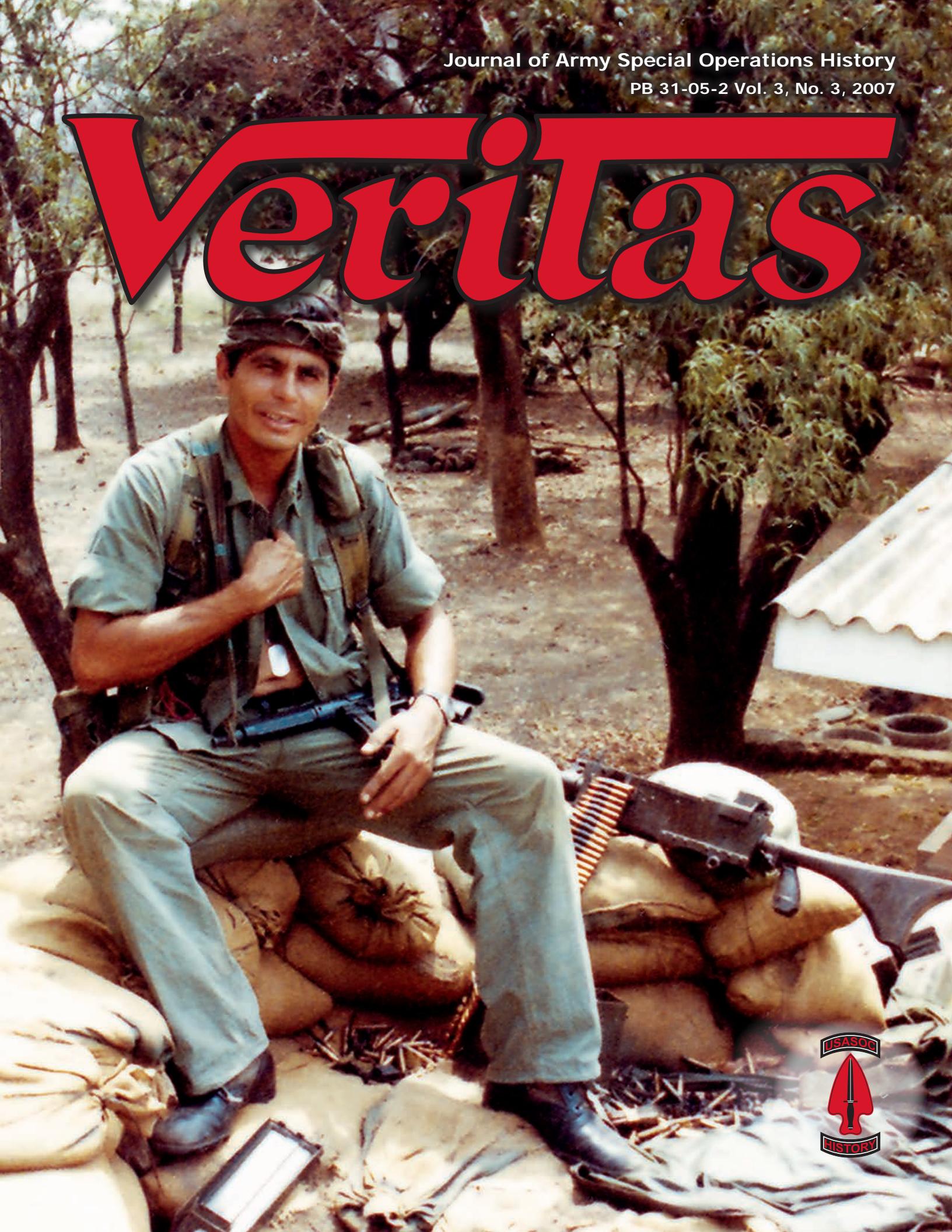


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Veritas



Errata

The FMLN attack on the 4th Brigade *cuartel* at El Paraiso, El Salvador, between Christmas 1983 and New Year 1984 and subsequent ESAF recapture of the base described in "El Paraiso and the War in El Salvador: Part I (1981-1983)," *Veritas* 2:3: 21 should have read as follows:

As soon as all resistance was eliminated, the guerrillas, who would occupy the base for another full day and night, splashed the ESAF bodies with acid and shot those pretending to be dead. The wounded were killed and some prisoners were taken. While elements manned the perimeter to repel any Salvadoran units sent to help, the remainder ransacked the facility, collecting food, useful supplies, material, and equipment. Five hundred of the six hundred weapons captured were American M-16 rifles. Using one to three KG (kilogram) explosive charges (*bloques*), they systematically destroyed buildings, bunkers, vehicles, and other heavy equipment. A thousand TNT *bloques* were used in the attack and the destruction afterwards.

LT Eduardo Garcia Landos, commanding a company of the *Izmitia Cazador* battalion, had been sent from DM-1 in Chalatenango to protect the dam at Cerron Grande, a strategic site, during the Christmas-New Year holidays. While bivouacked in San Antonio de los Ranchos, Teniente Landos heard mortar fire and large explosions to his rear. Early the next morning he and his radio operator climbed to the top of a large hill to contact DM-1. His battalion was ordered back to Chalatenango because the guerrillas had destroyed 4th Brigade at El Paraiso. After returning to the *cuartel*, Landos discovered that most of the brigade officers had been at a party in San Salvador. But, there was not time to chastise because his company was to lead the relief force, the *Izmitia Cazador* battalion. They had to get aboard the trucks.

At Desvio de Santa Rita, the battalion (less than 200 soldiers) dismounted and began moving in a column towards the El Paraiso *cuartel*. As they approached they could see FAES (*Fuerza Aerea de El Salvador*) aircraft strafing the base. Since they did not have FAES radio frequencies it was inevitable that they would be mistaken for enemy forces and attacked. As Teniente Landos moved his company into the center of the attack line facing the *cuartel*, the flank company commanded by Teniente Saca Romero, hit by the FAES fighters, pulled back. Landos saw that Loma Alpha was swarming with armed personnel.



And, they weren't ESAF from the *Belloso* Battalion because they started firing into his company about 1200 hours.

"Since the guerrillas were occupying the security posts, we used our 90mm recoilless rifles to destroy them one by one. It was 2200 hours by the time we reached the main gate. So, we were able to get three companies on line with the fourth in reserve. We decided to attack around midnight because we knew the terrain and best approaches. About the time we were finalizing our attack plans, we received a radio message from the FMLN on our frequency, 'Gentlemen, the FMLN want to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.' Then, a massive explosion followed as they blew up all the ammunition storage bunkers. It was the biggest explosion I've ever heard in my life. As a huge mushroom cloud rose from the *cuartel* secondary explosions illuminated the entire area and there were fires everywhere. So much for breaking into the base that night," said Landos.

At 0400 hours the next morning the *Izmitia Cazadores* moved in and began clearing the base. Since the *Cazadores* had blocked the main exit, they prevented the guerrillas from taking eight trucks loaded with mortars, weapons, and ammunition. "Though 175 Salvadoran soldiers and 70 FMLN were killed in the attack, there were survivors—several conscripts had hidden in the sewer. The brigade operations and intelligence officer had come running into the Plaza de Banderas wearing PT shorts, tee shirt, and tennis shoes. The *iguano* had obviously been in El Paraiso with his girlfriend during the attack," said Landos. "The camp looked like a Holocaust scene. The *Belloso* Battalion, moving on foot from Colima, arrived at noon to find the base retaken."

Major (Retired) Eduardo García Landos, interview with Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 July 2007, San Salvador, El Salvador, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

The caption for the photo on page 9 of "Major Herbert R. Brucker, SF Pioneer: Part IV: SO Team HERMIT in France," *Veritas* 3:2 should be: "Vive la franc! The American Army issued Occupation francs to its troops during WWII."



Cover Photo: This photo of retired Command Sergeant Major (then Sergeant First Class) LeRoy R. Sena, heavy weapons sergeant, ODA-7, on the sandbagged rooftop position in *El Bosque* after the 25-26 March 1984 attack on San Miguel was taken by Sergeant Kenneth R. Beko. He had the foresight to recognize the significance of this defensive action. Those photos taken by SGT Beko were critical to explaining and illustrating the final 3/7th SFG small unit tactical training (SUTT) mission to El Salvador. Sena currently works in the USASOC Safety Office.





