police Department is a patrol supervisor and tactical team leader for his agency. David Knight has five years with the Kerrville Police Department and a member of their firearms training unit and SWAT team. He has served for 12 years in the U.S. Army Reserve and Texas National Guard.

The 24 students in this class represented the usual cross-section of individuals that attend courses to hone their gunfighting skills. Seven of the students were police officers. The rest were men and women who realize that purchasing a firearm is only the smallest part of the self-defense equation. One of them was a commercial airline pilot, another a rocket scientist. This and Thunder Ranch's Home and Vehicle Defense course are especially popular with married couples.

The mix of handguns used by the students in this course was, as usual, revealing. There were eight .45 ACP 1911 types (three of which were Les Baer TR Specials while another two were Bill Wilson TR pistols), nine Glocks (one a .45, the others split between .40 S&W and 9mm Parabellum), two SIG-Sauers, one Heckler & Koch P7M13, two Beretta M92s (both in .40 S&W), one Ruger .45 ACP pistol and one S&W Model 19 .357 Magnum revolver. Using speed loaders, the wheel gunner did an admirable job keeping pace with the auto loaders.

The first morning of every course at Thunder Ranch is spent in the classroom listening to Clint lecture. This is a fascinating and unforgettable experience itself, providing your mind can keep pace with his

(right) Team tactics in the Terminator. (below, left) Team tactics applied to "grounded" drills. (below, right) Firing from a vehicle and then withdrawing to cover behind it requires well-rehearsed choreography.



# Handgun Course

## Team Tactics At Thunder Ranch





(clockwise from far left) Team Tactics student uses his partner to conceal his drawstroke as he moves from one side of her to the other from the rear. David Knight demonstrates while Clint Smith discusses "grounded" drills. Team tactics applied to "grounded" drills. Rob Rathburn and Bill Black demonstrate tactics in the Terminator. Students demonstrate team co-ordination in the Terminator under the watchful eye of instructor David Knight. Thunder Ranch instructor Rob Rathburn demonstrates the method used to clear a "stovepipe" malfunction. Firing from the cover provided by the barricades. Withdrawing to cover.



# THUNDER TEAM TACTICS RANCH



100-miles-per-hour stream of thought. Clint always stresses that there are two questions no shooting school can answer: 1) what the threat is going to look like and 2) what it's going to take to win. Leaving us with the thought that "The single biggest failure in most gunfights is that people can't run their gear under stress," we departed the classroom for Red Range.

After dry fire drills and live fire for accuracy, we practiced all three of the most commonly encountered malfunctions: magazine not locked in place, stovepipe and a double feed. The first two can be cleared by the standard "tap, rack, bang" sequence, the latter requires locking the slide rearward, removal of the magazine, racking the slide several times and then insertion of a new magazine and consequent chambering of a round. This is a tough stoppage to experience in a gunfight and personally I would probably transition to a back-up if I had one, as Clint says, quite correctly, "You're going to have to fight back." and "The fight will last as long as your ammo does."

We then began live fire with movement — usually withdrawing back to cover while firing; as Clint frequently stresses that "proximity deletes skill" and "the killing begins when one side turns to run." Behind cover we practiced tactical reloads and malfunction drills with our partners covering. Then we fired "grounded" drills that involved lying on your back and drawing and fighting your way to your feet and back to cover. Sometimes we moved from the barricade to a grounded partner and then both fought their way back to cover. The "grounded" positions included



lying down with either the feet or head facing the target.

Shooting over 900 rounds in three days means a lot of magazine changes. They are always performed in conjunction with your partner shouting, "cover" when you need to change and "clear" when you are finished. His response should be "covering." Of course, any other verbal responses that would be appropriate can be used as long as both parties agree beforehand.

At Thunder Ranch shooting a "Plan A" means firing at the torso, or the body's energy source, the number of shots determined by the threat. Firing a "Plan B" indicates a shot to the head — the body's computer, while a "Plan C" signifies the first two zones plus shooting at the pelvis, which should affect your opponent's mobility. Clint Smith says, "Shoot what is available as long as it is available and until something else is available." At Thunder Ranch you shoot until you win or the threat stops. When moving targets stop, you cease fire, as they have either gone down or you have achieved compliance.

Obtaining verbal compliance is an important aspect of training at Thunder Ranch and is stressed continually. This is, without doubt, a consequence of the law enforcement background of most of the staff. Every firing drill on the Red Range and all runs through the Terminator and Tower require the student to apply verbal commands to the potential threat before firing.

The second day of Team Tactics commenced on the Red Range with dry fire practice and live fire with movement to the left or right. We then began the intricate choreography required when using your partner to conceal your drawstroke as you move from one side of him to the other from the rear.

We then left for the Terminator for a lecture on team tactics and then both several dry runs and a live fire run through this incredible simulator

with our partners. Back to the Red Range for more fire with movement, a trip to The Tower, the Red Range and firing drills that involved withdrawing while clearing malfunctions and covered by your partner, Terminator 1 and 2, Red Range and finally Terminator 1 and 2 again to end an exhausting day.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to the team concept. Team members provide physical and moral support for each other, supporting fire, more complex targets for your opponent and assistance if you're injured. On the other hand, there is the very real possibility of getting shot by your partner. Furthermore, your opponent has more

targets to shoot at and a dependence upon other in the stress of a gunfight could result in a drop in your awareness.

The last day of this three-day course started as usual on the Red Range. Dry firing was followed by live fire with movement — most often withdrawing to cover. Over at the Tower we climbed the outside ladder to the third floor by teams to enter the building and solve its many problems. Moving to the Orange Range we faced the ever challenging "chargers." Two runs through the Terminator followed this.

At the Yellow Range we were introduced to the complex seat belt and handgun manipulation required for shooting from a car from both the driver's and passenger's side. Firing was from approximately 10 yards at reactive steel plates and the pace was intense.

The course ended with a trip up the ladder to the very top of the Tower and

through a hole in the roof. There we were greeted by Clint himself. You can believe that anytime you encounter Clint Smith directing traffic in either the Tower and the Terminator, he's up to no good. Clint will do anything in his power to short circuit your brain waves and push you into a totally inappropriate response. And, that's exactly what he did to Chris Mayer and me. We both lit up a guy holding nothing more than an Easter bunny with so many hits that he resembled one of the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre victims (Chicago, 14 February 1929, engineered by Al Capone's right-hand man, "Machine Gun" Jack McGurn). As a consequence, Chris was awarded the Easter bunny at the subsequent graduation ceremony. But then, it's that kind of stress and realism that brings students back to Thunder Ranch over and over again. ✕

## Thunder Ranch: A World Class Facility

The Thunder Ranch Training Facility (Dept. SOF, HCR 1, Box 53, Mountain Home, TX 78058; phone: 830-640-3138; fax: 830-640-3183; web site: [www.thunderanchinc.com](http://www.thunderanchinc.com)), which opened in 1993, is located 96 miles west of San Antonio, Texas and 46 miles to the east of Kerrville in the rolling-hills karst topography of southern Texas on a total of 2,400 acres. This region, once known principally for Texas Longhorn cattle, is now a center for exotic game ranches.



Thunder Ranch's physical plant is world class throughout. There are four ranges. Both the Red Range and Orange Range are 50x50-yard square ranges. Red Range is the base range for all handgun-related classes. This 20-position range has turning, stationary, wobbler and interface target potential with "cover" structures when required. While the Orange Range also has stationary and wobbler target potential, its most prominent facets include a unique "charger" system that represents threats closing quickly on the student. In addition, it also has a two- or four-target setup for high-speed lateral running targets with an 80-foot range of operation. The Yellow Range measures 50x100 yards and has IPSC body-style armored and disc-type resetting targets. The target options include steel, paper, hostage, stationary, wobbler and movers. This 20-position range is the base range for preliminary work in shotgun and some pistol courses. Also holding 20 positions, the 50x100-yard White Range has stationary, wobbler and high-speed turning targets available. Its numerous barricades represent protective cover and/or concealment. The two-section Black Range has a 20-position conventional rifle range in 100-yard increments out to 300 yards. The other portion is a field range for target engagements from 400 to 1,200 yards for both known and unknown distance applications.

The most visually impressive facilities at Thunder Ranch are the Tower, Thunderville and the infamous Terminator. The Tower is a monolithic four-story structure with its own tactical simulator that permits live fire in all rooms and stairwells. Problems of both internal and external entry can be addressed. The stairwells vary in dimensions and geometry. All of the window ports can be plugged. Students in the Countersniper classes fire from the Tower. Thunderville is an elaborate, day or night, in-depth facade over 200-feet in length representing a two-sided street setting. It's used in all of the rifle programs that present dynamic scenarios. With over 60 target options, as well as movers, hostages, runners and wobblers, Thunderville features computer-controlled lighting, doors, movement, timing and hit documentation. This simulator has been designed to test decision-making and target identification under maximum stress. The Terminator, used in handgun, shotgun and rifle courses, can simulate home, motel or office environments with over 400 floor plan options and targets that emphasize identification and selection prior to engagement. This building is covered by a free-span roof for training under all lighting or weather conditions.

— P.G.K.

In Part I, Dr. Marks recounted and analyzed the history of the insurgency in Colombia, from its root causes to the effects of U.S. involvement, FARC's enabling involvement in the drug trade, and the effects of Colombian government COIN ops. In his conclusion Dr. Marks traces recent developments, including encouraging trends among the Colombian military community, and outlines what steps remain in the path toward resolution of this conflict.

**T**he dysfunctional nature of the U.S. position in Colombia cannot be overstated. We have involved ourselves in the internal processes of a sovereign democracy, even as we claim that our only interest in that state is its drug problem.

Yet as another Andean country, Peru, now the victor over *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path, Maoists) but once in even

worse shape than Colombia, made quite clear during the height of its counterinsurgency, a system fighting for its survival has to have its priorities.

Bogota thus has detached the extreme south of the country — the departments of Amazonas, Putumayo, and Caqueta — and made it a special counter-narcotics zone. There, the United States and its aid may close with and destroy vegetation to heart's content. In the rest of the country, the security forces are blunt: They do not want a U.S. presence as they try to get on with the lonely job of counterinsurgency.

#### Refinement Of Military Response

To that end, it was not until the end of 1998-early 1999 that many components in the Tapias-Mora approach began to settle in. General Ospina, for example, did not assume command of IV

# COLOMBIA

## *Into The Ring*

Text & Photos by  
Dr. Tom Marks

**PART 2**



Colombian troops with war wagon built on deuce-and-a-half, mounting quad-fifty. Crew-served weapons have been redistributed. In some cases taken out of mothballs — as Colombian military reorganizes to bring FARC to the mat.



Division until December 1998; Uscategui was formally arrested in May 1999. Eventually, the team that was assembled had, in addition to Ospina as IV Division CG: I Div, BG Eduardo Contreras; II Div, BG Eduardo Sanchez; III Div, MG Carlos Mendez; and V Div, MG Euclides Sanchez.

In the ranks beneath them, it was no longer business as usual. Those who could not adjust to the greater ops tempo were sacked. In one division area I visited, I saw a brigade commander and two battalion commanders removed in the space of six months.

In all division areas, things were turned upside down. Bases were reworked, especially those likely to see combat. Positions were moved and strengthened. Crew-served weapons were redistributed — and, in some cases, pulled out of mothballs. Greater emphasis was put on the skills of war-fighting.

In particular, funding was made available to begin conversion of many formations to professional status. The standard term for most draftees was 1.5 years (only one year if a high school graduate), not enough time to teach much.

Since the standard composition of a division was three draftee brigades, each with three battalions and a counterguerrilla battalion (BCG), virtually all manpower was locked up in essentially nondeployable assets. Only the 14 x BCG (ctr-g bn) and the 3 x BRIM (mobile bde) were real war-fighting outfits.

### Soldiers To War-Fighters

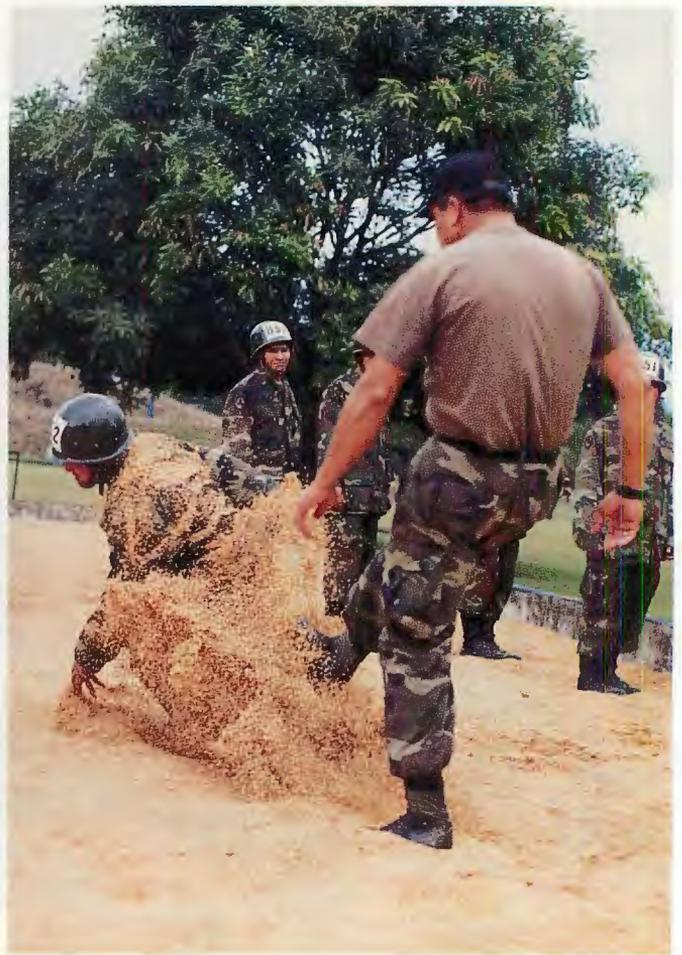
This had to change. By mid-1999, at the time of the FARC offensive, the changeover was well underway in key formations. By spring 2000, in an important unit such as 4th Division, the switch was all but complete.

Infantry weapons and ammunition were in ample supply, but shortages of crew-served pieces and communications gear remained severe. Transportation of every sort, whether trucks or helicopters, was all but absent. The army itself had but 17 choppers, the air force 50 (the police had nearly 100, but half had U.S.-dictated restrictions attached to them involving “counternarcotics only”).

Though the army was able to effect changes quite rapidly, true

Colombian forces have an arms-market melange of weapons — but commonly seen are M60s of various types, and Galil rifles. (below) Colombian forces soldier on, trying to protect a system which does scant to protect them.





(above) With the Army having only 17 choppers of its own, and rapid response a tactical necessity, the IV Division did the logical thing and (above, right) boot-strapped itself an airborne unit. (right) At the time of reorganization, most of the Colombian military was bound up in essentially nondeployable assets. The 14 x BCG and 3 x BRIM were among only real war-fighting outfits.



*jointness* was not achieved. National headquarters was integrated, but this did not extend beyond the building. In the field, the services remained separate commands, a posture which greatly hampered operations, especially where employment of air assets was involved.

Generally, close personal relationships could overcome obstacles. Air force pilots, in particular, demonstrated time and again their willingness to put themselves in harm's way for the sake of army formations. Still, there was degradation in capabilities and response time.

To streamline the army itself, by January-February 2000, the traditional command division — 1 (personnel), 2 (intelligence), 3 (operations), and 4 (supply) — had been reorganized into four directorates, each headed by a Chief: Operations, Personnel, Logistics, and Training. Significantly, under the Director of Operations (a planned MG billet) were actual operations (headed by a colonel), intelligence (a brigadier general), and psychological operations (a colonel). This turned the army into a combat command.

The Directorate of Training was similarly revamped to reflect the needs of warfighting. Normal service and MOS schools remained under their own organization, the National Education

Training Center (NETC), but a new National Training Center (NTC) provided the mechanism for manpower conversion.