1



23



31



41

Veritas

CONTENTS

- 1 San Miguel: The Attack on *El Bosque*
by Charles H. Briscoe
- 23 The 151st Airborne Tank Company at Camp Mackall, NC
by Troy J. Sacquety
- 31 Wolfpacks and Donkeys: Special Forces Soldiers in the Korean War
by Kenneth Finlayson
- 41 The Ganders: 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group Conducts PSYWAR in Korea- Part II
by Robert W. Jones Jr.
- 59 The Special Forces Patch: History and Origins
by Troy J. Sacquety
- 63 The OSS Exhibit:
Presented by the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, collaborating with the USASOC History Office and the North Carolina Museum of History
- 64 FTX FREE LEGION III: 30th Anniversary Reunion, 1973
Requesting assistance...
- 66 Books in the Field



The Azimuth of the USASOC History Office

We are "on target" to publish four issues of *Veritas* in 2007. "San Miguel:

The Battle for *El Bosque*" advertised for presentation in the last issue was slipped because our journal page count would have been excessive. The 2008 special issue of *Veritas* will be the 8th SFC Special Action Force (SAF) mission to Bolivia in 1967. A Korean War and White Star veteran, Major Ralph "Pappy" Shelton, led the 8th SAF team that trained the Bolivian 2nd Ranger Battalion at La Esperanza to combat Ernesto "Che" Guevara and his Cuban-dominated guerrilla force while Captain John D. Waghelstein taught UW and COIN operations to company-grade officers at the Infantry School in Cochabamba. Interviews with the Ranger officers and soldiers who fought the guerrillas and captured Che will balance the presentations.

Army SOF in El Salvador 1980-1993 will be our 2008 book. Interviews with Salvadoran war veterans are 40 percent complete. SF NCO input is close to balancing that provided by officers, but more NCO support is needed to reflect the ratio in our Force. While we have a manuscript for ARSOF in Somalia, it is far from being ready for publication. A thorough review, as was done for the El Salvador manuscript, will identify any

"holes" that require more work. Photos, documents, and memorabilia are still welcome from Somalia veterans. The Camp Mackall history project was restarted in October 2007. It will span World War II to the present (2008). The history of ARSOF in Korea, 1950-1954 will be presented as a series of separate books on Special Operations, PSYWAR, and Civil Assistance/Civil Military Government.

The USASOC History Office and NC Museum of History are combining their assets and collections for a major exhibit on the OSS at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, NC. The year-long exhibition opened on 13 October 2007. An Army SOF on Smoke Bomb Hill historical photograph marker will be installed in front of the Green Beret Club in the near future.

Civil Affairs and Army SOF support vignettes are needed. Origins of the Green Beret is the subject of a forthcoming article. Documents, photos, memorabilia, and insignia make articles more personal. We only scan, photograph, and copy, returning originals and a CD of what has been archived. We appreciate the accolades. Recommendations, constructive comments, and requests for specific history topics from the field are welcome. CHB

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HISTORY

SAN MIGUEL:

The Attack on *El Bosque*

by Charles H. Briscoe



THE last Small Unit Tactical Training (SUTT) conducted by a Special Forces MTT (mobile training team) in El Salvador was done by ODA-7, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, TDY (temporary duty) from Panama. The training was provided to 3rd Brigade elements at San Miguel, El Salvador, from January to April 1984. The SUTT mission was well underway when Colonel Joseph S. Stringham III, the second U.S. Military Group (USMILGP) commander with considerable SF combat experience, expanded OPATT (Operational Planning and Assistance Training Team) coverage to meet guidance from Ambassador Thomas Pickering for the 1984 Salvadoran

presidential election "watch."¹

The purpose of this article is to explain the most significant single combat action involving American Special Forces during the thirteen-year counterinsurgency war in El Salvador. It is presented not to justify awards or highlight individual performances, rather to provide details of the defensive actions taken by members of ODA-7, when the 3rd Brigade *cuartel* at San Miguel was attacked by a 700-man guerrilla force the night following the 25 March presidential primary election in 1984.² It is relevant because it serves to remind Special Forces soldiers tasked to train foreign militaries overseas that they are ultimately responsible for their own safety and survival. Self-protection measures should never be dis-

regarded. For these reasons, it merits presentation apart from the trilogy of *Veritas* articles that summarize the Salvadoran COIN (counterinsurgency) war begun in a previous issue (Vol. 3, No. 1).

ODA-7 (ODA 781 in today's numbering system), B Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (SFG), Fort Gulick, Panama was a team that had a good mix of Vietnam combat veterans, experienced and new SF soldiers with better than average language skills, and they had been training Latin Americans. ODA-7 had supported ODA-9 in the training of Salvadorans, Hondurans, Colombians, and Panamanians at the neighboring U.S. Army School of the Americas for a year when the team was alerted in the late fall of 1983 for a SUTT mission in El Salvador. In that year of training, ODA-7 conducted a RECONDO course for elements of BIRI (*Batallón de Infantería de Reacción Inmediata*) Atlacatl as well as a platoon of the newly created Salvadoran Air Force ground reconnaissance company, PRAL (*Patrulla de Reconocimiento de Alance Largo*). Small unit infantry patrolling, ambushes, and raids were taught at Fort Sherman and in the triple-canopy jungle along the Chagres River. In addition,



Colonel Joseph S. Stringham III, Commander, USMILGP—El Salvador, July 1983–November 1984, and Ambassador Thomas Pickering.



Sergeant Kenneth Beko, junior medic for ODA-7, explains emergency medical treatment to a Salvadoran soldier at Fort Sherman, Panama.

ODA-7 assisted with the training of the BIRI Arce in Panama covering topics that ranged from individual soldier skills to advanced collective infantry tactics in the field.⁴

“Preparing lesson plans and training aids, rehearsals, presenting classes, critiquing the field performances, tailoring remedial training, and just chatting with Salvadorans raised the language proficiency of the DLI-trained [Defense Language Institute] SF soldiers to a much higher level. It also introduced our native speakers to Salvadoran Spanish idioms and cultural nuances. We couldn’t have had a better mission prep,” said former Sergeant Ken Beko, the ODA-7 medic (18D) cross-trained as an infantryman.⁵ Having worked together in the field for more than a year, this strongly-bonded ODA underwent some organizational changes shortly before deployment.

Several things happened in quick succession. Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Scruggs assigned Master Sergeant Rodney F. Dutton, a Vietnam veteran and school-trained



Staff Sergeant Peter Moosey, light weapons sergeant for ODA-7, evaluates a Salvadoran soldier on the Leader’s Reaction Course at Fort Sherman, Panama.

18Z (operations and intelligence sergeant) to fill the detachment operations sergeant position (18Z). He then became the new team sergeant. When the request for country clearance of the site survey team was submitted to San Salvador, the detachment commander was denied access by the MILGP commander, Colonel Joseph S. Stringham, based on a serious incident during a previous mission. Because B Company already had an officer, Captain Craig W. Leeker, at San Miguel, keeping him there to command ODA-7 was a natural fit. CPT Leeker accepted the position offered by LTC Scruggs and COL Stringham. Sergeant First Class LeRoy R. Sena, the heavy weapons NCO (non-commissioned officer), a native Spanish speaker from Las Vegas, New Mexico, and Staff Sergeant Peter J. Moosey, the light weapons sergeant and a highly proficient DLI-schooled linguist, replaced two SF soldiers on an MTT at San Miguel, in order to conduct a “working” site survey in mid-November 1983. COL Stringham was not going to exceed the Congressionally-mandated 55-man limit and he was adamant about not granting country access to the detachment commander.⁶

CPT Craig Leeker was already in charge of a composite SF team (four NCOs from two different ODAs) that had been dispatched to San Miguel by COL Stringham to help the 3rd Brigade organize its defenses after a disastrous FMLN attack in early November 1983. It would be the SF captain’s third of four consecutive TDY assignments (fifteen months) in El Salvador. He had become Stringham’s MTT “fireman,” fixing problems from Sonsonate to San Vicente to La Unión to San Miguel. CPT



Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena trains Ponce Cazadores on the 90mm recoilless rifle in El Salvador.