Whereas, previously, professionals came only through re-enlistments of draftees, the enhanced manpower needs necessitated allowing direct induction of civilians seeking to enlist, as well as prior service personnel. Each had unique training needs. These were met through new, separate induction courses.

"Now anyone can join the adventure," observed an officer with a grin.

One of the planned outgrowths of rationalizing training and other administrative demands was the release from such duties of V Div. This returned what had become largely an administrative formation to the combat ranks.

To generate still more combat power, especially such as could be rapidly deployed, General Mora grouped his elite formations, the three BRIM and the single Special Forces Brigade (of four battalions — essentially Rangers, rather than true SF) in a Rapid Reaction Force (*Fuerza de Despliegue Rapido*) under his direct control.

### Airborne!

One division, IV, went one step further in its quest to cut response time and returned one of its counter guerrilla battalions (BCG) to airborne status *through in-house training!* Assessment of the vast IV Division AO quickly revealed that helicopters simply did not have the range or payload to get ground combat power to flash-points in as timely and efficient manner as the methods of a seemingly bygone era.

Another IV Div unit, confronted with a vast savanna to patrol, took a page from a Vietnam War manual and produced an armored truck company, complete with mounted .50 machine guns and an accompanying 106mm “gun wagon.” In its first contact, it recorded six FARC KIA.

Through such innovation and determination, the security forces have caused FARC to stall. Where, one moment, the guerrillas seemed a fearsome wave, FARC now has reverted in the popular mind to its role as “threat.”

### Move To The Offensive

Everywhere units have gone over to the offensive. In February of this year, extensive IV Division operations cleared FARC base areas which had been pushed out east from the DMZ. Further actions, by the Rapid Reaction Force, did more of the same in April.

Nevertheless, the contradiction in the government position is well understood by the military. The security forces have been fully occupied with their first priority, getting their house in order so that they can respond to the full range of the FARC threat, from terror to guerrilla warfare to mobile war. They have demonstrated that they are quite capable of responding to difficult circumstances.

The victories have followed. There is satisfaction in this, in piling up the bodies of an enemy who only months before was crowing of his intended victory. But that is the trap Westmoreland in Vietnam fell into, where the means became the strategic end.

The Colombian military recognizes the dilemma. There is no shortage of officers who have read the basic texts on the Vietnam War.

Indeed, FARC has responded as did the communists in Vietnam, by returning to the domination of the human terrain. In this, it has proved every bit as ruthless as the Viet Cong ever was. Torture and assassination, not to mention kidnapping and extortion, are so common as to go almost without comment except in the most extreme cases.

That there are echoes of Vietnam in the FARC approach should not be surprising. FARC (and also ELN) were trained directly by the FMLN of El Salvador. The FMLN, in turn, was trained, both at home and through personnel sent abroad, by Vietnam. FARC manuals are very similar to FMLN manuals. And anyone reading either would swear he was having a flashback to our Indochina involvement. Strategically, operationally, tactically, it's the Vietnamese approach.

### Giap Lives

What is that approach? Key is the constant interplay between the political and the military — with the Maoist template, if anything, being regarded by the Vietnamese as too militaristic and parochial in its emphases (not enough emphasis upon fostering “international solidarity,” for instance). On the ground, the Vietnamese emphasize that the “three stages” occur simultane-

ously as dictated by local circumstances.

The greater level of command and control made possible by modern, off-the-shelf communications gear coordinates lower levels of activity so that they support or are part of higher levels. Widely dispersed guerrilla attacks, for example, have both local objectives and prepare the way for mobile warfare operations.

This brings us back to the absurdity of Bogota's approach, pursued at U.S. urging: A country the size of Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico has basically 30-50,000 personnel running around like firemen responding to the last California earthquake. Tactical and even operational initiative may be wrested from the enemy, but he holds the strategic initiative in the absence of government popular mobilization to hold ground.

FARC understands this and has been pursuing successive domination of areas with a vengeance. Recognizing that for the moment it cannot go head-to-head with the armed forces, it is again concentrating upon hitting isolated, static police positions and uncooperative mayors.

An army report made in 1997 found that the mayors of 13.1% of Colombia's 1,059 municipalities, or counties (I have another government list which claims a smaller figure of 1,025 municipalities nationwide), with direct links to the insurgents. Another 44% had to collaborate in one degree or another.

The U.S. press somehow mutated this into “40% of Colombia controlled by the guerrillas,” but the point can still be made that it is domination of ground which is the key. And in that contest, while



Army's meager air assets, although of quality craft, were too thinly spread to effectively be used for deployment of rapid reaction forces.

there is nowhere the military cannot presently go, there are many areas where going there would be quite a fight, and costly.

Ergo, we find ourselves back at the paramilitaries, who — authorized or not, legal or not — have filled the gap and engaged in some of the most vicious fighting against FARC (and ELN). And they make no bones about their favored methodology: Go after the insurgent infrastructure.

### Contradictions Guarantee Pathos

There is no way around the reality that a vacuum will be filled. By refusing to mobilize the population, Bogota ensures that people's war is waged out of control in every nook and cranny. By demanding that Bogota adhere to this misguided approach, the U.S. pours oil on the flames. The result in many areas is pathos.

Worse than this, the United States gives voice to human rights activists whose only target appears to be the government. This has made it doubly dangerous to be an army officer, for it means besides scanning out front for insurgents, a commander must insure that he does not get a knife in the back from officials working with what has been called “the human rights cartel.”

The likes of Human Rights Watch (HRW) in New York simply have nothing to say about the daily FARC atrocities, which range from kidnapping (an important part of the Vietnamese approach, the

better to bring about societal dislocation) to the most hideous torture-murders of prisoners (e.g. skinning alive). Instead, human rights advocates too often function as a weapons system for the insurgents, trying ceaselessly to go after the security force's top commanders, those of the army in particular.

At no time was this more evident than in February 2000, just as debate was beginning in the U.S. Congress on the proposed aid package, when HRW released a poorly researched, slanderous document entitled *Colombia: The Ties That Bind: Colombia and Military-Paramilitary Links*. Predictably, it focused on three key commands, those of Bogota, Cali, and Medellin, and attempted to implicate those commanders, past and present, in alleged crimes.

The report, though, was a bridge too far, such a transparent lobbying effort that it quickly sank. The "evidence" presented, a mix of double hearsay and fantasy, should never have survived even the most cursory vetting process. Indeed, it would have ended up on the cutting room floor had U.S. citizens been at issue. It was, in fact, because those accused were foreigners that they could be smeared.

The report's linchpin was its fifth finding (page 2): "The brigades discussed here — the Third, Fourth, and Thirteenth — operate in Colombia's largest cities, including the capital. Their commanders are considered among the most capable and intelligent, and are leading candidates for promotion to positions of overall command of divisions, the Army, and Colombia's joint forces. If Colombia's leaders cannot or will not halt support for paramilitary groups in these units, it is highly questionable to assume that they will be more successful in units that are less scrutinized or operate in rural areas, including units that receive U.S. security assistance in southern Colombia."

There was the weenie! It made clear the bottom line in the entire report: The officers named were hurting the insurgents badly. FARC had demanded their dismissal, along with others, as a condition for talking peace and had seen its demands dismissed out of hand by the government. How coincidental — even as statistics demonstrated that it was FARC that was responsible for the overwhelming majority of human rights violations of all sorts throughout the country — that the do-gooders should take up the effort to make casualties of the army chain of command!

One of the most peculiar aspects of the report, in fact, was the effort to have it both ways as concerned command responsibility. In a portion on the 4th Brigade, the report, while fingering some subordinates, said the brigade investigated adverse reports — but these actions were "easily deflected" by subordinates who were adept at covering up (page 13).

So which is it? Either you are upset, because wrongdoing is not being investigated — which is the thrust of the report — or you're upset, because the command and control procedures of the army need to be strengthened — which would seem to be evidence for the defense, not to mention the dispatch of some U.S. advisers.

If you're saying there are some bad apples in the Colombian military, who need to be weeded out, that's one thing. But the report says the commanders failed to do the plucking — even while stating that "covering up" by subordinates was the issue!

As if to cover all its bases, HRW dutifully noted which officers had attended, in any capacity, the School of the Americas. The attempted smear was laughable, since the activists seemed quite unclear as to what precisely went on there.

## Analysis By The Uninformed

In fact, School of the Americas, whatever the HRW claims, focuses largely on technical training. That this-or-that officer may have gone there seems to have nothing to do with anything. But as I understand the logic: Subordinates did some things which certain commanders did not find out about; but since those commanders went to the School of the Americas, where we know bad things are taught; and since they're going to command units to which we might give aid — we can expect bad things to happen — unless we put strings on our aid.

It's all a bit much. The bottom line is that the authors don't know the first thing about either the people they accuse or counterinsurgency. Most importantly, if we follow their logic, we should all become firm advocates of the U.S. aid package.

Take another section, wherein HRW is complaining about the lack of perfect knowledge of his AO by the 4th Brigade commander in 1997. The commander happened to be BG Ospina, and I happened to have visited the AO at the time.

According to my notes, the 4th Bde AO was more than 7 million

people in an area the size of North Carolina (that's half a million *more* people than North Carolina). To cover this area, the unit had three battalions of draftees, two BCG, and a cavalry squadron (i.e. battalion) — let's puff up the numbers and call it 3,500 men — with no organic choppers. So there were at most 3,500 men running around North Carolina, and Human Rights Watch claims anyone is supposed to know what is going on? And that no one is supposed to dare form a neighborhood watch?

In reality, the situation was even more decentralized. One subordinate unit with which I spent a week, Task Force Choco (TF Choco), had but 10 platoons (approximately 400 men) to cover the

AO's 410,000 people in 9,719 square miles, which is a little bigger than New Hampshire! Those platoons were deployed, so the TF Commander could never be quite sure what they were doing, much less the brigade commander.

That the unit was quite effective stemmed from mobilization of *convivar*, citizens with radios to report insurgent movements. Yet even these, though declared legal by the Colombian Supreme Court, were ordered disbanded in response to another FARC condition for "negotiations"!

Another 4th Brigade unit, the cavalry squadron, was headquartered in the vicinity of Rio Negro, southeast of Medellin, but one of its troops (i.e., companies) was deployed to La Union in response to insurgent activity. La Union, the town, had 4,000 people; the surrounding farming area had 17,000 people. The total police force for the area was 10 men.

Eleven houses had been bombed simultaneously one evening. Even with perfect knowledge, how could anyone have prevented it? The four cavalry platoons were spread out all over the map amidst 21,000 people. But mobilizing the citizens to protect themselves, human rights types claim, would be a "crime"!

In reality, the pattern of the war is no different from every insurgency I've been in, from the Philippines to wherever. The point is not that we're unaware of the Yamashita Principle, absurd though it might have been (recall Yamashita was in a cave and had no idea what his retreating troops were doing).

It's that you can't, if you're Human Rights Watch, one of the fiercest opponents of popular mobilization, demand the creation of



**SOF spent a week with Task Force Choco, a unit with only 400 men to cover an AO larger than New Hampshire with more than 410,000 population. Constantly and remotely deployed, comms with headquarters can be a problem.**

a vacuum, then seek to blame individuals for not being on top of what happens in that vacuum!

Such a position may feel good, but it's silly. Worse than that, it's downright dangerous. Of course, all bets are off if FARC violence is seen as self-defense and therefore justifiable. Regrettably, this seems to be the position of much human rights activism, activism disguised as altruism. Insurgent atrocities are fine, because they're for a worthy cause, "liberation."

There are those who in the Colombian force structure who have advanced, only half in bitter jest, that — in addition to the present medals for valor which are earned in combat — a new decoration should be added for having survived a human rights attack.

### Imperfect Democracy Struggles On

It is this strange environment in which the Colombian security forces seek to protect a system which does not do much to protect them. U.S. Embassy involvement with such attacks has cost us dearly, far more than is appreciated. Further, we have opened the door to the abuse of genuine concern for human rights.

And there is always the danger of pushing the security forces too far. At present, I have seen no signs whatsoever, even discussions, of movement beyond the military realm. What could cause this to change is a combination of forces: continued abuse of the human rights system, added to government ineptness which was perceived as endangering the very existence or essence of the Colombian state.

For nationalism runs deep within the "public forces." It is a fact we would do well to keep in our sights. Bogota will allow us to run our separate war in the south, as long as this does not infringe upon certain internal prerogatives. First and foremost among these is to protect society from those who would overthrow it from within.

There is a school of thought which looks to the past, to the errors which have indisputably been made — and continue to be made — by Colombia in the handling of the insurgency, and argues that the key is conversion of the guerrillas into legitimate political forces — by all means short of force. Therein lies the dilemma of the present situation: Such advocacy is understandable but will not work.

Once an insurgent movement becomes a going concern, the dynamic which obtains is quite different from that which may have given it life initially. It becomes an alternative social structure, able to recruit, assign, promote, and control. The mistake of liberals, such as Human Rights Watch, is to equate existence with legitimacy. This simply is not so.

What better way to show this than to point out again the fallacy in the argument, "The rebels control a significant part of national territory, mostly in the south." Let's, for the sake of argument, say they controlled everyone east of the sierra (mountains). And, for the sake of argument, since IV Div, which has assigned to it a majority of the area, puts its AO population at 2 million, let us put the entire non-sierra population at 4 million. Is there any source which claims the insurgents control "all" of these? "Half?"

### Large "Base" — Small Support

I think it is clear what I'm driving at: The insurgents have no significant support base. To the contrary, they "control" territory in areas where there is little — save, in many cases, coca/poppy/marijuana and a transplanted work force. The "insurgents control 40%" figure first surfaced, as best I can tell, in a map in the *Washington Post*, drawn from background briefings,

which has since been reprinted and cited.

The figure itself is reprinted endlessly without any attempt by any source, to my knowledge, to check it on the ground. To the contrary, when the situation maps are examined, they tell quite a different story.

Even the DMZ, though indeed the much-cited "size of Switzerland," in reality has a population of less than 100,000 — with a growing number, according to the United Nations, fleeing the area.

Increasing areas in both rural and urban areas, the latter 75% of the populace, are indeed becoming "contested." Everywhere, though, terror is the dominant FARC tactic. This, as was the case with (Sendero Luminoso) in Peru, distorts the actual insurgent position to make it appear as one of strength and widespread dominance.

Perhaps, of most importance, while the state certainly had a role in creating the original insurgency, and then made it worse, insurgent numbers do not stem from this earlier era. The present insurgents, especially FARC, did not become a serious concern until their linkup with the drug trade relatively recently. Thus they — and insurgency/counterinsurgency — cannot be separated from narcotics/counter-narcotics.

That the United States continues to pretend such a division can be made is the canard peddled to us by a variety of actors, official and unofficial.

There are times when negotiations and "humanitarian assistance" won't do it. The insurgents, as disciplined groups (this term to make clear that leadership and manpower invariably have varying agendas, which are not necessarily overlapping), are not agrarian or national reformers any more than were the Viet Cong or Filipino CCP.

They are political actors. They produce more deaths and more displaced persons than the paramilitary groups and the government combined.

Indeed, one of the signal successes of the human rights agenda has been to deflect attention to the symptom (the popular reaction against insurgency) rather than to the cause (insurgency).

Certainly Colombia's democracy is imperfect, but I think much of the recent commentary is over-wrought, ethnocentric, and more than a little under-researched. And, yes, the system itself has been a significant factor in producing alienation, particularly through repression of leftist actors who have endeavored to work within that system.

Still, alienation and insurgency are not the same phenomenon, and the one does not necessarily lead to the other. For that, ideology, motivation, and group dynamics must also be examined. The original COIN dynamic, detailed initially in this article, has been superseded by another, much deadlier conflict, one which has taken on a life of its own.

In this fight, Colombian government policy may not be "right," but certainly there is much that is being advanced as reporting on the Colombian situation that is wrong. Drugs, to repeat, are not the central element of Colombia's problem. That is state fragmentation. We can talk of nothing until the government actually exercises its writ within its national territory.

This will come about only through a combination of military and socio-economic-political means.