BIRI Atlacatl
shoulder patch



BIRI Arce
shoulder patch



Fuerza Aérea
PRAL shoulder
patch

Leeker, told to “make sure that the 3rd Brigade was not overrun again,” had just gotten all the new conscripts armed after a short period of weapons familiarization and was working with Colonel Jaime Flores on the *cuartel* defenses when SFC Sena and SSG Moosey arrived from Panama.⁷

“The assignment of ODA-7 to an MTT mission in El Salvador—instead of the typical composite elements from 3/7th SFG—was an anomaly. It was a welcome change for me. An experienced, well-trained team knew how to work together and this paid big dividends,” said Leeker.⁸

SFC Sena, uncomfortable with the security at San Miguel, took SSG Moosey to walk the camp perimeter the next day. They assessed the security measures and Moosey made a detailed sketch of the defenses. Afterward, the two began setting fire to the high grass and bushes between the *cuartel* and the billeting area in *El Bosque* to improve their defensive posture. The primary FMLN avenue of approach for the attack a few weeks earlier had come through the *Bosque*. The fires angered COL Flores because they had revealed how inadequate the brigade defenses were. They blatantly exposed the holes under the fences and gaps in the wire used by the *iguaneros* [Salvadoran soldiers who sneaked out to hunt for food (iguanas) or to see their girlfriends in town]. CPT Leeker apologized to mollify COL Flores. The senior Mortar MTT sergeant read “the Riot Act” to the two recent arrivals.⁹

Since the last *Veritas* article on El Salvador focused on the central region of the country, a thumbnail area “sketch” of the San Miguel region follows. It describes the FMLN (*Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional*) *focos* and the state of the ESAF (El Salvadoran Armed Forces). An explanation of Salvadoran fixed base securi-



The San Miguel cuartel was located between two of the largest FMLN-dominated areas (*focos*) in the country. Since it prevented the guerrillas from controlling the eastern region of El Salvador, it was a lucrative and regular target for attack.

ty completes the description of the environment in which ODA-7 would work during the first four months of 1984.

El Salvador is the smallest and most populated of the Central American countries. The eastern of its three regions (west and central are the other two) consists of four departments: Morazán to the north borders Honduras, Usulután in the west is situated on the Pacific Ocean, La Unión to the east on Gulf of Fonseca and the Pacific borders Honduras and Nicaragua, and San Miguel in the center stretches from the Pacific Ocean north to the Honduran border. This eastern region, the most thinly populated in the country, contained three cities with more than 25,000 people in the 1980s: San Miguel, La Unión—the country’s second most important seaport, and Usulután. San Miguel, second largest city in the nation, contained more than 100,000 inhabitants. The 1968 population densities of the four eastern departments—Morazán, Usulután, La Unión, and San Miguel—were 285, 332, 209, and 365 persons per square mile respectively.¹⁰

The eastern region, predominantly agricultural, produced 12 percent of the country’s coffee and most of its cotton. Its industrial output accounted for only 16 percent of the gross national product.¹¹ Two distinct and fairly well-defined seasons—the dry summer season and the wet winter season are normal. The rainy season usually lasts from May to October, but sometimes extends into early December. Afternoon showers are typical and on average produce ten inches a month.¹² There are two main east–west highways that traverse the country. The Inter-American Highway, part of the Pan American Highway, crosses the central plateau from the Guatemalan border to La Unión and on to the eastern frontier with Honduras. The second major artery, the Coastal Highway, follows the Pacific coastal plain from the western frontier to the eastern border, ending at La Unión. It parallels a major railway. The country’s fourth north–south highway splits away from the Inter-American Highway at San Miguel, goes northeast to Santa Rosa de Lima,



Large FMLN flags were rarely carried by fighting columns. They were displayed by the political arm. Combatants wore unit scarves, campaign buttons, and armbands for identification.



The San Miguel volcano dominated the view to the east of the city and the cuartel.

and then rejoins the main highway east into Honduras.¹³ These lines of communication intersect in and around San Miguel, the largest city.

Though San Miguel was founded in 1530, cotton cultivation after World War II prompted its most rapid growth. Situated on the railroad and the cross-country highway to La Unión, it is an important distribution center for eastern cotton as well as coffee, agave fiber, and dairy products. The city is located at the foot of two inactive volcanoes and has a pleasant semitropical climate.¹⁴ It was situated between two of the largest FMLN *focos* in the country.

During the thirteen-year COIN war, the disputed, demilitarized areas along the southern border of Honduras, the *bolsones* (pockets) housed numerous refugee

camps that dated to the 1969 war. These *bolsones* became *focos* for guerrilla training and cross-border supply distribution centers. Two of the largest *bolsones* were in northern Chalatenango department in the central region and Morazán department in the east. Usulatán and San Miguel departments had major sections dominated by the guerrillas (see map highlighting areas domi-

In El Salvador, *cuartel* means a garrison. The DM *cuarteles* look like 19th century thick-walled fortresses while a brigade *cuartel* looks like a base camp with permanent structures.¹⁵

nated by the rebels in 1981). However, national defense was conventional war based. It centered on “nineteenth century fortress-like,” thick-walled *cuarteles* (quar-tellays) dating to the early 1900s, in each military district, *destacamento militar* (DM) and six brigade *cuarteles*.

The brigade *cuarteles* were fortified camps ringed with barbed-wire fencing that enclosed perimeter bunkers and some cinder block guard towers. Neither had been constructed to be defended like the firebases were in Vietnam. The tactical security measures were more akin to industrial sites—fences to limit access through guarded entry gates.

*Note: At the San Miguel *cuartel* only the upper, central part was completely fenced. Internal access to *cuartel* central was controlled by a guardpost and gate. Only guard posts at the entry points had communications with the command post. Security patrol sweeps outside the perimeter were rarely conducted.¹⁶

With a conventional war mentality (defense against Honduran land and air attacks in retaliation for its incursion in 1969), the Salvadoran *Estado Mayor* (General Staff) positioned the 4th Brigade *cuartel* at El Paraiso to reinforce the DM-1 *cuartel* located in Chalatenango. The 3rd Brigade *cuartel* at San Miguel backstopped the DM-4 *cuartel* at San Francisco de Gotera near the Honduran border blocking another invasion corridor.¹⁷ This conveniently placed the 3rd Brigade *cuartel* between two major guerrilla *focos* to the north and south.

From 1981 to 1984, the El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) were struggling to survive, to expand, and slowly trying to gain the initiative against the loosely aligned groups of the FMLN. By early 1984, ESAF combat effectiveness and morale had improved—the result of new brigade commanders, a major staff shuffle in the *Estado Mayor*, better trained battalions, a central basic training facility, and joint coordination. By the end of 1984, the ESAF had 42,000 troops in uniform, more than three times the highest estimate for guerrillas.¹⁸

As the focus began to shift from expansion and training of new ESAF units to more small-unit COIN operations and to pacification and civic action, the MILGP wanted to have more continuity in its training and advisory role at the brigades. The three-officer OPATT program, developed by Colonel John D. Waghelstein to satisfy that need, dovetailed neatly with the shakeup of the Salvadoran senior officer corps in late 1983.¹⁹ The expansion of the OPATT program to all brigades and to all *Estado Mayor* staff sections by COL Stringham overlapped with the last SUTT mission performed by a Special Forces MTT from Panama.

The mission to train the 350-man *Cazador* (Hunter) battalions of the 3rd Brigade in San Miguel had been assigned to ODA-7, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG in the fall of 1983. The original ESAF *Cazador* battalions (three) had been organized and trained by a Venezuelan Army MTT using a compressed six-week program in late 1982.²⁰ These *Cazadores* were lightly armed and equipped mobile battalions that could deploy with little notice. The *Cazadores* were assigned to brigades whereas the immediate action, heavily armed 600-man BIRI



8th SFG trained the Venezuelan Cazador battalions in the early 1960s.



Cuscatlán was the initial Cazador battalion trained by the Venezuelan Army MTT in 1982.



The old DM-4 cuartel in San Francisco de Gotera “butted up” against the Catholic church in the town center. Note the basketball court painted on the street outside the main gate of the cuartel.



The central area of the San Miguel cuartel looked like a rimless wagon wheel missing some spokes. Outside that “wheel” were defensive trenches, guard towers, and some sandbag bunkers surrounded by an inner barbed-wire fence.

battalions—like *Atlacatl*, *Atonal*, *Arce*, *Belloso*, and *Bracamonte*—that received six months of training, were controlled by the *Estado Mayor*.²¹

Regardless of organization, the ESAF units from company to battalion were reconstituted almost annually with conscripts based on national service laws.²² Infantry tactical training was a constant, although regularly interrupted by operational requirements. Thus, a brigade’s fighting strength fluctuated very dramatically according to its conscription fill cycles; three battalions would in actuality equate to one reinforced battalion. These two very important realities were consistently overlooked by analysts counting units to compare with guerrilla elements. And, since U.S. military aid was tied to achieving certain force levels by deadlines (national elections),



Empire Range was the primary firing range in Panama used by all U.S. military forces. It was located opposite Fort Clayton on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal.

ESAF labeled units as battalions, i.e., the brigade security battalions, when they were actually reinforced companies at best. Brigade commanders preferred the smaller *Cazador* battalions since they could be trained faster.²³ SFC Sena and SSG Moosey discovered that these ESAF-wide practices indeed existed at the 3rd Brigade in San Miguel during their “working” site survey. They brought these insights back to Panama where ODA-7 was finalizing preparations for its upcoming mission.²⁴

During the last four weeks before Christmas 1983, ODA-7 conducted mission prep. SGT Ken Beko remembered, “Captain Gil Nelson, battalion S-2, provided intelligence briefs to the team and showed an FMLN film in which San Miguel guerrillas were firing an 82mm mortar. After researching tropical diseases and disorders, I had an extensive ‘laundry list’ of medicines and supplies to accumulate and pack. Then, it was off to Empire Range for a week.”²⁵

“SFC Sena put us through his ‘Gun-a-Rama’—a relentless shooting and firing regimen on everything from



Staff Sergeant Gary Davidson fires the 60mm mortar during the ODA-7 “Gun-a-Rama” at Empire Range in Panama.



The 3rd Brigade cuartel at San Miguel with the central area and *El Bosque* outlined.

we were at the end of the week. We were 'smoked.' But, that refresher 'got our heads into the game,'" remembered Sergeant Ken Beko.²⁶ After that training, SFC Sena and SSG Moosey left for El Salvador.

Special Forces MTTs were tailored to provide skills requested by the MILGP based on available personnel in the 3rd Battalion of 7th SFG in Panama. The 55-man "force cap," strictly managed by the MILGP, governed the team size and mission duration. Shortly before Christmas 1983, SFC Sena and SSG Moosey returned to Fort Gulick, leaving CPT Leeker and Staff Sergeant Charles Studley behind at San Miguel.²⁷ ODA-7 for the San Miguel SUTT would be all noncommissioned officers (NCOs).

Shortly before New Year's 1984, MSG Dutton; SFCs Sena and Jorge M. Reyes; SSGs Moosey, Gary Davidson, and Loyd Palmer; and SGTs Beko and Dave Janicki boarded a U.S. Air Force C-130 "Hercules" transport aircraft at Howard Air Force Base, Panama, to fly into Ilopango Airbase in San Salvador. Sergeant Major Carlos Parker, 3/7th SFG operations sergeant, met the military aircraft when it arrived. He had made arrangements

to secure the ODA-7 pallet of equipment before taking the team to the MILGP in the U.S. Embassy.²⁸ The eight Special Forces soldiers, dressed in *guayaberas* (short-sleeved, open neck Panamanian dress shirts worn over trousers—a climate-driven equivalent to a sports jacket) and slacks, were carrying small gun "tote bags" to lower their profile as American soldiers. After several days in the Sheraton Hotel, ODA-7 boarded a U.S. Army UH-1D Huey (TDY from Panama to support the Defense Attaché) for the trip to San Miguel.²⁹

CPT Leeker met them at the 3rd Brigade helipad and took them to the messhall for their first of hundreds of meals consisting of rice, beans, tortillas (mealy thick corn version), and soup. SSG Chuck Studley, the last member of the Mortar MTT, took the helicopter back to the capital en route home to Panama.³⁰ "I thought that we'd be going to the jungle. Instead, it was dry, dusty, and flat terrain like central California. I really didn't know what a coastal plain was like, but I was happy and excited to be there," said SGT Beko, the team medic.³¹

"What wasn't so good was discovering that we were going to live in the *El Bosque* area of the *cuartel*. In November, when the FMLN attacked, they drove a herd of cattle in front to conceal their movement and broke through the *Bosque*. It was a 'huge attack' that penetrated deep inside the *cuartel*. The FMLN controlled the camp for several hours. ESAF casualties were high . . . most were new conscripts that had not been issued weapons. There were twelve KIA [killed in action] in *El Bosque* alone. The *cuartel* ammo storage facility was destroyed as were numerous vehicles. Before they withdrew, the guerrillas killed several nurses and all the wounded in the hospital and set the building afire. The brigade was still doing clean up and rebuilding when we did the site survey. Security became my highest priority," said SFC LeRoy Sena, the heavy weapons sergeant.³²

SFC Sena got serious about security shortly after ODA-7 arrived. The third week in January 1984, the 3rd Brigade *cuartel* was attacked again just as intelligence

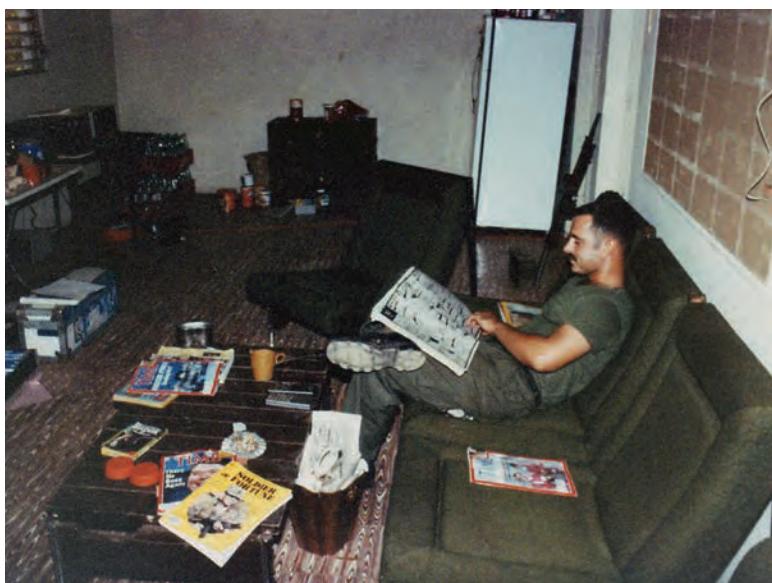


Tortillas served as the soldiers' plates for beans and rice, the staples of the Salvadoran diet, whether in the cuartel messhall or in the field. ODA-7 soldiers ate the same thing, but were served on plates in the messhall.





Master Sergeant Rodney Dutton, ODA-7 team sergeant, uses the AN/FRC-93 shortwave radio to make a MARS call to his family in Panama at night.



Staff Sergeant Loyd Palmer, senior radioman, relaxes in the team "lounge" area.



Visiting ESAF nurses and nurse's aides inoculate 3rd Brigade conscripts.