The security forces are doing their part. It is time for the rest of Colombia — and the United States — to join them.

*Senior Foreign Correspondent Dr. Tom Marks has spent much time on-the-ground in Colombia for SOF in recent years.* ✕



There has been much innovation, adaptation, redistribution of crew-served weapons, such as this quad-fifty built in-house by a Colombian Army maintenance depot.

# FROM MY COLD,

## The NRA Is Back

Holding a hand-made reproduction of a Revolutionary War-era musket at full arm's length above his head, Charlton Heston offered "everyone within the sound of my voice, [words] to hear and to heed, and especially for you, Mr. [Al] Gore: From my cold, dead hands!"

As one body, thousands of National Rifle Association members sprang from their chairs as if prompted by an electric jolt, waves of thunderous applause and rousing cheers breaking over the convention hall for the 129th annual NRA meeting, held 19-21 May in Charlotte, North Carolina.

For anyone who holds the Bill of Rights, and especially the Second Amendment, sacred and inviolable, the moment was thrilling, even for an admittedly jaded journalist. In that instant, Heston crystallized what may well be the NRA's most historic meeting ever. He set the association on course to play a major and possibly pivotal role in November's presidential elections.

A longtime champion of the U.S. Constitution and an Oscar-winning star of such cinematic classics as *Ben Hur* and *The Ten Commandments*, Heston made a little history himself, being elected NRA president for an unprecedented third term. But that was just one of many things that marked the meeting for posterity.

Another momentous element, while less quantifiable, was no less notable in Charlotte. It was a widespread, almost palpable feeling in the air that, like Moses leading the Israelites, Heston has led the NRA out of its own wilderness.

The NRA got a cold-shoulder reception two years ago in Philadelphia, not just from anti-gun protesters, but from the city itself. Ironically the birthplace of liberty in this nation, Philadelphia is now one of many major cities, all controlled by lock-step socialist Democratic Party bosses carrying political water for Bill Clinton and Al Gore, trying to financially strangle U.S. gunmakers with a bevy of bogus lawsuits.

Last year's NRA convention in Denver, another bastion of Democratic Party hacks, was subverted by the opposition. It was a one-day meeting muffled by left-wing political propaganda, hucksters hawking feel-good gun control while wading into the bloody wake of the Columbine High School massacre to blame law-abiding gun owners and the NRA for a monstrosity insane crime by two nihilistic punks who adored Adolf Hitler.

On the cusp of the new millennium, however, the NRA came to Charlotte big and bold, undivided and proud. The tone of almost every speech was in-your-face activism, not just about the Second Amendment, but about the future of the nation. If the Democratic Party wants to make guns a key issue in the upcoming national election, the meeting in Charlotte left no doubt that the NRA and its burgeoning membership will happily lead the charge.

Heston summed up the moment perfectly.

"Do you feel that incredible energy here today?" he asked the standing-room-only crowd in the members' meeting. "... It's the feeling you get when you're making a difference in the future of your country."

Heston praised the members for accomplishing three tasks he challenged them with when he took over NRA. First, NRA rebuilt its membership base, "not by just a few thousand members, but by one million members," to approximately 3.8 million.

Second, thanks also to the membership, NRA has rebuilt its



financial war chest, Heston declared, and third, "I wanted to bring the NRA back to the table of mainstream political debate ... I'd say we're not just at the table. We're eating their lunch."

### United We Stand

Most important, Heston recognized the membership for putting aside the bitterly selfish internal squabbles that have marred members' meetings in the recent past, distracting everyone from the NRA's *raison d'être*: safeguarding the Second Amendment.

"More than anything else," Heston said, "I asked you to believe in each other again. To believe that gun ownership is as wholesome as it is constitutional. ... To believe that a kid who wants to plink at tin cans is not a kid gone wrong. To believe that the great flame of freedom our founding fathers ignited has not grown cold.

"I declare that mission accomplished!" he proclaimed. "I ... see the fire is in your eyes, the pride is in your hearts. ... The NRA is baa-a-a-ack! All of which spells very serious trouble for a man named Gore."

The Charlotte meeting was historic in more tangible ways. It set an attendance record. More than 52,000 members sojourned to a city renowned for the bloody, inhospitable un-welcome its citizens gave to British troops during the American Revolution. With his army repeatedly bushwhacked by small, fierce bands of citizen mili-

# DEAD HANDS

Text & Photos by  
James L. Pate



Preaching to the choir, Charlton Heston brings down the house at the 2000 NRA convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

door consumption of alcoholic beverages, council member Mike Castano reminded everyone that the NRA has led the way in teaching gun safety to adults and children.

"They are a guest in our city, and I feel that we have a debt of gratitude, regardless of your political affiliation," Castano said.

But when the NRA convened its annual meeting the next afternoon, casual conversations and speeches never strayed far from politics and political affiliation. Outside the Charlotte Convention Center, the protesters were solidly in the NRA's corner, except for a lone woman carrying a sign advising, "We Don't Need More Guns and Moses."

After pro-gun demonstrators, the most popular cause was a boycott of gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson. One man passed out thousands of yellow stickers urging gun owners and buyers to boycott the company, now British owned, which on 17 March became the only gun manufacturer targeted in the municipal lawsuits to capitulate to the strong-arm tactics of the Clinton-Gore Administration and greedy trial lawyers flush with cash from their settlement with tobacco companies.

In its "pact with the devil," as one protest leaflet described the S&W sell-out, Smith agreed to limit lawful handgun purchases to individuals to one every 14 days. The deal Smith signed with the Department of Justice also stipulates that S&W would forbid federally licensed firearms dealers who sell its products to also sell certain types of other legal firearms.

Smith would also forbid dealers handling its product from selling at guns shows where lawful private sales occur, and promised the feds to distribute anti-gun propaganda with every S&W sold. Smith also pledged to donate 1% of its annual gun revenues to an anti-gun propaganda campaign, and to support so-called smart-gun technology.

## SOF Awards

*Soldier Of Fortune* Publisher Robert K. Brown, who spearheaded a national S&W boycott in the editorial columns of this magazine, held a press conference on Saturday morning to present awards of recognition to some well-deserved individuals in the world of guns, culminating in a mock award for Smith & Wesson.

Brown couldn't find in his heart the words to adequately express his dismay over Smith's recent betrayal of the Second Amendment. So at the 129th members' meeting of the National Rifle Association, Brown found another, less delicate way to express himself. In a pig's ass. Yes, a pig's ass.

The national news media was widely represented, including ABC News anchor Peter Jennings, who seemed to get an earful from association members everywhere he turned as he roamed the convention hall.

Local coverage by *The Charlotte Observer* was, for the most part, balanced, although significantly more ink was spared for comment by gun-control advocates than is provided to pro-gun groups when they comment on anti-gun rallies such as the "Million Mom March" the weekend before.

NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre dubbed it the "Misled Moms March," because "they thought they were marching to keep kids safe, but they were marching to keep Clinton-Gore in power. ... It wasn't organized by a 'housewife and mother of two from New Jersey,'" as the news media reported, but by a woman who is "a professional White House insider on leave from CBS

tia, Lord Cornwallis complained bitterly that Charlotte was "like a hornet's nest" for soldiers of a tyrant king.

Unlike Philly and Denver, though, Charlotte could not have been friendlier to the NRA, adding to the feeling that the association has turned a corner. Mayor Pat McCrory came to offer a personal welcome to the officers and membership at opening ceremonies. More than 5,000 men and women, most of whom lived within driving distance, joined the NRA over the weekend.

For the first time ever, though, one of the convention's most popular attractions, the indoor air rifle range, was cast in serious doubt, much to the short-lived glee of gun control advocates, who had trouble mustering respectable numbers in Charlotte, and then remained a discreet distance from the convention hall.

Two days before the convention opened on 19 May, city police advised the NRA that a Charlotte ordinance forbids shooting guns of any type within city limits, except at licensed ranges. The problem was raised at the next night's city council meeting, and a one-time exception was requested. Council members split 5-5. Mayor McCrory broke the tie in favor of the NRA.

## NRA As Guests

Noting that the city had made exceptions for other special events, allowing such usually illegal activities as fireworks and out-



ABC news anchor Peter Jennings listens to an NRA member make an impassioned plea for gun rights.



This year's NRA gathering in Charlotte broke attendance records, is being hailed as a rallying-point event for gun rights.

News, the sister-in-law of Hillary Clinton's closest friend, lawyer and political strategist.

"It wasn't a grassroots campaign rally, but a Gore campaign rally — scripted and coached by the White House," LaPierre said. "It wasn't about moms for safety. It was about Gore for president. And Mr. Gore, you're going to find out: It's not smart to lie to Mom."

James Jay Baker, executive director of Institute for Legislative Action, NRA's lobbying arm, also attacked Gore's credibility, condemning the vice president for using the shooting of seven school kids at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., as an opportunity to promote trigger locks.

### Locks And Chains

"Trigger locks?" Baker exclaimed. "This shooting took place in a city where the sale, ownership and possession of handguns are already prohibited. If disarming Americans were a solution to anything, our nation's capital would be a crime-free, gun-controller's paradise. But ... our capital remains plagued by criminals.

"Trigger locks have become a political symbol, exalted on Bill Clinton's altar of spin, and imbued with magical powers," Baker said. "According to Clinton and Gore, they can make crack dealers into responsible parents. They can even keep violent juveniles from viciously attacking their classmates. The hysteria has reach such ridiculous levels that the Massachusetts legislature actually ordered trigger locks to be placed on the Minutemen's historic flintlocks displayed in the States House."

Indeed, many in attendance repeatedly marveled at how, under President Clinton and Vice President Gore, lies have been turned into truth, evil has been proclaimed as good, logic has been turned on its head.

For example, guns, such as those historic flintlocks, are *by right* one of the most tangible symbols of our history, and of the hard-won freedoms that make the United States the envy of all people on the planet who long for liberty; the bane of jack-booted thugs and would-be tyrants the world over.

Locks, on the other hand, are the perfect symbol of oppression, subjugation and slavery.

So it should be no surprise that Bill Clinton and Al Gore have embraced gun locks — the most totalitarian symbol imaginable — as the cure-all for the social ills that, by and large, have infected our society thanks to these same socialists, such as Clinton and Gore, nurtured in the primitive slop of secular humanism and worship not of God, but of the state.

Clinton and Gore, and their political patrons in Hollywood, exploit gun violence for profit in popular culture entertainment, at the same time they piously call for further curtailment of the rights of law-abiding gun owners under the foolish notion that this will somehow affect the behavior of criminals. They feed this crap to the public, calling it caviar, and the public laps it up.

This was eloquently explained by the convention's keynote speaker, U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts, Jr., a former University of Oklahoma football star, and ordained minister, whose conservatism and leadership in the Republican Party has made him a pariah shunned by his liberal black colleagues in the House of Representatives.

"Blaming guns for horrors such as Columbine is no different than blaming the chains for slavery," Watts said. "The problem isn't the guns. The problem is what is in the hearts and minds of a very small minority that decides to kill."

Watts marveled at the irony "that those well-intentioned people who came to Washington" for the Million Mom March, "to pass



Pro-gun demonstrators make their point outside the exhibit hall in Charlotte.

laws that criminals will not honor ... were led by members of an entertainment industry that not only glorifies violence, but which has promoted the sexual license and glorification of bizarre behavior which produces so many of our violent young criminals.

### Blame Where Deserved

"Our children have been forced to live in a relentlessly secular culture," Watts said. "They have been robbed of much of their religious heritage by the complete banning of religion from public life, especially in our schools. Don't think for a second that they haven't gotten the message.

"They can discuss almost anything in school except 'Thou shalt not kill' and 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' Discussing the abiding truths of our Judeo-Christian faith makes the adults very, very testy, sometimes to the point of legal action. And that sends a very clear message to kids. Religion is somehow bad or, at the very least, irrelevant to their lives."

Watts read several quotes from the police report on the Columbine massacre which, he said, illustrates how the killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were influenced by the gun violence portrayed in popular culture by the same people who want to abolish the Second Amendment. The two were especially seduced by the craven blood lust seen in the Oliver Stone film, *Natural Born Killers*.

Klebold wrote one entry in Harris' yearbook that referred to "the holy April morning of NBK," or *Natural Born Killers*. Harris wrote in Klebold's yearbook: "God, I can't wait till they die. I can taste the blood now — NBK."

In a notebook the day before the shooting, one of the killers wrote: "About 26.5 hours from now, the judgment will begin ... What fun is life without a little death? It's interesting when I'm in my human form, knowing I'm going to die. Everything has a touch of triviality to it."

The killers "filled their spiritual vacuum by making a religion out of violence," Watts pointed out. "I am not guessing here. We have the killers' word for it. Yet the entertainment industry will not accept any degree of responsibility for it. This is an astounding position.

"What Hollywood is telling us," Watts said, "is that children are not affected by what they read, see and hear. This is obviously wrong and any parent who has to buy Pokemon cards, Beanie Babies, Nike shoes or Cookie Crisps knows better.

"Can we link the Columbine slaughter to the entertainment industry? Clearly, we can ... If a person attacks a citizen of a different race, and a subsequent search of his home finds racist literature, don't we assume there is a link? We would be incredibly foolish not to ...

"I don't recall hearing anyone blame the Ryder truck, the fertilizer and [fuel oil] that [Timothy] McVeigh used to build his bomb for that horrific crime," Watts pointed out. "Quite the contrary. The president blamed anti-government rhetoric and talk radio. Not many people, at least on the gun control side, disagreed.

"They were admitting," Watts said, "that people can be inspired to violence by their cultural experiences. After the Columbine killings, police searched the killers' homes ... They discovered hate literature, violent video games and writings by the killers showing a deep affection for the work of Oliver Stone.

"But who has gotten the lion's share of blame for this horror? The man most to blame, we have been instructed, is Charlton Heston.

### Honor Where Due

"I honor ... the entire Bill of Rights, not just the amendments that happen to suit me," Watts told the packed banquet hall. "I stand completely and forever opposed to allowing the criminal element to destroy our liberties. These liberties, ensured by our Bill of Rights,

*Continued on page 74*



SOF gave out Silver Anniversary Awards at the NRA convention, to leaders and luminaries in the shooting community. In alpha order, the awards went to:

- James J. Baker, in recognition of effort above and beyond the call of duty in defending and promoting the American right to keep and bear arms;
- Jeff Cooper, for being a driving force in the promotion of defensive weapon craft and combat mindset as well as an inspiration to all;
- Richard Davis and Second Chance, humanitarian award for 800 officers saved in the line of duty through the development of exceptional personal body armor;
- Val J. Forgett, lifetime achievement award for innovative design and marketing policies that helped popularize a black-powder revolution in America;
- Jim Fotis, for outstanding leadership in the law enforcement community and for promoting and protecting the American right to keep and bear arms;
- Gaston Glock, in recognition of his outstanding support of the responsible possession and personal use of firearms;
- Kimber, for excellence in industry, providing top-quality, reliable 1911 pistols at the most competitive price;
- Buzz Mills, for saving Gunsite and returning to its values, beliefs and traditions;
- Robinson Armament, for the courage to produce an entirely new politically *incorrect* semiautomatic rifle in an age of anti-gun politics and cheap-shot law suits;
- William B. Ruger, lifetime achievement award for innovative design

and marketing policies that made high-quality firearms affordable to the American public;

— Bob Scheutz and Olympic Arms, for lifetime support of the NRA and the Second Amendment;

— SIG Arms, in recognition of outstanding support in the fight for the responsible possession and personal use of firearms;

— Taurus International, in recognition of strong support of the American right to keep and bear arms and for efforts to promote safe and responsible firearms ownership through providing membership in the NRA with each gun sold;

— Bill Wilson, in appreciation for the man who had the vision and dedication to put the "Practical" back in practical pistol shooting worldwide;

— and to Ken Hackathorn, Walt Rauch, Harvey Sayle and Dick Thomas, in recognition for having joined together in an outstanding effort to found, support and promote the International Defensive Pistol Association.



Unveiled by Col. Robert K. Brown (left) — but unclaimed — was a surprise two-ham award to Smith & Wesson "for selling out the values and ideals of Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson and the unbelievably quick and treacherous jump to the Clinton anti-gun bandwagon."

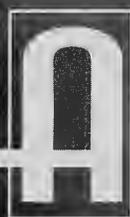


James J. Baker, Executive Director of the NRA/ILA, received a special SOF award in recognition of his efforts above and beyond the call of duty in defending and promoting the American right to Keep and Bear arms.

# THE NO-NONSENSE 45

Les Baer  
Thunder Ranch Special

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



After almost 90 years, it remains the quintessential fighting tool for *combate mano a mano*. Although it has been fielded in 9mm Parabellum, 10mm Auto and .38 Super (and now even .40 S&W and 400

COR-BON), it is almost always associated with the most effective handgun cartridge to date – the .45 ACP. It can be obtained in no less than three envelopes, from incredibly compact to its original form – the so-called Government Model. It has been tuned, chopped, welded and had gingerbread beyond description attached to it. At the highest levels of my loop it is still, without doubt, the handgun of choice among armed professionals who are permitted to choose the tools of their craft. Each of us has his own ideas about what features are essential and which are useless gimmickries on the 1911. The U.S. Government Model 1911 .45 ACP Pistol will remain pre-eminent well into the foreseeable future.

Thunder Ranch's honcho, Clint Smith, has, in conjunction with Les Baer Custom, Inc. (Dept. SOF, LBC, 29601 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Hillside, IL

61257; phone: 309-658-2716; fax: 309-658-2610; e-mail: lesbaer@netexpress.net; website: <http://www.lesbaer.com>), designed a 1911 that reflects his personal philosophy: serious and no nonsense. The Baer 1911 Thunder Ranch Special provides only the features that Clint feels are necessary, together with the rugged reliability associated with all of Les Baer's 1911s. hand-fitted and finished to perfection. Les Baer has been custom crafting firearms since 1973.

The Thunder Ranch Special is a full-size Government Model pistol. The overall length is 8.5 inches. With a height of approximately 5.6 inches, the width at the grip portion of the frame is about 1.1 inches. The weight, empty, of this steel-framed handgun is about 39 ounces. All of the steel parts except the barrel, stainless steel barrel bushing and grip panel screws have a high-quality black oxide finish. The Baer 5-inch hammer-forged, match-grade barrel has four-groove rifling with a left hand twist of one turn in 16 inches provided by famed gunsmith Fred Kart.

The slide and frame are precision machined from roll-forged 4140 ordnance steel. They are heat-treated to 40 R.C. and mill finished on CNC machin-

ery after heat-treating to prevent warpage. Baer holds the tightest tolerances in the industry to guarantee consistency. The slide's barrel channel is precision bored. The slide has a 9mm firing pin hole to keep primer flow to a minimum. The precision made firing pin has a 0.067-inch diameter to exactly fit the Baer slide and further inhibit primer flowing. The recoil plug was machined all the way through to avoid any more drilling or reaming in order to install reverse recoil plugs. There are precision cocking serrations at both the rear and at the front for safely "press checking." Baer felt that the cocking serrations on most M1911 were too thick and bulky in appearance. He designed a special CNC cutter to machine very fine serrations on the slide. As a result, the appearance has improved and they are less aggressive on the fingers. The ejection port has been lowered and beveled to enhance ejection reliability and protect empty cases from denting.

The TR Special is also equipped with a skeletonized Commander-style hammer and match grade sear. Extremely hard, these two parts are furnished with the smoothest and most highly polished surfaces possible. The recoil spring,

guide rod and plug are of the conventional Government Model type. The match grade extractor has been precision machined and heat-treated. The barrel, built to SAAMI specifications has been "throated."

The left side of the slide is roll marked "BAER Custom". The right side of the slide is roll marked with the Thunder Ranch logo and "TR SPECIAL". The serial number on the right side of the frame carries the serial number with a "TR" prefix. Les Baer informed me that, as of this writing, about 600 TR Specials have been ordered, with no end in sight.

The high profile, blade-type front sight carries a single, Trijicon, self-luminous green tritium dot and is dovetailed to the slide. It's 0.115-inch in width. The open square-notch LBC fixed combat rear sight has two self-luminous tritium dots. The square notch is 0.120-inch wide. The sight radius is

about 6.5 inches. All of this has been carefully designed to provide an extremely crisp, clear sight picture.

All of the pistol's components are machined oversize and then precisely hand fit. It takes 40 hours to fit, polish, contour and assemble the Thunder Ranch Special, exclusive of the time required to manufacture the parts themselves. Even the frame rails are polished by hand. These pistols are nothing if not tight! The slide-to-frame tolerance is held to plus/minus 0.30-inch when in battery. The barrel bushing is so tightly fit to the barrel that it cannot be removed without using the polymer bushing tool provided. The pistol's sharp edges have been rounded or beveled to prevent snagging on clothing or gear, but this is not a radical "meltdown" of the type so popular now.

The attention to details, many of which may not be seen or noticed, is without peer. An example is the Baer

extended ejector, a component now popular that, however, few understand. When shooting around corners your grip on the pistol may not be as firm as it should be. This means the frame on this locked-breech, short-recoil handgun may move slightly to the rear together with the slide during the recoil stroke. As a consequence, a standard length ejector might not clear the empty case out of the ejection port. The usual result is a "stove pipe" malfunction. An extended ejector will usually prevent this from happening.

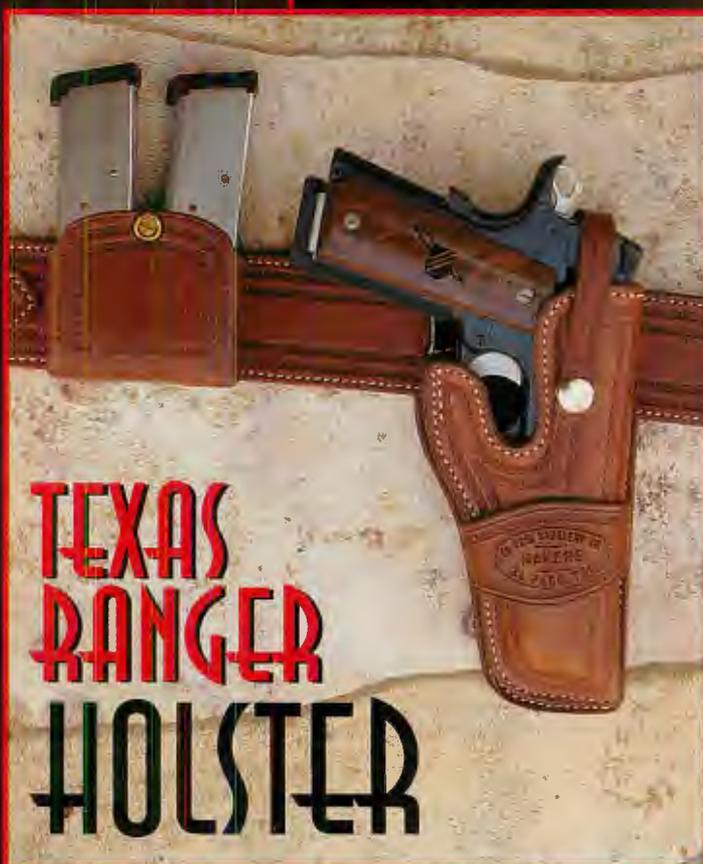
Moving to the frame, the magazine-well has been beveled to assist changing magazines. The frame's feed ramp has been opened and polished, an almost standard feature now on customized M1911s. The beavertail-type steel grip safety has a noticeable hump on the bottom to insure that it is disconnected even if not depressed completely. It entirely cups the hammer to prevent



TR Special (right side) features the rugged reliability associated with all of Les Baer's 1911s, hand-fitted and finished to perfection. (inset) TR Special is equipped with a skeletonized Commander-style hammer, as well as a slightly extended single side thumb safety.

"hammer bite" and permit as high a grip as possible. It features a 0.250-inch radius cut from the pinhole. Both this component as well as the thumb safeties, either single side or ambidextrous, are mill-finished investment castings. Since 1992, Baer Custom has machined the frame high just under the rear portion of the trigger guard. The high grip permitted by these two features lowers the bore line in relation to the shooter's hand and reduces the perceived recoil somewhat. TR Specials are currently provided with slightly extended single side thumb safeties. Left-handed shoot-

(below) TR Special (left side) — note very fine precision cocking serrations at both the rear and at the front for safely "press checking." Les Baer magazines feature a special electro polishing process on the magazine body, both inside and out. (right) Original Slim-Tech grip panels proved to be too thin for the author and so Clint Smith changed them out for Thunder Ranch grips of standard thickness.



Nobody, in the United States has been making gun-leather longer than El Paso Saddlery Co. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 27194, El Paso, TX 79926; phone: 915-544-2233, fax: 915-544-2535, website: [www.epsaddlery.com](http://www.epsaddlery.com); catalog: \$5). While it was incorporated in June 1889, the company had already been in business a decade by that time. Along the way they have made more than a few holsters for the fabled Texas Rangers.

One of the most intriguing holsters in the El Paso Saddlery Co. catalog has been popular with the Texas Rangers for more than seventy years. Known as the 1930 "Austin" holster, it was originally designed by one of the West's legendary holster makers, A.W. Brill. From 1917 to the early 1950s Brill had a shop right down the street from the Texas state capitol building in Austin. Men appointed to the Texas Rangers were responsible for obtaining their own gear. Invariably, they would buy their handguns at J.C. Petmeckey Hardware and then go next door to buy their leather from A.W. Brill.

Bobby McNellis, head honcho at El Paso Saddlery, had always admired the Brill "Austin" holster. Subsequent to Brill's death Bobby learned that Brill's daughter was Nellie Connally, the wife of Texas Governor John Connally. McNellis wrote to her and asked permission to make her father's holster and call it the "Austin." She wrote back with a letter of permission and several original patterns.

The 1930 "Austin" holster is a single-loop transition-type. Made by El Paso Saddlery Co. since the early 1970s, the "Austin" is a transition from the full back flap frontier style to a modern fast draw type. Its single loop and somewhat narrowed back flap provide a traditional appearance. Brill not only narrowed the back flap on this design but cut down the traditional "S" curve for a faster draw. He did retain the "S" curve on holsters made for the 1911 pistol and even put a significant

ers can order the pistol with an ambidextrous safety, but this cannot be fitted to the standard-issue Slim-Tech grip panels.

The lightly checkered wood Slim-Tech grip panels carry the Thunder Ranch logo. They are retained by slotted stainless steel screws and require special abbreviated threaded bushings in the frame. These grip panels reduce the width from about 1.25 inches to 1.1 inches. They are especially useful for those with smaller hands. Since I have very large hands, they resulted in my point of impact moving slightly to the left. As a consequence, Clint changed them out for grip panels of standard thickness after the first day of the Team Tactics course.

The match-grade aluminum trigger pad has a stainless steel bow and a vertically serrated front face. A short pad can be ordered for those with small hands. Trigger pull weight on our test specimen was exactly 4.0 pounds. Many feel this should be the minimum trigger pull weight for a combat handgun. The trigger pull is as smooth as glass with a very crisp let-off. The allen-head screw on the front face of the trigger pad adjusts over-travel. However, this adjustment is made at the shop and should not be

*Continued on page 70*

dip in them for the pistol's trigger. The "Austin" holster has a strong 1930s to 1940s look to it and El Paso Saddlery Co. still sells quite a few of the model to Texas Rangers.

The 1930 "Austin" comes with a slight muzzle-rearward cant and lining. It sells for \$90. Add \$20 for border stamping and \$60 for floral carving. A neutral cant costs \$10 additional. Hammer thongs are standard on single-action revolvers. Semiautomatic pistols such as the Glock have covered triggers. I chose to match this holster with El Paso Saddlery's classic #150 River belt, which is 2 1/4 inches wide and finely finished with 1 1/2-inch billets. Smooth or non-slip lining is standard. This belt costs \$70. Add \$20 for border stamping or \$80 for floral carving. A 12-inch zipper can be installed for \$20. With a #2-F double-magazine pouch the rig was complete (\$24 with stamping). All three components were ordered with border stamping, which has always been popular with the Texas Rangers and other Southwestern law enforcement personnel.

The process by which El Paso Saddlery holsters are handcrafted is both unique and fascinating. Holster patterns are cut with a "steel rule" die using a powerful hydraulic press called a "clicker." Looking very much like a kitchen "cookie cutter," the dies, with sharp edges on one side only, are made from El Paso Saddlery's patterns and to their specifications. The sharp edges are removed

## THUNDER RANCH SPECIAL

### SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:** .45 ACP.
- Operation:** Locked-breech, short-recoil, semiautomatic, single-action trigger system with frame-mounted thumb and grip safeties.
- Weight, empty:** 39 ounces.
- Length, overall:** 8.5 inches.
- Width:** 1.1 inches with Slim-Tech grip panels.
- Height:** Approximately 5.6 inches
- Barrel:** Six-groove, left-hand twist with one turn in 16 inches.
- Barrel length:** 5 inches.
- Magazine:** LBC-designed single-column, detachable box-type magazine with seven-round capacity. Magazine body and follower spring retaining plate are fabricated from 17-4 stainless steel. A special electro polishing process is used on the magazine body, both inside and out.
- Sights:** High profile, blade-type front sight with a single, Trijicon, self-luminous green tritium dot that is dovetailed to the slide and 0.115-inch in width. Open square-notch (0.120-inch in width) LBC fixed combat rear sight with two self-luminous tritium dots. The sight radius is about 6.5 inches.
- Finish:** Black oxide.
- Price:** \$1,620, complete with three magazines and polymer bushing wrench.
- Manufacturer:** Les Baer Custom, Inc., Dept. SOF, LBC, 29601 34th Avenue, Hillside, IL 61257; phone: 309-658-2716; fax: 309-658-2610; e-mail: lesbaer@netexpress.net; website: <http://www.lesbaer.com>
- T&E summary:** Reflects Clint Smith's personal philosophy: serious and no nonsense. Features the rugged reliability associated with all of Les Baer's 1911s, hand-fitted and finished to perfection.



by hand with an edging tool. After this, the edge surfaces are polished using a rough canvas cloth impregnated with saddle soap. If specified, the safety strap is installed next, together with its snap on the holster body. If the holster is to be made with a lining, usually pigskin although cowhide and suede are also employed, it's glued with leather contact cement called "Barge." The lining is rolled over at the mouth and stitched in place. This is done to prevent the lining from separating during repeated re-holstering. It's an El Paso Saddlery exclusive.

The belt loop is folded over, measured for the required belt width, and sewn to the body of the holster at the rear. A leather welt (or spacer) is installed at approximately the same width as the handgun's trigger guard to insure proper fit. The leather pattern is then folded and the main seam stitched. El Paso Saddlery uses Landis No. 3 Harness Stitchers. They have six of these famous machines, which have not been manufactured since prior to World War II. Made in St. Louis, Missouri by the Landis Machine Company, they remain highly desirable pieces of equipment, as they are simply the best stitching machines ever designed for leatherwork. They pull the stitch tight and well below the surface of the leather to protect the thread from abrasion. After stitching, both ends of the thread are burned with a soldering gun to form a ball of melted

nylon that will never pull through. After stitching, the main seam is made smooth on a drum sander followed by the edging tool and polishing with a canvas cloth that has been impregnated with saddle soap.

First dampening the holster and then inserting an aluminum casting of the handgun for which the holster is being made achieves the all-important blocking process. Some holster makers use actual handguns, but this runs the risk of marring the inside of the holster. Furthermore, aluminum will not discolor the leather. The holster is allowed to dry naturally with the aluminum replica in place.