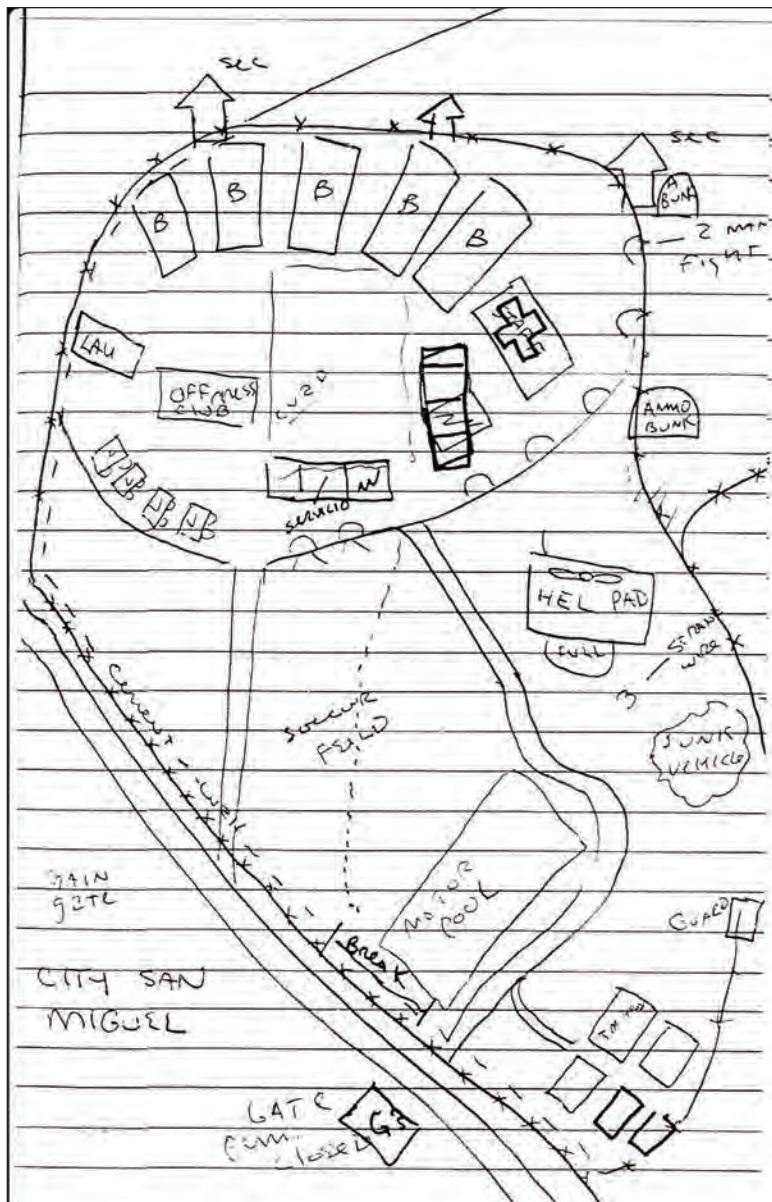
had indicated they would. The previously coordinated plan for the Americans to move up inside the *cuartel* inner perimeter when under attack proved foolhardy. CPT Leeker alerted the brigade tactical operations center using the telephone in the *Bosque* guardhouse that the SF team was coming up to the *cuartel*. But halfway up the interior road to the *cuartel* center, the well-armed ODA "bumped into" a *Cazador* element returning from patrol. The Special Forces team froze when they heard the weapon safeties of the unknown group coming off as the individual soldiers, or guerrillas, fanned out into assault formation. *Cazadores* patrolled with weapons loaded and safeties on. There was a lot of gunfire and outgoing tracer fire visible when SSG Moosey calmly spoke, "Americanos. *Fuerzas Especiales* . . ." and then repeated it in English.³³ After a long pause, a Salvadoran lieutenant stepped forward and asked "what the hell they were doing." CPT Leeker intervened and both groups proceeded into the upper *cuartel* perimeter.

After that close encounter, the rest of the night was spent sitting in a defensive ring outside the headquarters, watching the ESAF response to the attack. "Salvadoran soldiers, dispatched to reinforce the perimeter, would stop to fire their weapons while others manning sandbagged bunkers just blasted away. Fortunately, most ESAF fire was directed outside in response to the initial guerrilla firing. New conscripts, though armed, simply sought shelter. The *soldados* did explain afterwards how they knew the guerrillas were about to attack—dogs would be barking all around the *cuartel*," said SGT Beko.³⁴ To avoid being accidentally killed by the ESAF during an attack, ODA-7 reached the conclusion that it would be safer to simply protect themselves in *El Bosque*.

The near fratricide with the Americans was not a major concern to Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, the former BIRI *Atlacatl* commander who had just recently been assigned to command the 3rd Brigade. Since the aggressive leader had already had all the vegetation in and around the *cuartel* burned off, it was not difficult for CPT Leeker to broker an agreement that the SF billeting area



Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, former commander of BIRI *Atlacatl* (in the lead), took command of the 3rd Brigade in December 1983. The third soldier in line was Monterrosa's body guard, Soldado Juan Antonio Gómez.³⁵



Original 3rd Brigade cuartel defense sketch made by Staff Sergeant Peter Moosey.

would be "off limits" to Salvadorans at night for "safety reasons." In the meantime, SFC Sena and SSG Moosey put together an escape and evasion plan with contingencies, and started making range cards for two-man defensive positions adjacent to their quarters.³⁶

A few days after the January 1984 attack, the 3rd Brigade soldiers were busy improving defensive positions. They had already repaired the fence and blocked most of the escape holes.³⁷ By then, the ODA-7 trainers, assisted by second enlistment veterans (*chucos*) from the original *Cazador* battalion *Cuscatlán* serving as *cabos* (corporals), had started the basic infantry training for the conscripts assigned to the 2nd *Cazador* battalion *Ponce*.³⁸ In the middle of the six-week Venezuelan POI (program of instruction) for the *Ponce*, ODA-7 narrowly missed being ambushed.

In early February 1984, three members of the team were to return to San Salvador for the monthly MILGP meeting. Administrative activities did not merit the use of a helicopter, so flights were arranged with a commercial



Ponce
Battalion
SSI



The ODA-7 "Jeep" was made operational by cannibalizing several ESAF vehicles in the junk yard next to El Bosque. Sergeant Ken Beko (left) and Staff Sergeant Gary Davidson (right).



3rd Brigade Cazadores en route to training practice typical vehicle security measures.



Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena demonstrates how to "direct lay" a 60mm mortar to the Salvadoran Cazadores.



Ft Benning OCS graduate, *Cadete José Arturo Rodríguez Martínez*, LIV (54), was one of the best assistant instructors.

air carrier operating from the San Miguel dirt airstrip. Cessna C-172 aircraft were used to shuttle passengers to and from San Salvador daily. The MILGP suggested this service. It had been used before by previous SF MTTs. "Lady Luck" smiled on ODA-7 that morning. Transportation problems delayed the arrival of everyone and the agreed upon cross-loading plan prevented MSG Dutton and SGT Beko from getting aboard the first aircraft. Just as the five-seater plane started to lift off the airstrip, there was an explosion (a land mine). The small plane slammed nose-first into the ground. Covered by MSG Dutton and SSG Palmer from the dispatch shack, SSG Moosey and two *Cazadores* fanned out to search the airstrip for the guerrillas and more mines. Having received a "thumbs up" from Moosey, CPT Leeker, who had accompanied the party to the airstrip, and SGT Beko—wearing his medical vest as usual—ran to the crash site. Though the two passengers in the rear were dead, the pilot's son in the baggage area was only banged up. His father and the front right seat passenger were alive. Beko

applied tourniquets to their crushed legs to keep them alive. They had the airplane engine in their laps. Both survived, but lost their legs.³⁹ Going to San Salvador that day was no longer a priority. A helicopter that stopped to investigate agreed to carry the two worst casualties and a Volkswagen van was commandeered to take the rest of the injured to the San Miguel hospital. The disquieted SF team members returned to the *cuartel* to resume training *Cazador Ponce*. That ambush reinforced the need to keep force protection a high priority.

The constant fight with the brigade logistics officer for sufficient training ammunition prompted SFC Sena and SSG Moosey to begin searching the *cuartel* area for long-hidden caches. The ESAF leadership, always unsure if and/or when the United States would reduce or cut-off military aid, tended to hoard ammunition. When the two NCOs finally got inside the padlocked and guarded ammo bunker, they discovered vast quantities of 5.56 and 7.62mm. But, the banded cases were all stenciled "Training Ammunition." After a Salvadoran lieutenant opened all the boxes, sure that they were mislabeled, they discovered that they had been hoarding thousands of rounds of blank ammunition in their ammo bunker; additional outdated ammo was being stored in the S-4 (logistics) warehouse virtually unguarded. That incident gave Sena and Moosey the opportunity to rummage around the rooms of the warehouse.⁴⁰

In a back room they found a treasure trove of M-1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs), M-1919A6 Browning light machineguns, and innumerable cases of .30 cal ball, tracer, and armor-piercing ammunition. None of it was linked for machinegun usage, but there was an old hand-operated link-belt machine. After the *Cazador* training was complete, SFC Sena, SSG Moosey, and SGT Beko began inspecting, field-stripping, and cleaning all weapons—some thirty BARs and twenty A6s. When they were done "cannibalizing" them, they had about twenty BARs and fifteen A6 machineguns operable. The



3rd Brigade propaganda leaflet blaming the FMLN for destroying the Cessna C-172 that killed two and injured two passengers in February 1984.