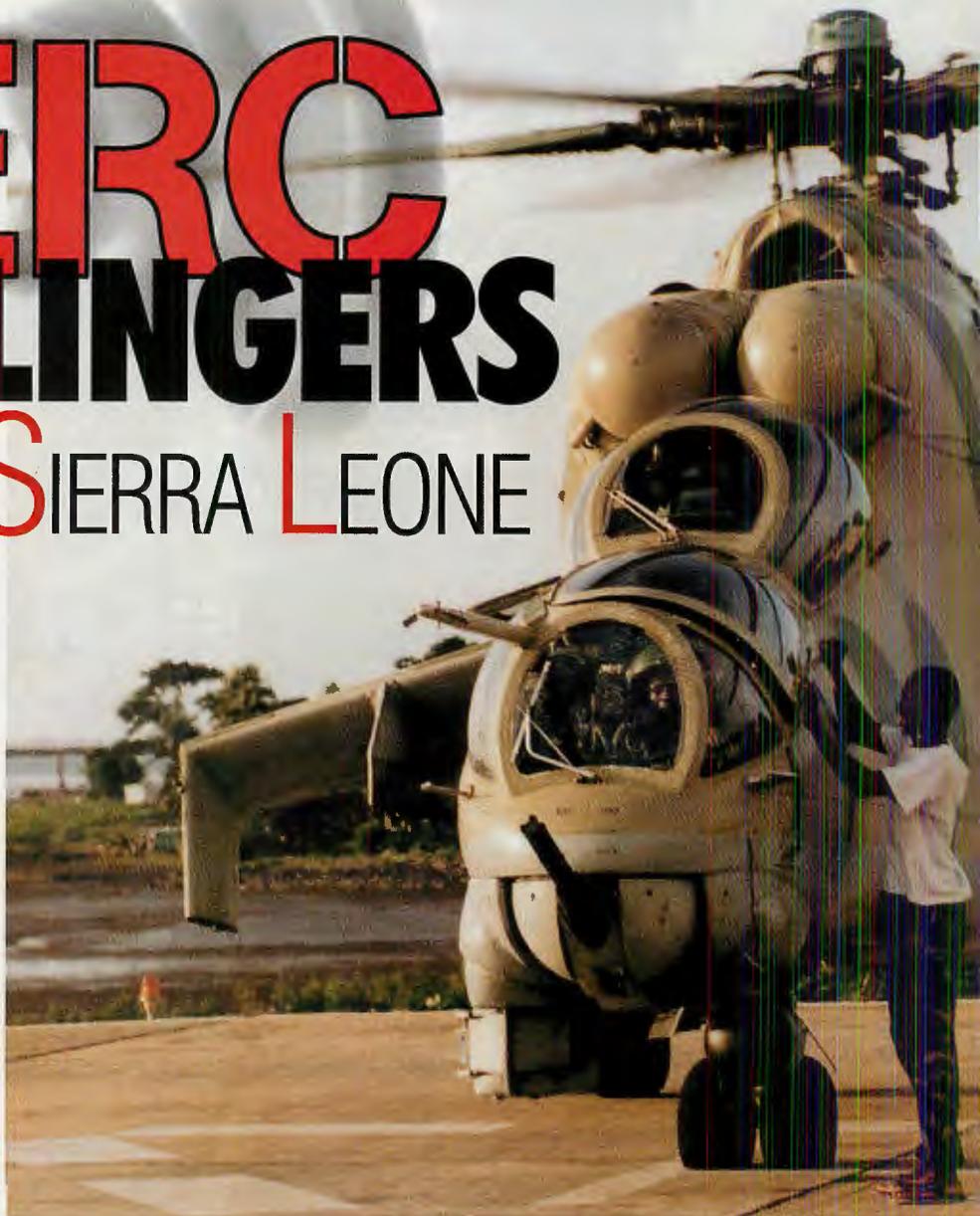
After blocking, the holster is cleaned with oxalic acid, a mild acid that removes fingerprints and dirt. Oiling is done by hand with pure prime neatsfoot oil (not neatsfoot oil "compound" which contains a substantial amount of petroleum byproducts). Neatsfoot oil is an animal product that comes from the hooves of cattle. Only a small amount is applied with each coat. As many as ten to twelve coats are required. Subsequent to oiling, the holster is given a coat of Feibing's Harness Dressing. This non-acrylic leather dressing protects, waterproofs and provides a slight sheen. If it has a safety strap, the snap is installed. There is a final inspection for fit before the holster goes to shipping. All of El Paso Saddlery's holsters are handcrafted in this manner.

— P.G.K.

# MERC GUNSLINGERS IN SIERRA LEONE

*SOF* Flies  
Hind  
Gunship —  
Fires Up  
Rebels

Text & Photos  
by Al J. Venter



*Last month we brought you part one of Al Venter's account of the battle of Freetown that occurred in 1994. As we noted then, Al was on his way to Sierra Leone once more to cover the war — rather than print part two, we decided to run his current dispatch instead. Watch upcoming issues for the second part of Venter's series on the 1994 war.*

— Editors



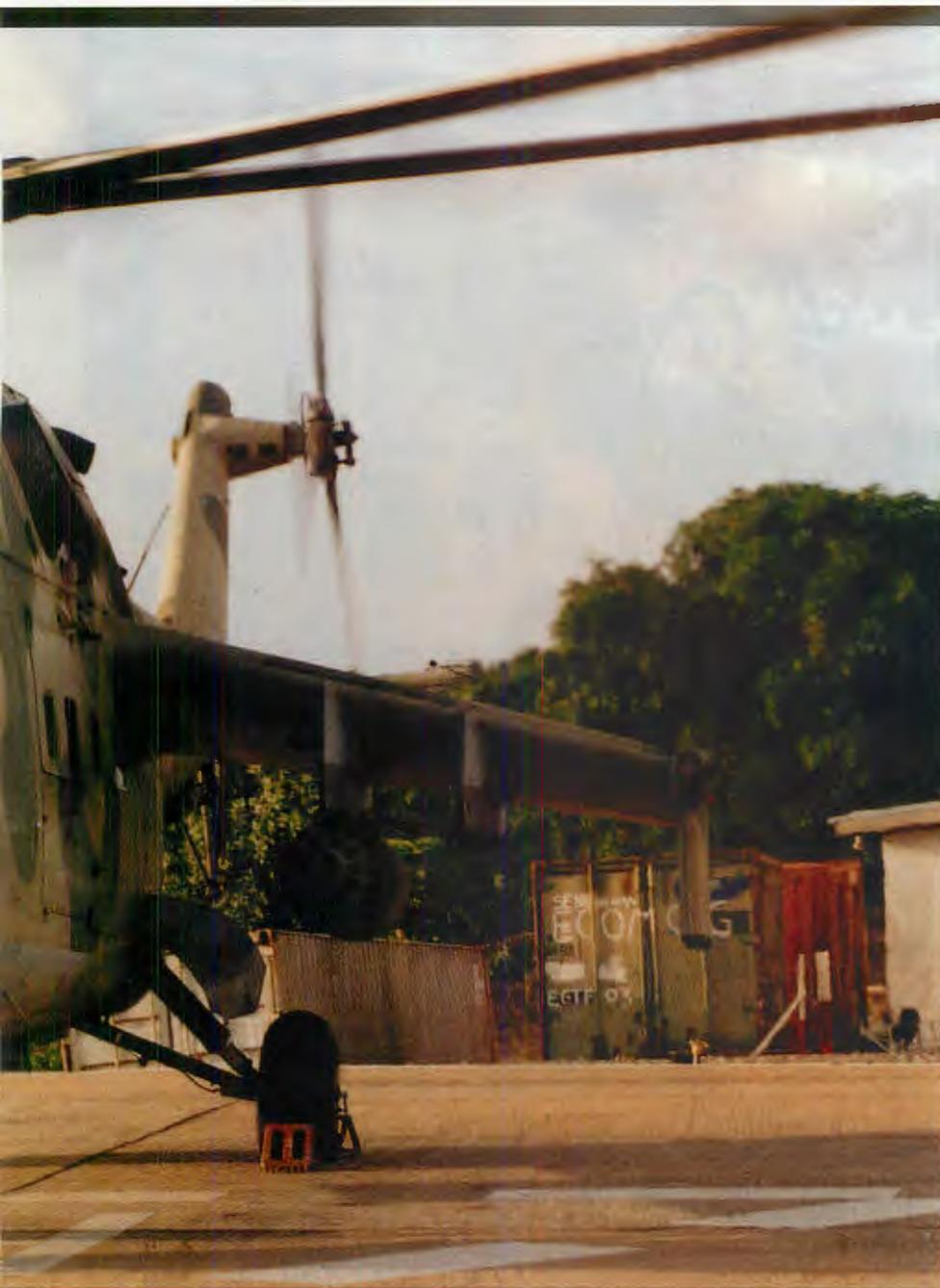
**W**hen the war in Sierra Leone started again early May, Neall Ellis, a South African helicopter pilot working on contract to the government as a component of the UN Peacekeeping Operation, was among the first to go into action. He was averaging three or four missions a day. Twice, he went up six times, using night-vision goggles to spot rebel concentrations after dark. His logbook shows that in five weeks — from 6 May 2000 — he clocked up over 90 combat missions. Pilots in the majority of the world's air forces don't achieve a fraction of that figure during

the course of their entire careers.

— Lt. Col. Rob Symonds, British Military Liaison Officer, British High Commission, Freetown, Sierra Leone

We did some serious fighting yesterday. It was late afternoon and almost time to go back to the villa when a call came through from the operations center upstairs.

For most of the day we had been sitting in the Air Wing ready room waiting: There had been a sortie earlier in the day, but that produced nothing. Then it happened. Just in was a report from one of the Sierra Leone



(opposite) Scramble! After a hurried briefing with the senior armed forces officer on duty, Neall Ellis — Nellis to the boys and Sierra Leone's only freelance gunship pilot — lifts his Mi-24 off the Air Wing pad at Cockerill. When the war in Sierra Leone started again early May, Ellis (above), a South African helicopter pilot working on contract to the government as a component of the UN Peacekeeping Operation, was among the first to go into action. He was averaging three or four missions a day. His log-book shows that in five weeks — from 6 May 2000 — he clocked up over 90 combat missions. Pilots in the majority of the world's air forces don't achieve a fraction of that figure during the course of their entire careers.

army units deployed near Port Loko. They had been ambushed by rebels, their commander, an army captain screamed over the radio. It was a serious attack, reported the man whose *nom de guerre* was "Scorpion."

Scramble! After a hurried briefing with the senior armed forces officer on duty, Neall Ellis — Nellis to the boys and Sierra Leone's only freelance gunship pilot — lifted his Mi-24 off the Air Wing pad at Cockerill.

From maps covering the walls of our base, we could see that our destination was closer to the Guinea border than Freetown. It was also a good half-day away by road, but it took us only 20 minutes in the Russian-built gunship. We barely got there before Nellis let rip with his first rocket salvo. Eight 57mm projectiles cumulatively made a mighty whoosh as they blasted off the wing pods barely an arms-length from where I was sitting at the back.

A moment later the chopper banked sharply right and then left again as Nellis took evasive action. He followed up with a succession of short bursts from the Gatling in the nose.

Curiously, the four-barreled 12.7mm chin gun didn't sound at all like an automatic weapon. Rather, from where we sat, it was more like a low-pitched roar. With a cyclic rate of fire of about 4,500 rounds a minute, you could feel the retardation effect of the blast, almost as if the pilot had pulled back slightly on the throttle.

As we continued to circle the jungle below, the reason for the scrap gradually became clear. Government forces that had been attacked were being led by an unconventional and well motivated group of fighters known colloquially as Kamajors — literally, hunters. Before the war, these tough, seasoned fighters roamed the forests of West Africa, keeping themselves and their

families alive with what they were able to bag in the bush. Almost all had originally been armed with shotguns, some of them primitive old flintlocks almost two centuries old. These days, to match the firepower of the enemy, they cradle AKs.

What had happened was that the Kamajors had come under fire from a rebel emplacement on the road north of Port Loko. It was not far from Rogberi Junction where four of our colleagues had been ambushed 10 or 12 days before. Two of them, Kurt Schork, an American with Reuters and Miguel Gilmoreno, a Spanish national with AP, died in the attack. As Nellis expressed it afterwards, it was not impossible that the same band of rebels were responsible for both actions.

Moments after arriving over the site, Hassan — sitting in the cockpit ahead and slightly below the pilot in the customary gunship configuration — spotted a truck. It had probably been taken from the UN a few weeks before. This one was heading fast down the road from enemy lines towards the Kamajor position. Mounted on its cab was an anti-aircraft gun. Only later were we able to identify it as a DshKa, one of the weapons that has done so much damage to both sides in Chechnya and, before that, in Dagestan and Afghanistan.

### Into Battle

Nellis didn't waste time. He gained a bit



(top) Ground crew completes final check before a mission departure. (above) Crew-member cleans the rocket pod. (right) The Hind's four-barreled 12.7mm chin gun doesn't sound at all like an automatic weapon. Rather, from inside the aircraft, it is more like a low-pitched roar. With a cyclic rate of fire of about 4,500 rounds a minute, you can feel the retardation effect of the blast, almost as if the pilot had pulled back slightly on the throttle.

of height, banked, leveled off once the vehicle was in his sights and delivered the rocket salvo. That was followed by more Gatling fire. Moments later we swung low over the target to find that the truck had crashed into a palm as it skidded off the road.

The vehicle was history, badly blasted by Nellis' rockets. A bloodied body lay spread-eagled on the road a few yards away. There were more rebel dead lying nearby in an open patch surrounded by clumps of tall elephant grass. At that point I thought I spotted some green tracer fire coming up at us from a heavily foliated area nearby:



clearly, the rebels weren't yet spent.

By then Nellis' attention was focused elsewhere: he was looking at another target and I was forced to hold on tight as he threw the machine into a tight spiral.

In his debrief afterwards, Neall explained the action: "I had a vague grid reference where the battle was taking place. Operational headquarters had indicated that it was somewhere along the road to Mange, not a big place but nevertheless an important rebel staging area in the north." Mange lay a short distance beyond Port Loko: Rogberi Junction where the journalists were killed was perhaps 15 miles away.

"The truck was a distinct white shape against the red gravel and throwing up a lot of dust as it headed towards the Kamajor positions. You couldn't miss it. Apart from two or three people in the cab, another rebel with an AK on his lap sat up front, balanced perilously on the hood. There were half a dozen more on the back, all of them clustered around the 12.7.

"That promised trouble," said Nellis. "So I had to get it and as quickly as I could, though it was good that I saw them before they knew that we were around."

Acting on the spur, Neall fired first. As he tells it, he could see that the driver — suddenly aware of the approaching gunship — had reacted immediately by slamming on his brakes. Totally unexpected, it had the

effect of hurling the fellow riding on the hood headlong into the road ahead. The driver's next move could only have been dictated by fear. In what must have been a blind moment of panic, he put his foot down hard and, in doing so, drove over the prostrate figure. Ellis recalls seeing the van lurch as it went over rebel's body, in all probability killing him.

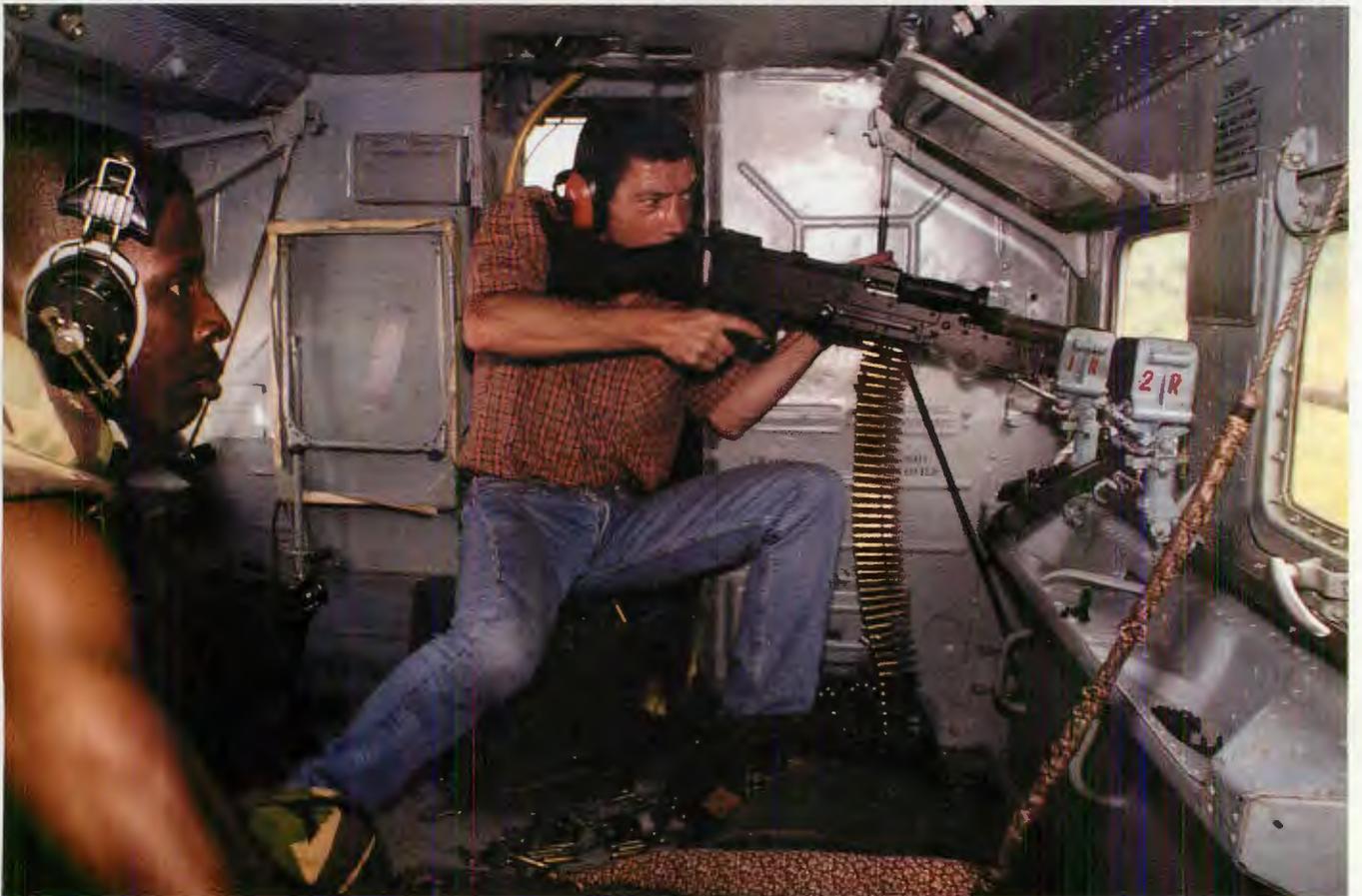
By now both of our sidegunners were busy, firing hard and independently at other

rebel targets as they appeared in the jungle below. Gooks kept emerging from the bush below as they tried to escape. Onboard, spent cartridges began to litter the floor.

Because our flight came at short notice, I didn't have time to prepare. But I went aloft anyway, even though I was in a T-shirt, jeans and a pair of sandals. One result was that a lot of time I was dodging chunks of hot metal as they clattered out of the breach onto my feet. I should have known better:



Sidegunners keep busy, firing hard and independently at rebel targets as they appear in the jungle below. Onboard, spent cartridges litter the floor.





the guns had been positioned, first at one side of the building, then the other.

"After that we went in fast," said Hassan, "firing the Gatling and more rockets." End of story.

There are also a lot of RPG-7s in this untidy conflict. Ubiquitous in most Third World wars, the rebels use them with abandon.

That trend was illustrated by an incident reported by Joint Operations Command the day before we went in. An Indian Air Force Alouette — unarmed, as is the UN custom — was on a recce in the same area between Rogberi and Mange. Like all UN planes in Sierra Leone, it was painted white and nobody could have missed the two extra-large letters painted on the fuselage.

What we heard later was that the Indians had spotted a column of gooks moving fast along a jungle path. They waved at the Alouette, which began to circle. The chopper crew waved back, but not before the pilot observed that the men on the ground had discreetly lowered their weapons to their sides, as if to hide them. The next moment there were three RPG grenades coming up at the hovering Alouette.

As usual, the rebels, probably high on dope, missed. Truth is, these tiny French-built gunships have little armor — except under the pilots' seat — and are vulnerable to ground fire.

### Much Ado About RPGs

Nellis, incidentally, is dismissive of the RPG as an anti-aircraft weapon even though volleys of them took out two U.S. Army Black Hawks in a notorious Mogadishu battle which resulted in the deaths of some of the crews and more than a dozen U.S. Rangers. The incident shocked the American nation. With the heavily armored Mi-24, he reckons, RPGs are not really a problem. It's his view that you've got to be inordinately unlucky to be brought down by one.

It is interesting, that as a consequence of the Russians having lost so many helicopters to ground fire in Afghanistan — including many more Mi-24s than they care to admit — they eventually incorporated an all-titanium cockpit "capsule" into the design of the Hind. It protects both men up front, and though not impervious to larger calibers, offers a lot more protection than before. For us at the back, it was different. Obviously we had a lot more metal between us and the gooks than the Indians in their little Alouette. Still, the big stuff bothered us: 12.7mm and 14.5mm.

Interestingly, the Indians have taken a more pragmatic approach to this war than some of the other nations involved in what is still termed a Peacekeeping Mission. While all this was going on, three of their own Mi-24 gunships were being assembled at Lungi. As it was phrased by one of their commanders, "If those people shoot at us, we'll retaliate and it won't be a game."

Notably, the two Indian battalions that arrived in Sierra Leone while I was there are crack fighting units straight out of Kashmir. The African posting is said to be a reward



Freetown, Sierra Leone. In spite of signs indicating otherwise, Freetown has seen some of the most savage fighting on the continent.



for a job well done, as one of their officers commented.

So it went on for the rest of the time that we worked the target area. Nellis would bank sharply as soon as something came into view. If he didn't use his Gatling, more rockets would follow. With 32 projectiles in each pod, he was capable of eight salvos per sortie. After each action we would revert to tree-top mode.

Gradually the pace slackened. Weaving about in the air enough to make me squeamish, we waited until we could see some of the army's ground forces approaching along the road. It was their task to secure the vehicle and the DshKa. That done, Nellis headed a short distance north, towards the riverside town of Mange. It was from there that the truck had originally come.

More than a village than a town and dominated by a disproportionately large, white mosque with requisite tower, Mange is not a big place. Suddenly, vision like, it emerged from the jungle. Nellis fired his rockets and, a second later, looped round

while he prepared for another run-in. I didn't see any retaliatory fire, but the pilot assured me that there was.

His target this time, as he explained it afterwards, was a cluster of buildings protected by sandbags at the southern end of a large bridge on the outskirts of town. Earlier, intelligence had indicated that it had been used as a rebel checkpoint. Banking once more, he came in for a final pasting, hitting several more buildings at the far end.

We were back in Lungi to refuel roughly 12 minutes later. By the time we got to army headquarters across the bay, we'd been out for just on two hours. Winding down, we found that just about all the helicopter's ammo had been used. The tally of confirmed kills — body counts — was 14.

There might have been many more wounded, but we would never know because the jungle claims its own. Certainly, not many of the wounded were likely to have survived. Without specialist

*Continued on page 71*

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by John J. Culbertson

*The following is an abridged excerpt from the author's Military Book Club bestseller Operation Tuscaloosa.*

O

rders had just come in from An Hoa.

First Squad was to join the rest of first platoon on Phu Loc 6 and await the rest of Hotel Company, which would be marching across Liberty Bridge in front of our position around 1400 hours. First Platoon would then take the point and guide the rest of Hotel's Marines to positions along the western bank of the Song Thu Bon River. The positions were to be dug in with a 180-degree field of visibility from up river to down river. The squads were to be divided into two fire teams each occupying a bunker approximately 200 meters distant from their neighbor. Fields of fire were to interlock, and each squad would have one machine gun position and two automatic riflemen. Two 105mm howitzers had been helilifted to Phu Loc 6 with about 1,000 rounds of ammunition. These guns could provide protective fire to shelter Hotel Company's positions, or the 105mm howitzers could fire preplotted fire missions into grid sectors along the river that were likely crossing points for the enemy.

Two reinforced rifle companies (Echo and Foxtrot) were out presently sweeping the Arizona from a departure point some 12 miles to our east, far across the Song Thu Bon. The companies, both from Two-Five at An Hoa Combat Base, were linked up and running crossing patterns through the paddies, jungle-cloaked hills and valleys, and through all the local villages. The objective of the sweeping companies was to drive the enemy before their joined formations toward the river where Hotel Company was emplaced in carefully constructed bunkers that were not visible to Charlie from the opposite bank of the river. Hopefully, Charlie would attempt a night crossing at several of the narrows in the river. If a crossing was made at night, the blocking force Marines of Hotel Company would call an artillery fire mission from Phu Loc 6. The two 105mm howitzers would fire illumination rounds high over Hotel's position. These rounds would explode high in the air and illuminate the ground as though it were daylight. The burning orb of the illumination charge would fall suspended by a parachute, shining for around 20 seconds, before the charge was immersed in the river and extinguished.

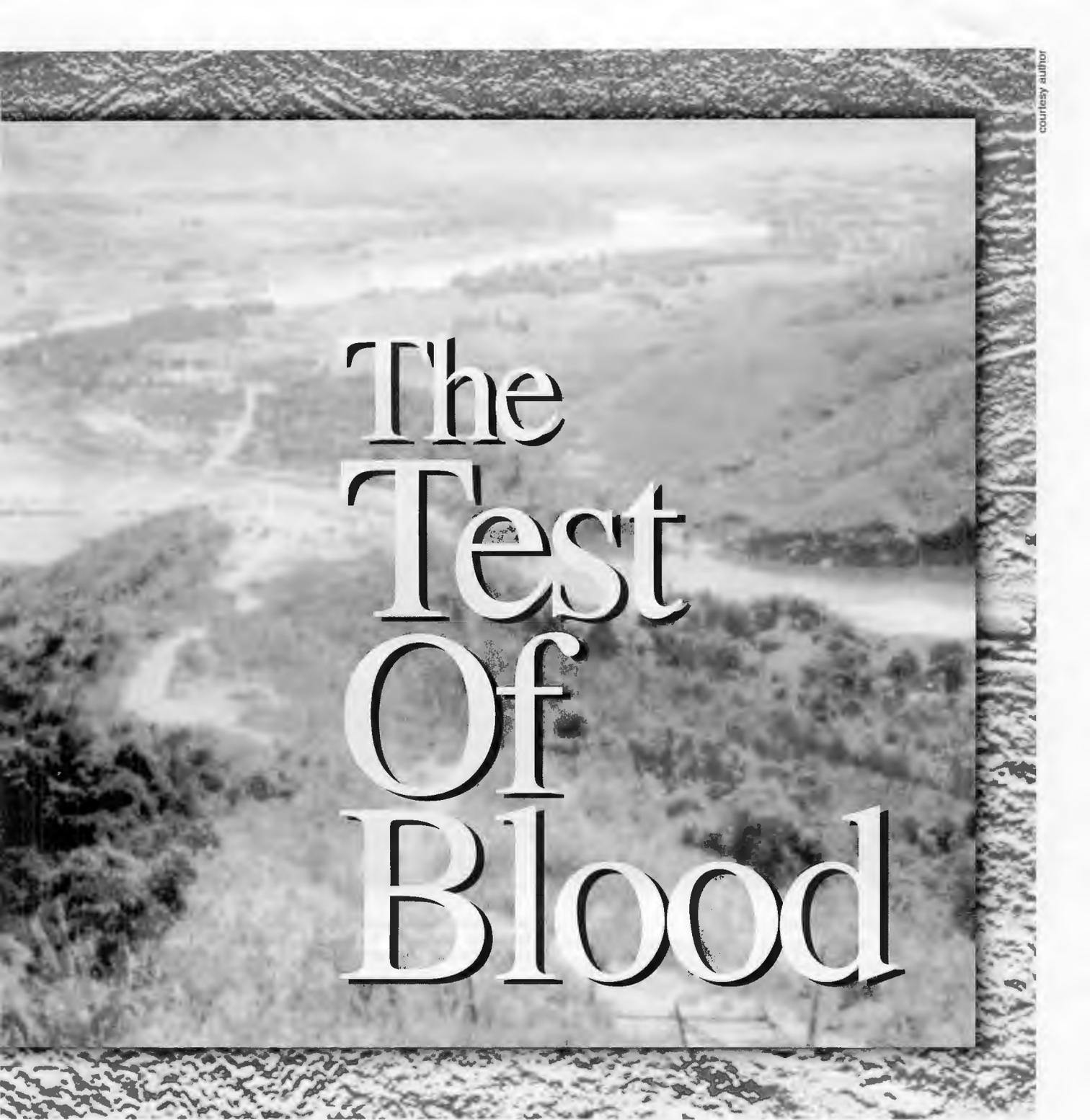
If Charlie failed to elude the Marines of Echo and Foxtrot Companies, the river created a natural barrier which the Viet Cong must negotiate at some point to escape back into the myriad of protective hamlets in the An Hoa basin. First Squad ate a comfortable C-ration repast, and smoked a couple of cigarettes before we divided up the watches. I got the 0200 to 0400 watch, which as junior man was my just desserts. The 0200 watch, or graveyard shift, didn't bother me because if Charlie came across our sector it was an even money



Song Thu Bon, off Nong Son Mountain firebase, where blocking forces drew blood.

bet that 0300 to 0500 hours would be Charlie's ideal time to move. Defensive troops on guard are generally tired and the least alert just before dawn. That fact was not lost on Charlie but I wanted to catch the commie bastards crossing on my watch. That way I was certain not to miss anything! Just maybe, I would get the first shot at sneaky Charlie as he lay motionless in a shallow draft, village pole boat.

The sun burned itself out over the river and seemed to melt into the dark silhouettes of the distant mountains. I lay back in my fighting hole fully dressed resting on the relative softness of my haversack covered by my poncho. My rifle was fully loaded and rested against the parapet of my foxhole. My flak jacket and helmet were on the ground behind my head where I could grab them instantly, if we went into action. Laffley, old salty veteran that he was, got the first watch from 2000 to 2200 hours. Then Burns from 2200 to 2400, and Corporal Kirby from 2400 to 0200 hours, when I would come on duty. I closed my eyes and focused on visions of Mom,



# The Test Of Blood

## Blocking Forces Along The Song Thu Bon

Dad, and little Susie back home and was off to sleep.

At exactly 0200, Kirby shook my shoulders, and I was instantly with the program. Kirby who was short, blond and stocky, and hailed from someplace like Bald Knob, Kentucky, or another highly cosmopolitan environ, whispered, "Culbertson, they're firing illumination about 2,000 meters to our front. Echo or Foxtrot are pushing Charlie hard. If the activity gets within eyesight across the far bank wake me up immediately. Got it?"

"Aye, aye Corporal," I breathed, as I slipped my flak jacket over my shoulders and fitted my helmet where I could just see the opposite bank of the river under the brim of the cammo cover. I had learned that night vision is hampered if you take in too wide a per-

spective, or if too much light is allowed to enter your eyes. All I needed to worry about was my direct front. If Charlie came across it would be smack in front of my position. I caressed the stock of my M14, and removed the magazine and tested the pressure on the spring to make certain it was full. I was ready and my eyesight was 20/20. I thought, "Please cross the fucking river now Charlie, 'cause Uncle John is waitin' for your ass."

From behind me I heard one of the field guns at Phu Loc 6 report and send a round our way. The canister split high overhead, and a 20,000-candlepower illumination filament swung back and forth in a lazy arc down, down over the river. The opposite bank, the sand, and water was clear as in the daytime, and I begin to fear that

# The Test Of Blood



Charlie could see us and would not come.

I strained my eyes to the front, and sure enough not 200 meters from the bank, the bushes were moving as men pushed ahead to the river. "Kirby, Kirby wake up! The gooks are right in front of us. Wake up man!"