ESAF C-123 Provider carrying ballot boxes for the 25 March 1984 election was ambushed using a command-detonated mine on the same airstrip just weeks after the Cessna C-172 was wrecked.⁴¹



Left to right: Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena, Staff Sergeant Davidson, Staff Sergeant Moosey, and SGT David Janicki reconditioning the newly-found Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs) outside their billets in El Bosque.

neighboring *Sección Dos*, the brigade S-2 intelligence reconnaissance element living in *El Bosque*, agreed to link the .30 cal ammunition into belts for the machine-guns in return for two BARs and an A6. LTC Monterrosa was pleased with the new firepower because it enabled him to recoup 7.62 M-60 machineguns emplaced at static guard positions near strategic security sites. Since the Americans had found, reconditioned, and trained elements of his Security Battalion on the BAR and A6, Monterrosa gave ODA-7 one of the A6s and a BAR for security in *El Bosque*. CPT Leeker's suggestion to temporarily place twelve A6s to defend the brigade's mountaintop radio repeater site near Perquin in northern Morazán had already worked wonders. Their interlocking fires had devastated a large FMLN attack force; the A6 could fire 600 rounds per minute.⁴²

Toward the end of February 1984, with the six-weeks tactical training of *Cazador Ponce* completed, LTC Mon-



ODA-7 trains Salvadoran 3rd Brigade soldiers on the M-1919A6 light machinegun outside San Miguel.

terrosa wanted to test his new unit in combat by launching an offensive in the Ciudad Barrios region with two *Cazador* battalions. His operation provided a welcome break for ODA-7. Everyone except SFC Sena and SGT Beko elected to return home to Panama for five days to visit their families and friends. Sena and Beko chose to stay at the *Bosque*. Two OPATT officers [Infantry Lieutenant Colonel (frocked Major) Lesley Smith and SF Captain Jae Hawksworth] had arrived and were billeted in the *cuartel*.⁴³

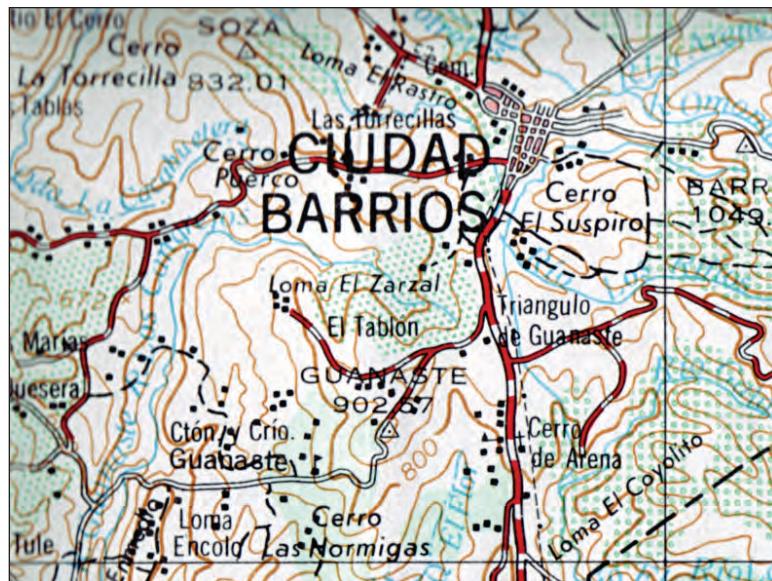
It was quiet and peaceful until the fourth night (3 March) when "we were awakened by the 'thump-thump' sound of mortar rounds being dropped into the tubes, followed shortly thereafter by the exploding shells that were hitting in the upper part of the *cuartel*. I grabbed my weapons and LBE [load bearing equipment] and climbed up on the roof for better observation. Sergeant Beko, wearing his medical vest, took up a defensive position just below me in the inner courtyard of our building. When the mortar fire lifted, a ground assault



Sergeant David Janicki (left) and Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena (right) checked the 3rd Brigade Security Battalion's M-1919A6 machineguns nightly.



Ponce Cazador Battalion passes in review after completing six-weeks of training by ODA-7.



In November 1983, a 3rd Brigade Cazador was badly mauled by a 600-man FMLN force in the mountains near Ciudad Barrios about 40 km NNW of San Miguel and 30 km WNW of San Francisco de Gotera. In February 1984, the Cuscatlán Cazador battalion that "collapsed" under heavy FMLN pressure was stopped by the physical intervention of LTC Domingo Monterrosa.

began, supported by snipers in a building opposite the main gate. Though we weren't receiving any fire in the *Bosque*, I was never able to reach Colonel Smith and Captain Hawksworth in the *cuartel* by telephone. For a few hours, we watched the small arms tracer fire going in and coming out of the *cuartel*. Here we were, four Americans, split-up, in a brigade-sized camp under attack [estimated 500-man force], being guarded by a reinforced platoon of ESAF. We were lucky. Repeated attempts to penetrate the *cuartel* failed, but that made me get serious about defensive measures," said SFC Sena, the Vietnam SOG [Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV)-Special Operations Group] veteran. "When Colonel Stringham arrived the next morning, he ordered Smith and Hawksworth into San Salvador until the rest of ODA-7 returned from Panama."⁴⁴

Unbeknownst to Sena and Beko, the FMLN attack on the *cuartel* was a blocking action while another element dropped the Urbina Bridge in San Miguel and their major assault force mauled LTC Monterrosa's leading *Cazador* battalion, *Cuscatlán*. A well-armed, 600-man guerrilla force simply outgunned and then overwhelmed the lightly armed, widely dispersed, understrength 250-man ESAF battalion. Only Monterrossa's physical, armed intervention enabled him to regain control of the shattered units. An airborne company was dispatched to help disperse the enemy forces. After reorganizing the two *Cazador* battalions to fight as one element, doubling his firepower, Monterrosa was able to counterattack and achieve a measure of success.⁴⁵ The valiant Salvadoran commander learned the hard way that the *Cazador* battalions were "a creation of expedience." Afterward he always operated with combined *Cazador* battalions.⁴⁶

The *Cuscatlán Cazadores* who had not performed well at Ciudad Barrios and the *Cuscatlán iguaneros* who had



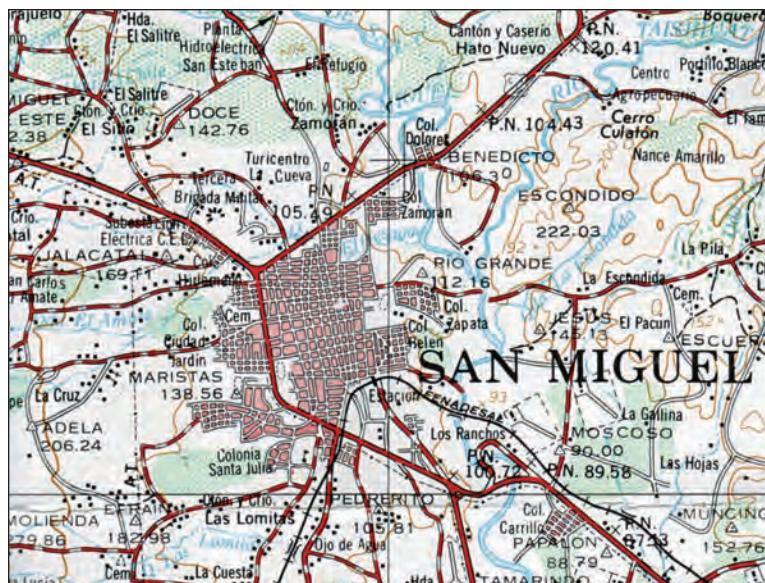
The Urbina Bridge in San Miguel was one of the last Lempa River bridges collapsed by the FMLN.

been AWOL (absent without leave) for the mission had their heads shaved and uniforms torn to ribbons. Then they were publicly humiliated by being put through a physical "hell week" and treated like "outcasts" (*castigados*). Weak officers were sent away in disgrace.⁴⁷ "Captain Leeker and I read about the San Miguel attacks in the *Miami News* on our way back to El Salvador. The story was based on interviews with the guerrillas," recalled SSG Moosey.⁴⁸ Things were definitely heating up as the FMLN tried to disrupt the presidential election slated for 25 March.

Instead of starting to train the newly-forming third *Cazador* battalion, *Leon*, when they returned from Panama, ODA-7 first dealt with a primary weapon rearmament for *Ponce*. M-16 rifles had arrived to replace the battalion's old 7.62mm Heckler and Koch (H&K) G3 rifles. The *Ponce Cazadores* were already scheduled to guard election sites in the department. ODA-7 would ensure that the soldiers were proficient with their new weaponry before deployment. "During that train-up, we encountered so many booby traps and personnel mines on the Hato Nuevo range, clearing the range before training became a daily prerequisite. Guerrillas were actually spending



Sergeant Kenneth Beko, wearing ear protectors, during M-16 training for the *Ponce Cazadores* prior to the 25 March 1984 election.



San Miguel as shown on 1/100,000 topographical map used by ODA-7 in El Salvador.

the night in the arroyos surrounding the site. We found old campfires and actually surprised a few that overslept one morning. They abandoned everything. One day a group of four sat and watched us—out of small arms range, of course," said SSG Moosey.⁴⁹ In exchange for the M-16s, the *Estado Mayor* wanted all the H&K G3 rifles collected and carried back to San Salvador.