Kirby was awake seconds later at the front of the bunker scanning the river bank. "Yeah, I got 'em now, they're coming straight toward us. Get Laffley and Burns up into firing positions."

The other two woke easily and grabbed their vest and helmets.

The fire team spread out along our bunker with each man responsible for a field of fire to the direct front. Kirby spoke first, "Let them get in their boats and into mid-stream before we engage. I will fire first and you men may then fire at will. Is that clear?" We nodded, intent upon Charlie's actions now, our vision swept up and down the far bank awaiting the first sign of Charlie.

"I got one. There he is holding something at the water's edge about 150 meters north of Culbertson. You pick him up yet? There's three more getting into the shallow boat. That first dink is holding a rope to steady the craft until his buddies can hunker down inside. Oh shit, man, there's at least 10 more getting into boats all along that little cove!" Laffley had great eyes and gave us the play by play.

Kirby looked sharp at the activity that seemed to get more animated. Several explosions flared 500 meters to our front. It appeared that Echo or Foxtrot was closing in for the kill.

"Culbertson, what do you make these explosions out to be?"

Kirby was testing my knowledge identifying weapon systems at night. It was important to know what weapons were used either in your defense, or against you by Charlie because their existed very

**3rd Platoon, Hotel Company, 2/5 on bunkers on Nong Son Mountain following Operation Tuscaloosa. (foreground) Laffley, Ybarra and McDonald. Author's right profile is between the latter two.**

specific methods of protecting yourself from different types of attack. Marines did not react the same to an attack by machine-gun fire as one did to mortar fire.

"Corporal Kirby, those explosions sound like M79 blooper shells impacting." I ventured.

"Good guess. That's exactly what they are, and Echo and Foxtrot are close enough to spit on those dinks." Corporal Kirby offered that last bit of information to underline the reality that Echo or Foxtrot could get to Charlie before Charlie got free into the river and into our rifle sights. The only thing I knew was that this was one exciting happening! The sweat was fairly running down off my brow and my grip was slippery on my rifle.

Laffley hissed, "They're into the boats and pushing off from the banks. I count four boats and about a dozen V.C. Man alive, Kirby let's barbecue these fuckers."

"Hey Burns, you think the next bunker can see these dinks from over there. I mean, if no one but us can see these guys then they're ours." Kirby and Burns were buddies. Both came from the South in some Appalachian woodlands, where Burn's swore that when he wanted some supper he got out his .22 rifle and walked into the forest to shoot rabbits or squirrels. Both Kirby and Burns were naturals in Vietnam, and their hunting and camping skills were not the least obsolete in this jungle hell-hole.

"Lookee here, they comin' down right purdy now. Boats all lined



3rd Platoon CO Lt. John Pindel fires 106mm rifle off Nong Son Mountain into Antenna Valley, 1967.



Between battles, Marines hit the beach — China Beach, that is — and the young lady appears impressed.

up real nice!" Kirby's excitement was felt by all of us. "Pfc. Burns you got the honor of first shot. The team can fire at will after Burns opens up. Steady now boys, watch your sights and markers close!"

Burns' rifle swung easily with the muzzle tracking the bow of the lead boat, as it swung-into mid-channel and picked up speed.

*Blam, Blam, Boom, Boom, Boom* echoed the reports of our rifles off the far riverbank. All four members of the fire team were working the Viet Cong boats over now. All the bullshit had stopped, and the Marines were covering each craft from bow to stern with accurate and deadly plunging fire. The cones of rifle fire impacted with the boats and the surrounding water, and lifted the river's channel into a fountain like froth of death. The heavy .30 caliber bullets slammed through men and wood as the boats were cut into kindling. Not a shot was returned from Charlie, so suddenly had the bullets poured into the fragile craft.

*Blam, Blam, Boom, Pwaang, Pwaang* went the rounds from the Marines' bunkers thudding into the wreckage of the Viet Cong soldiers. Bullets skidded off the fractured lumber that littered the water, and made a *whaanging* sound as they ricocheted into the far river bank. It was over in two minutes, and the last minute probably constituted overkill. Charlie was gone somewhere under the murky waters that slid along unrepentant of the lives it had digested. Corpses and severed body parts would turn up down river in the morning, but that was not our concern.

Our business was to trap and kill Charlie any way we could. As the old-time Marines in Vietnam liked to say, "Our business is killing Charlie, and right now our business is real good!"

"Well, how about them apples, boys?" Kirby was pleased with himself. "They never even got off a shot! Hell, I'm sure we got all of 'em. Aren't you sure we got all of 'em Burns?"

"Yeah, my Corporal," replied the usually silent and brooding Pfc. Burns, "I think we tore Charlie a new one, although the skipper will probably ask why we ain't got no prisoners!"

Everyone laughed at the prisoners bit. Burns was funny for a fat, freckle-faced hillbilly. Burns, like all the other Marines that had been in Vietnam for any length of time, could turn mean when the subject of killing came up. "Culbertson ain't a cherry no more! Shit, boy, you might just make a trooper with old Private Burns to school your ass. You liked killin' them boys in the boats, didn't you?"

"Yes, Sir, Private Burns, I liked it real good. Do you guys have some kind of hillbilly merit badge for slaughtering hogs or anything like that?" I had learned that in the Marine Corps you always stood your ground and never gave in to the shit-givers. It was a rite of passage of sorts. I knew that I had passed the first test (the Test of Blood) in being accepted by this strange breed of fighter — a warrior breed who could joke and swear with the best of them, and even defame your mother, yet in the next moment salute the flag from ramrod-straight attention with eyes welling with tears as the strains of the *National Anthem* or *Marine Corps Hymn* blared from the golden throat of a trumpet. These Marines would thrash an offender who transgressed their unspoken code of honor and loyalty to America or the Corps. Most notably, Marines everywhere shared a common bond of faithfulness and pride in Country and Corps that was almost a religion. I had gotten that religion and instinctively knew that the faith would remain in my blood forever.

Incidentally, Kirby and the other Marines in his fire team knew that Charlie would discover what had befallen his comrades by morning. The Viet Cong did not like to shoot it out with Marine patrols. Not ever! This type of occurrence added to the mystique of not fucking with the Leathernecks of the 5th Marines. Tomorrow, Charlie would add a new verse to his 1967 *Yearbook* entitled, "Don't cross the friggin' river in a tiny boat in the dark! 'Cause if Joe Marine spots your hide, he will punctuate your butt with lead and send your waterlogged corpse down the Song Thu Bon, stuffed with shot up little chunks of your boat."

Now, I was clear on the deserved reputation of Marine Riflemen and their awesome firepower. Four of us, in less than 60 seconds, killed a dozen men over a hundred meters away and cut their boats into kindling leaving less residue than if they had been attacked by Great White sharks.

I thought Charlie would be properly impressed. I know I was!

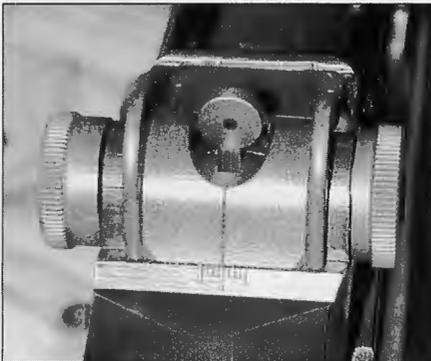
*John J. Culbertson served with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines in Vietnam's I Corps in 1967. He operated as a scout-sniper and was wounded in combat, earning three Purple Hearts. He is the author of OPERATION TUSCALOOSA and A SNIPER IN THE ARIZONA, both Military Book Club bestsellers. ☒*

## The Garand Rifle

Continued from page 39

medium ammunition capacity. They should know how to load it and unload it and clear potential malfunctions. Yes, malfunctions. Sure, I would like to have a perfect rifle, perfect fight, perfect response time by the police and perfect doctor in case something goes wrong. Remember the better any weapon system works the more you should practice malfunction clearances. No, I am not anticipating a problem, but if something goes wrong it will be very hard to acquire new fighting skills lying on your back in the middle of a fight. Maybe a simple rifle would work and it wouldn't have to be black or plastic or have a 30-round magazine.

By now you have figured out that I am going somewhere with this. In some coming issues of *SOF* I intend to offer those of you who don't want a black gun, or can't afford one, some options in the selection of personal- or home-defense rifles. I intend to offer an



The Garand is a rifleman's rifle. It has, by design, good sights, a good trigger and is, without argument, durable. As would be appropriate to a rifle of military origin it is stout, weighing in at 9.5 pounds. The rifle loads through the top of the open action using an eight-round true "clip" called an *en bloc* clip device that stays inside the rifle while firing and exits as the rifle goes empty with resounding "plink" sound.



extreme spread of rifles in style, operation and application. Where will we start?

General George S. Patton stated "Three things won the war for us, the B-17 bomber, the jeep and the M1 rifle."

John Cantius Garand's M1 rifle was adopted 9 January 1936 making the United States the first nation to adopt a semiautomatic rifle for its military units.

Much to the dismay of the gun-burners, approximately five-and-a-half-million Garands were manufactured from about 1937 until the Garand was replaced by the M14 around 1959. The Springfield Armory and Winchester Arms Company produced the original WWII Garands. International Harvester, Harrington & Richardson and Beretta of Italy also manufactured additional rifles that were needed to meet the demand for Korea.

Manufacturing continues today using new and old G.I. parts on newly made receivers.

The Garand is a rifleman's rifle. It has by design good sights, a good trigger and is, without argument, durable. As would be appropriate to a rifle of military origin it is stout, weighing in at 9.5 pounds and with an overall length of 43 1/2 inches. The rifle loads through the top of the open action using an eight-round true "clip" called an *en bloc* clip device that stays inside the rifle while firing and exits as the rifle goes empty with resounding "plink" sound.

There have been subtle rumblings about CCF forces charging U.S. troops in Korea upon hearing the rifle go "plink" and empty. Whatever shortcomings it may have had in the "plinking" department, the majority of information I can gather from books, battlefield research analysis documents, personal interviews with people who used the rifle are strongly positive. My personal experience seeing the Garand used by Popular Forces troops in Republic of Vietnam circa 1968-69 were positive.

The Springfield rifle used for this article was a "plain Jane" vintage 1952 field-grade rifle. For testing I used Remington UMC .30-06 150-grain full-metal-jacketed ball ammunition. With iron sights solid 2-inch groups were recorded at 100 yards. Groups measuring 4 and 5 inches were logged at 200 yards. Moving to 300 yards, five-shot strings opened to about 8 inches. The rifle functioned flawlessly. I believe with match-grade ammunition the rifle would shoot better if

you needed it to. My problem is I'm not sure how much better I need for it to shoot. This may not be minute of angle, but for most of us I think we'll be hard-pressed to convince the members of the grand jury why we felt justified in shooting a threat 200 yards away. If you feel the need to shoot farther the .30-06 caliber has an effective range of 500 - 600 yards.

The Garand is bigger than some rifles, it is heavier than some rifles and it works!

If the thought of using a rifle at shorter ranges, for example, in or around your home concerns you there are some issues to consider: Would I willingly go to a fight with a handgun? A machete-armed threat is coming towards you down your bedroom hallway and if you had time to choose a firearm for defense would it be a handgun or a rifle?

If the issue is excessive firing I already know I'll be held responsible for *everything* I shoot. So would I rather answer for six 9mms, or one .30-06? You and I both know there is a penetration, or maybe over-penetration issue. Should there be other family members in the potential impact zone, then consideration of where the spent pro-



jectiles may go is mandatory, as it would be using any firearm. The potential threat could be wearing body armor and the .30-06 from the Garand will go through the armor like excrement through a goose. If it doesn't go through the first round you have seven more to follow. Something will give. If you are

working on the behavior-modification of your threats and hit them with eight rounds of .30-06 and if the issue hasn't been resolved, you are in deep water.

Potential Garand buyers may have a concern that there is no detachable high-capacity magazine. Buyers may also consider a different viewpoint; you don't have a magazine to lose. Just read the book *Black Hawk Down* and you'll get a good idea of how important it is to monitor your magazines whether full or empty.

Since the media and certain government representatives promote that all of society's ills are apparently solvable by the use of trigger locks, the Garand is ready to go.

The trigger is capable of being locked by putting the safety on and running a lock through the hole in the safety. Presto, we cured everything wrong with the planet!

There are still many Garands available from original collector-grade rifles in the \$800-\$1,000 range to current production rifles using G.I. parts on new receivers in the \$500 range.

If you are really intrigued by the Garand there is Garand Collectors Association located at P.O. Box 181, Richmond, KY 40476-0181; or look up their web site at <http://www.garandcollassoc.org>.

The G.C.A. is working to educate potential buyers and collectors to reduce fraud and promote true and correct information about the Garand whether your potential selection is a true collector rifle or a currently made rifle.

Since the world is not a nail, maybe we don't all need a black plastic hammer to solve all our problems. Whatever your choice of firearms, an understanding of your weapon's mechanics, the ability to manipulate your equipment safely and marksmanship skills will probably be the ultimate test.

If you thought you might have to take *the* test of a lifetime, the M1 Garand could serve you well.

It has for many others. ☘

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# KA-BAR was there

## The No Nonsense .45

Continued from page 57

tampered with by the operator. All of the trigger mechanism components are of match-grade quality.

The flat-type mainspring housing carries hand checkering at 20 lines per inch (LPI). Les Baer feels this is too coarse for the front strap, which has been checkered at a less aggressive 30 LPI.

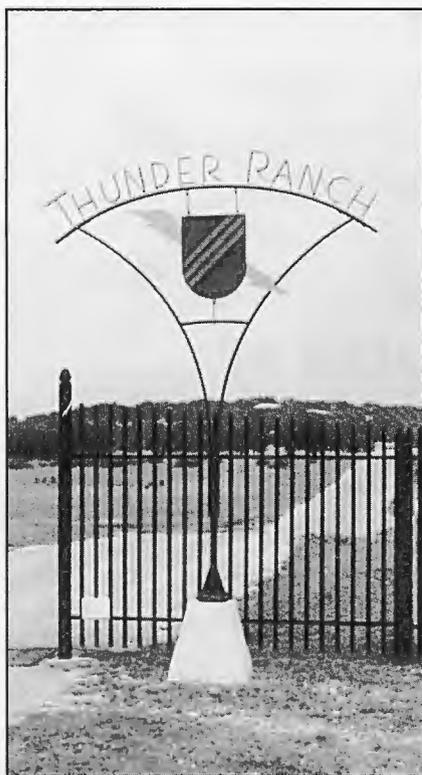
The three single-column, detachable box-type magazines provided with the TR Special were designed and manufactured by Les Baer Custom. They hold seven rounds. Based upon his experience at the ranch, Clint Smith does not believe that eight-round M1911 are completely reliable. These LBC Premium 1911 magazines have easily removable floorplates. The magazine body and follower spring retaining plate are fabricated from 17-4 stainless steel. A special electro-polishing process is used on the magazine body, both inside and out. As a consequence, the magazine's interior is as bright as a mirror and this permits the follower and cartridges to move upward with the smallest possible coefficient of friction. Both the follower and extended floorplate are injection molded black polymer components.

The price of the Baer TR Special is \$1,620, complete with three magazines. Additional magazines are available for \$25 each. An order for this pistol should be placed directly with Les Baer Custom, Inc.

Black Hills Ammunition (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 3090, Rapid City, SD 57709; phone: 605-348-5150 — call for the location of your nearest dealer. If there is none, Black Hills will ship to you at retail.) once again provided all rounds I used to test the Les Baer TR Special .45 ACP pistol during Thunder Ranch's Team Tactics course. For practice and training I prefer their 230-grain Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) roundnose with a muzzle velocity of about 850 fps. While all 230-grain roundnose ball ammunition will over-penetrate, as it will travel up to 26 inches in soft tissue, it remains the most reliable load you can stuff in a .45.

Black Hills also offers a 185-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) with a muzzle velocity of about 975 fps and a 230-grain JHP driving out of the barrel at approximately 880 fps. Both of these JHP bullets are Speer Gold Dot types. My carry load remains the Black Hills 230-grain JHP, which will expand to almost .70 caliber and penetrate in soft tissue well past the minimum 12 inches required, but less than the 18 inches that signifies over-penetration.

I fired more than 1,000 rounds through the Les Baer TR Special pistol while at Thunder Ranch. Operation was flawless and there were no malfunctions of any kind. It's a magnificent piece of no nonsense equipment that will satisfy even the most particular armed professional. I can recommend it without qualifications of any kind. ☒



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medical treatment, septicemia results from any major wound to the torso. In the tropics it will kill a man within hours.

Also, with their own witchdoctors offering concoctions which consist mostly of covering wounds with herbs mixed with cowpat or something just as repulsive — the rebels enjoy little succor in such barbaric hokus pokus.

*Voodoo, Fetische*, black magic — call it what you will — is an important ingredient for total control in the rebel psyche. We were told in Freetown that there were instances of the rebels having made human sacrifices before battles. As I was to see for myself in a town taken from them in the east a few years before, all the churches there had been turned into *ju ju* shrines.

We were not to know it then, but Neall Ellis' sortie was a lot more successful than we had initially realized.

The day after the attack, he got a call from the colonel who heads Military Intelligence in the Sierra Leone Army. Intercepts of rebel radio traffic earlier, he disclosed, had reported that an enemy field commander — one of their best — was wounded. His condition was serious, the report said. It went on: "Mingo needs urgent medical treatment."

As one of Foday Sankoh's trusted aides, RUF Colonel Dennis Mingo had been fighting the government since the start of the war. A particularly brutal man, he had caused enough damage in his time for his followers to have dubbed him Superman. He was also known to favor a variety of primitive rites "to make my plans work," as he told a Freetown newspaper reporter.

After each battle, it was said, Mingo would cut the heart out of somebody that he had killed with the Cold Steel lock blade that he is purported to have carried on his belt. He would eat the organ raw, often doing so while it was still warm. His fetish priests had apparently told him that such a gesture would accord him even greater mystical power to wage war.

By all accounts, a good tactician, Mingo used Sierra Leone's primeval forests to clever military advantage. Each time he struck, usually in an ambush, he would leave behind leaflets with slogans which made claims, among them "Superman is invincible" and "There is no bullet that can kill Superman."

Wrong!

It is worth observing, that although Neall Ellis (51 next birthday) hasn't been paid for his efforts in Sierra Leone for 19 months, he fights on. He says he will continue doing so until the barbarism foisted on the ordinary people of the country is ended.

*Al Venter, a senior SOF foreign correspondent, will be filing another first-hand account next month. ✕*

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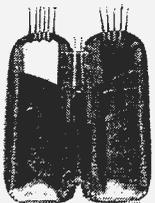
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\*Master Guy Savelli has been tested at Duke University, the Mind Science Foundation, JFK University, The Psychical Research Institute and The Special Forces Laboratory at Fort Bragg.

## **Command Guidance**

*Continued from page 4*

that stays open late to choose to carry a concealed gun for protection. An accountant, who stays late at work during March and April, would not be able to choose whether to keep a handgun in her desk, and carry it with her when she walks to the parking lot late at night.

The White House Working Group praises the 1976 Bartley-Fox law in Massachusetts. This law imposes a mandatory one-year term in prison for carrying a gun without a permit. In one notorious case, the law was applied to a man who started carrying a gun after a coworker assaulted him and repeatedly threatened to kill him. The co-worker did attack later, and the victim successfully defended himself. The crime victim was then sentenced to a mandatory year in prison for carrying a gun without a permit. This is the kind of law that the Clinton/Gore Administration wants to apply nationwide.

The Clinton/Gore memo states that domestic manufacture of guns should be brought under the federal government's regulatory standards for product designs. The White House memo predicts that such regulation would outlaw "many handguns now manufactured in the United States for civilian use." With great applause from the White House, a forerunner of the White House plan was recently imposed in Massachusetts, by the administrative edict of the state attorney general. The result was to ban the sale of all handguns, except for some of the Smith & Wesson models.

*This article was originally published in National Review On-line. ✕*

## **Combat Weaponcraft**

*Continued from page 29*

placed so that the thumb could operate the mechanism with the thumb. With the hands held together the light beam was inclined to be slightly higher than the pistol muzzle line of sight. This caused the light to be directed generally in the threat's eyes. It is an effective technique for the long drum lights.

### **Chapman**

Chapman's techniques are similar to Ayoob's except the three lower fingers of the left or flashlight hand are slightly opened so that the can contact and support both hands.

### **FBI**

Although considered by many to be archaic I can put you in a place where this older technique can be useful in illuminating an area before you have to expose yourself to potential gunfire. With the pistol pointed at eye level down the extended arm, which is covering the threat area, the opposite arm

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is extended away from the body at arm's length. It generally works best if the light is kept slightly forward of the body and best of all is if not behind the trunk of the body.

### Other Stuff

There are always other techniques floating around like bringing the light in close to your body near your head while resting the light on your shoulder. This in theory is supposed to illuminate the threat and your sights. Maybe. Then again it may give a back splash of light affecting your vision. I am not concerned that this technique draws any more fire directed at my head and torso anymore than any of the other techniques sans the FBI style. I have seen people dramatically affected by the flashlight turned on in close proximity to a wall or doorway — creating sort of a flashbulb effect.

### Other Equipment

I treat the use of lanyards on flashlights just like I do weapon-mounted lights. If the light in my hand is not working the way I want it to, I probably don't want it tied to my wrist. The lanyards are handy, but they need to be used properly. Holding the flashlight hand with the thumb up, loop the opening of the lanyard over the thumb with the lanyard across the back of the hand. The light base should be approximately 4 inches from the edge of the hand, which allows the light to hang free while reloading and manipulating the pistol. If something goes wrong simply roll the thumb backwards and down which allows the faulty light to drop free of your hand.

### The Bugs

The "Bugs" as we fondly refer to them, are the Micro lights made by Photon. They come in a variety of colors. I have a standing offer if anyone buys one from the Thunder Ranch store and doesn't like it, I'll give them their money back, plus a buck. They are really an amazing source of light in a small package. I have successfully cleared the Tower and Terminator in tactical runs with them. I have one attached to every coat I wear. Running the middle finger of my flashlight hand through the ring provided on the light then used in a modified Chapman or Ayoob technique they work great.

The acquisition of flashlight firing skills is no more difficult than acquiring any other skill. Repetition of required skills and the development of several techniques allow the operator the latitude to approach different problems with different techniques. Alert and aware individuals realize that statistics show many confrontations take place in low or altered light environments. So how will you train, Grasshopper?

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## From My Cold, Dead Hands

Continued from page 53

were properly recognized by our Founders as divine in origin, transcendent in nature and beyond the political manipulations of beings even so powerful as talk show hostesses."

The culturally perverted mindset of criminal fiends like Klebold and Harris, Watts said, represents a "bizarre mentality" which has, "for many young people, replaced the mentality on which this nation was founded — a mentality that honored transcendent truth, personal responsibility and duty to others.

"American democracy was created for self-governing individuals — people who did the right thing whether or not anyone else was watching. ... That mentality is under attack," Watts said. "If we lose our ability to teach our children individual self-restraint, public order can only be maintained by outside forces."

At feel-good rallies like the Million Mom March, he said, the gun-control patriots bleat for more laws, when "what they were really asking is for the government to protect us from ourselves. That mass demonstration held a very clear warning. There are many, many Americans who are eager to exchange their constitutional liberties for additional security.

"That represents a crisis in confidence in the American experiment," Watts said, one being deftly exploited by Bill Clinton, Al Gore and all their liberal benefactors.

Watts, Heston and everyone who spoke at the convention stressed that is people like NRA members who must muster to turn the tide, who must register to vote and then exercise that hard-won privilege.

"Every time our country stands in the path of danger," Heston said, "an instinct seems to summon her finest first — those who truly understand her. When freedom shivers in the cold shadow of true peril, it's always the patriots who first hear the call. When loss of liberty is looming, as it is now, the siren sounds fist in the hearts of freedom's vanguard.

"The smoke in the air of our Concord bridges and Pearl Harbors is always smelled first by the farmers, who come from their simple homes to find the fire and fight," Heston said, hoisting his musket aloft. "Because they know that sacred stuff resides in that wooden stock and blued steel, something that gives the most common man the most uncommon of freedoms.

"When ordinary hands can possess such an extraordinary instrument," Heston proclaimed, "that symbolizes the full measure of human dignity and liberty. That's why those five words issue such an irresistible call to us all and we muster. ... From my cold, dead hands!"

*Former SOF staffer James L. Pate is a frequent writer on the American political scene.*

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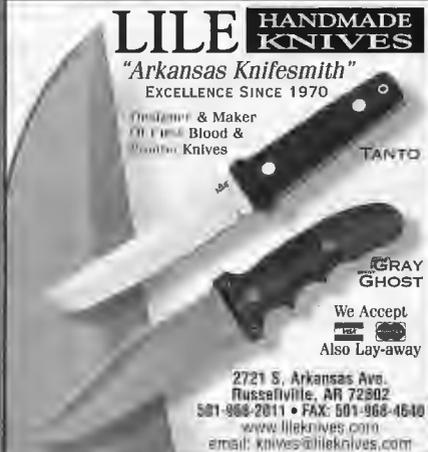
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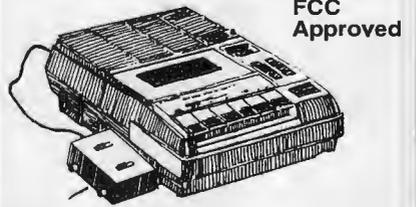
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## ADVERTISERS INDEX

Automatic Knife	
Resource Guide	12
Baden K-9	36
Blackhawk Industries	10-11
Bud K Worldwide	23
Camel Bak	9
Chase-Durer	Cover 4
Direct Action Video	14
Eden Press	75
Edges2	24
Excalibur Electro Optics Inc.	18
gasmasks.com	Cover 3
getfitnow.com	8
Global School of Investigation	76
Glock	13
GSi/Steyr	15
Gun Rights Policy Conference	38
Harrison K-9	76
Innovative Sports	17

Inter-American Security	
Products	77
Investment Arms	9
Iron Wolf Enterprises	35
Jarvis International	
Intelligence, Inc.	71
Kabar Knives	70, 73
L.A. Law Enforcers	75
L.A.R. Grizzly	24
Lile Knives	75
Master Guy Savelli	72
Matthews Police Supply	76
Maxsell	22
Michigan Body Armor	75
Military Media	35
National Rifle Association	69
NRA Whittington Center	72
Paladin Press	5
Planet Ammo	73
Professional Career	
Development	75, 77

Round Eye Knife & Tool	71
7.62 Design	77
S&K Labs	75, 76
Short Timer	75
Silver Creek Industries	76
Silverman's	16
SOF Back Issues	37
SOF Convention	77
SOF Logo Items	29, 34
SOF Wine	74
Southern Ordnance	71
Steiner	29
Steve Arnold's Gunroom	25
Taurus International	Cover 2
Threat Response	
Systems	19-21, 27-28
Thunder Ranch	70
United Cutlery	12
U.S. Cavalry	77
USI Corp.	76
Wiggy's	74

## PRODUCT INDEX

Black Hills Ammunition	70
CZ-USA	68
El Paso Saddlery	56
International Training	
Consultants, Inc.	60

Jews for the Preservation	
of Firearms Ownership	16
Leatherwood Optics	6
Les Baer Custom, Inc.	54
London Bridge	
Trading Company	6
Masters of Defense	36

Military Book Club	64
Paladin Press	39
ParaTours	18
7.62 Design	34
Thunder Ranch	60
UCD Industries	14
United Cutlery Brands	34

## A Right Worth Fighting For

Secretary of Defense William Cohen should be given a medal — by America's enemies, that is — for allowing our armed forces to drop to the lowest point of combat readiness and morale I've eyeballed since the first shots of the Korean War were fired almost 50 years ago.

Now this so-called Republican, still flaunting his Clinton drag, is at it again — assaulting every U.S. citizen's individual rights and basic freedom by not punishing a Privacy Act breach.

In 1998, two of Cohen's Defense Department assistants — Kenneth H. Bacon and Clifford Bernath — violated the Privacy Act by wrongfully giving *New Yorker* magazine writer Jane Mayer information from Linda Tripp's personnel file.

Because of their unlawful actions, the world learned Tripp was busted as a teenager for larceny — a charge later reduced to loitering — an arrest Tripp had chosen not to disclose.

Cohen's own Pentagon inspector general concluded that Bacon and Bernath broke the law. The IG report says the harm to Tripp's privacy caused by the release of his information outweighed any public benefit.

Cohen didn't fire these two creeps nor order that they be tried and, if found guilty, sent to the slammer just as Watergaters Charles Colson and John Dean were when they played their dirty tricks. Cohen didn't even slap his culprits' wrists. Instead, he sent each a letter that expressed not the outrage that would have been appropriate, but "disappointment." No "FELON" stamped on their foreheads, as happened to Colson and Dean, effectively removing them forever from positions of public trust. No pink slip. No jail time.

Come November — typical of Cohen's double-standard style — Bacon and Bernath will be free to cash in on high-paying press jobs with a liberal news network or two as payoffs for their shameless service to President Clinton.

This is a sorry example for the troops. In the U.S. military, the Privacy Act is drilled into all the ranks from Day One. To violate it is a career-ender. Every guardian of our defenses knows by heart the strict regulations that govern the Privacy Act, and they all know its purpose is to protect our citizens' civil rights. If a corporal or a colonel had broken this federal law, they'd be in the slammer faster than a drill sergeant can bark "Ten hut."

Now Cohen is blatantly telling the troops that the Pentagon



*Col. David Hackworth (Ret.) also writes a syndicated weekly column titled "Defending America." "Hack" doesn't pull any punches and many liberal rags won't carry his writing. If your local paper falls into that category, call the editor and let him know you'd like to see "Defending America" on the Op-Ed page. It's syndicated by King Features, 235 E. 45<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10017.*

brass are a law unto themselves, and that the rules of this land don't apply to the people at the top. Next, he'll be tossing citizens in the slammer without due process, as if we were some banana republic.

Yet, look at his web site — <http://www.defenselink.mil/osd/topleaders.html> — and you'll see more Privacy Act warnings than Pentagon doublespeak.

Funny how this release happened just when Tripp blew the whistle on Clinton's Oval Office sexcapades with his intern girl-toy Monica Lewinsky. Gee, could it be that someone on high was out to smear Tripp — a standard tactic to destroy a whistleblower's credibility — for bringing on the Starr investigation?

Sure, what Tripp did to her supposedly close pal Lewinsky was the Pearl Harbor of betrayals. A person would have to be pretty benevolent to cut the woman much slack.

But Linda Tripp's flawed character doesn't change the fact that violating her privacy was wrong. This is a matter of principle, one that's fundamental to what our country stands for and one that we must continue to uphold and defend.

The Clinton administration has an eight-year track record of violating the privacy rights of their perceived enemies. We know, for example, about the 900 FBI files in a Clintonite's hands that were

eagerly mined for dirt on Reagan and Bush administration appointees — another outrageous breach that to date has also been allowed to go unpunished.

Enough is enough. The Pentagon must be held to a higher standard. Cohen should be fired for dereliction of duty, and Bacon and Bernath should be prosecuted for violation of the Privacy Act.

If we don't draw the line now, we might as well forget about it. Between Cyber-world, Clinton, Cohen and the rest of the feds, we soon won't have any privacy left to worry about.

<http://www.hackworth.com> is the address of David Hackworth's home page.

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Hackworth's new book, a novel, *The Price of Honor*, is now available. ✕

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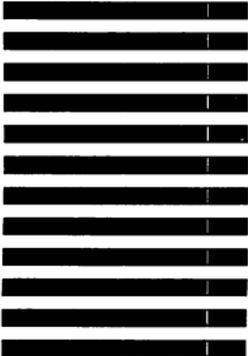
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