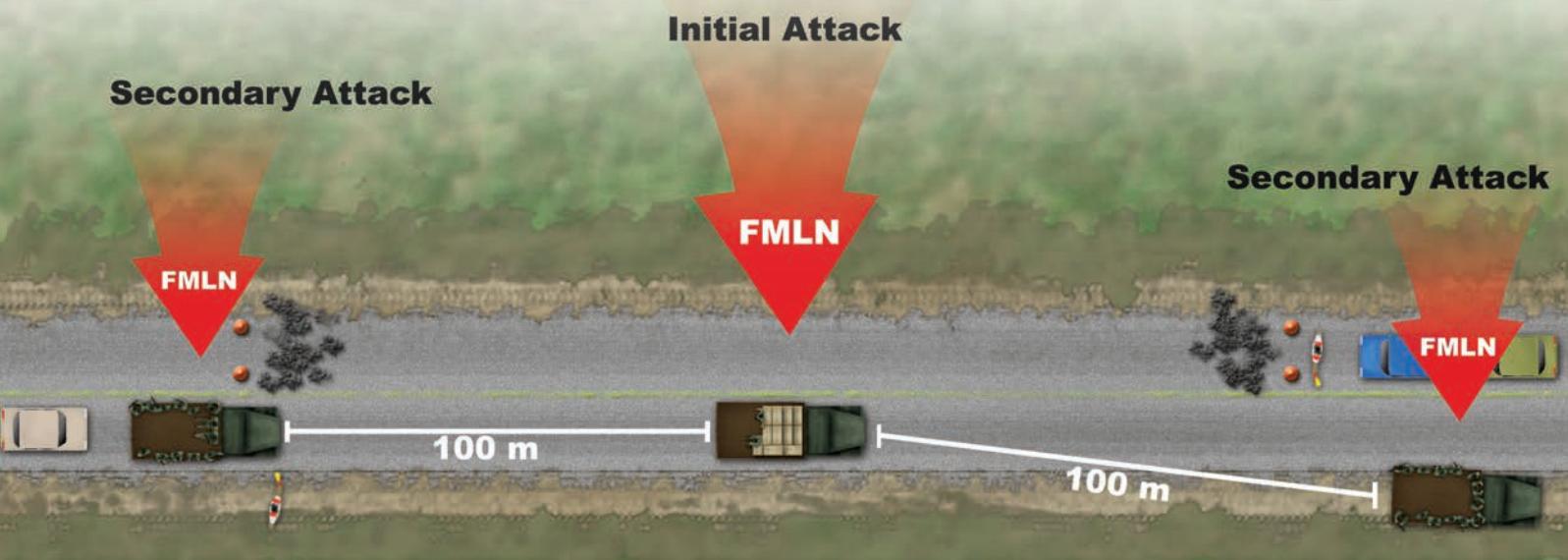
By the time everything was arranged for the shipment of weapons, the operation was compromised.⁵⁰ Less than ten miles from San Miguel, just after they entered the San Vicente department, the three-truck convoy encountered a highway repair team controlling traffic to a single lane area. Traffic controllers with flags limited vehicle access through the one-lane zone, alternating traffic flow from each side. The ambush was well coordinated and simply executed. The lead guard truck cleared the far road guard (over 100 meters) and pulled over to wait while traffic accumulated. The truck carrying the several hundred G3 rifles was waved into the one-lane construction area (the ambush "kill zone"). It was allowed to get halfway between the lead and trail guard trucks



Left to right: Sergeant David Janicki, Staff Sergeant Peter Moosey, and Sergeant Kenneth Beko at an FMLN campsite whose occupants received an early "wake up call" from a Cazador range clearing patrol.

when guerrillas sprang out of hiding and began firing. ESAF LT Armando Nuñez Franco, the driver, and the rifle guards in the back of his truck were killed. That firing triggered simultaneous assaults on the lead and trail guard vehicles. Within minutes, thirty *Cazadores* were dead and the guerrilla force had fled in the truck carrying the G3 rifles. Truck and automobile drivers on both ends of the "road construction" watched in amazement.⁵¹ The "Semana Santa Ambuscade" was another black day for the 3rd Brigade. The FMLN was determined to discredit the American-trained ESAF and Salvadoran government before the election. Daily sniping and chance contacts became almost routine. The question was merely when they would attack the *cuartel* again.

Efforts to improve security around the SF billets in *El Bosque* were already underway. Being located in the lower, southerly section of the *cuartel*, it was imperative to have an elevated vantage point to observe the major avenues of approach and to adjust their defenses based



- 1 SF Team Quarters
- 2 Soldier Insurance Office
- 3 Humanitarian MTT
- 4 ESAF Maintenance Yard
- 5 Gas Pumps
- 6 *El Bosque* Gate and Guard House
- 7 To Base
- 8 To *Sección Dos*
- 9 To Banana Grove and Wrecked Vehicles
- 10 To Open Field
- 11 Inter-American Highway

- 1 CPT Leeker and SSG Palmer
- 2 MSG Dutton
- 3 SGT Beko
- 4 SFC Sena and SSG Moosey
- 5 SFC Reyes

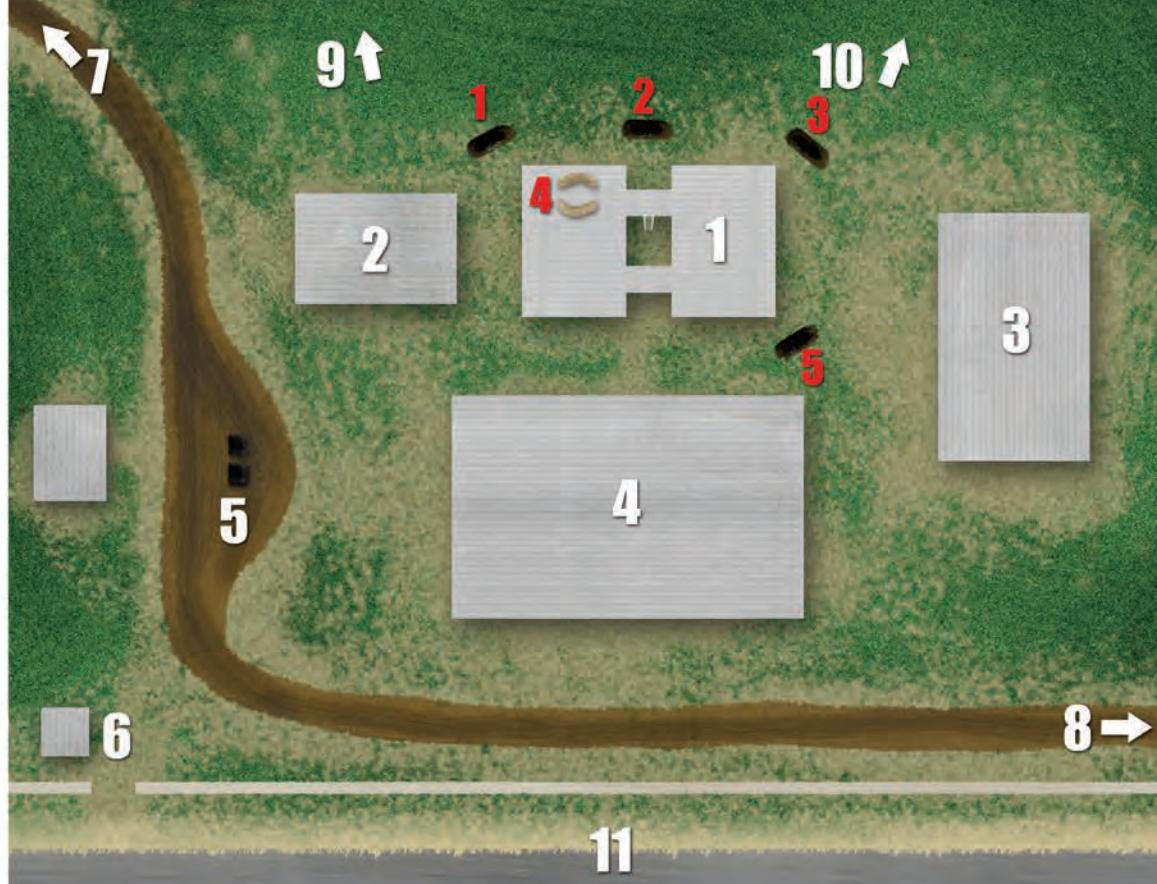


Diagram of ODA-7 defensive positions within *El Bosque*.

on directions of attack. Previous attacks in January and March 1984 had made this obvious. To the rooftop they went. SFC Sena and SSG Moosey started construction of a two-man position, bringing sandbags up two at a time, until they had two small sausage-shaped walls about three sandbags high and four and a half feet wide. It was initially to be an OP (observation post) for CPT Leeker and a radioman.⁵² When COL Stringham came to explain that an OPATT team would replace ODA-7, he announced that the SF team would remain at San Miguel

(in reduced numbers) through the election. The coming "election watch" would require the OPATT to be augmented for the mission. Sergeants Palmer, Davidson, and Janciki, though going back to Panama, would be returning to serve as election observers. And the increased FMLN threat dictated having "real infantry fighting positions around the *Bosque* billets of the Americans," said Team Sergeant Rodney Dutton, a former Vietnam infantryman. "Hasty individual prone shelters were not going to cut it, despite the rock-hard ground."⁵³

"I wanted infantry . . . Ranger fighting positions



Two Salvadoran soldiers help Sergeant First Class Jorge Reyes (second from right) and Sergeant Kenneth Beko (far right) carry sandbags up to the rooftop defensive position.



The primary digging tool for the ground defensive positions was the U.S. Army folding entrenching tool. The rock-hard dirt was used to fill the sandbag barriers in front of each position.

Phase 1: At approximately 9:00 p.m., 25 March, occupants of a truck on the Pan-American highway do a “drive-by,” firing their weapons at the main gate of the *cuartel*.

Phase 2: The SF soldiers hear the distinctive “whump, whump” of mortars followed by explosions in the *cuartel*. The generators are immediately shut off and the *cuartel* is plunged into total darkness.

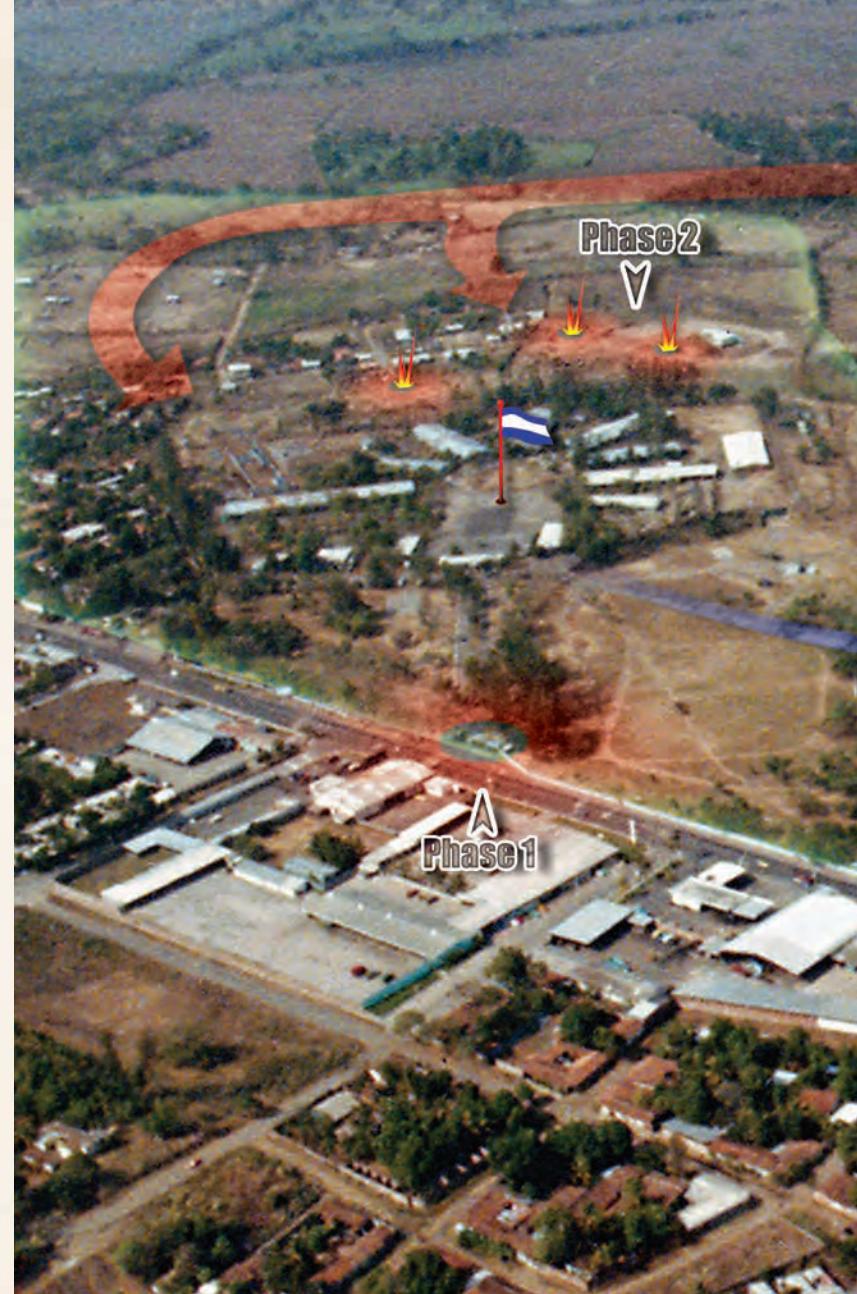
Phase 3: Guerrillas begin mass assault toward the SF position only to meet SSG Moosey’s machinegun fire. Having disrupted the enemy’s main attack, the SF soldiers begin receiving heavy small arms fire from all directions.

Phase 4: FMLN attempt to infiltrate through the dry streambed. They are decimated in series by “Claymore” mines, A6 machinegun, and BAR fire from the *Sección Dos* defenders.

Phase 5: Approximately eight guerrillas climb onto the flat roof of the tractor dealership some fifty meters to the rear of the SF rooftop position. SFC Sena engages them with semi-automatic fire.

Phase 6: An armored vehicle departs the *cuartel*, stops to refuel in the *El Bosque* area, then continues on into the field adjacent to the dry streambed. The crew fires a single round from the .50 cal machinegun before it jams. Ineffective and exposed to enemy fire, the armored vehicle reverses and retreats back to the *cuartel*.

Phase 7: AC-130 overhead spots a convoy of three trucks heading toward the *cuartel* through the northern field. The aircrew reports that they are carrying heavy machineguns. SFC Sena shifts the A6 fire to engage the new threat. When he finishes, only small fires caused by his tracers mark their destruction.



around the *Bosque* facility . . . ideally DePuy bunkers. The team had to have several positions in order to have a flexible defense. We also had a medical MTT (two NCO medics) working in the *cuartel*. There would be a lot of Americans on site during the election. I told Colonel Monterrosa that the SF team needed help ‘digging in’ and he sent half a platoon the next day. ESAF infantry platoons had two *secciones* of troops, where ours had three rifle squads. When the positions were done, I inspected them,” said Stringham.⁵⁴

“The positions were dug with U.S. Army folding entrenching tools. The Salvadorans had no picks or



The Vietnam-era AN/PVS-2 night observation device (NOD) was intended to be rifle mounted. The weight and ambient light needed to make the “Starlight Scope” effective limited its use by the ESAF. In a fixed defensive position it worked well for ODA-7.

D-handle shovels in the *cuartel*. Between the rock-hard ground (dry season) and the tree roots, it was a chore getting down four plus feet. We used the dirt to fill sandbags to serve as berms,” said SFC Sena.⁵⁵ He had already convinced CPT Leeker and MSG Dutton that the single M-1919A6 machinegun should be up on the roof with its primary fields of fire, the open field to the east and the dry streambed to the south (FMLN primary avenues of approach in November 1983 and on 3 March 1984, respectively). Leeker kept their BAR with a box of magazines on the ground.⁵⁶ Another chance discovery in the brigade supply warehouse further enhanced the American defensive measures.

“While I was in the brigade S-4 (logistics) shop, I spotted two U.S. Army AN/PVS-2s, Vietnam-era night observation devices (NODs) called ‘Starlight Scopes,’ gathering dust on a shelf. They were brand new and the batteries were good. None of the Salvadorans knew how to use them. They had no interest in them; the second-generation NODs were heavy, bulky, and had poor resolution. Captain Leeker got permission from

Secondary Attack

The Fight for El Bosque



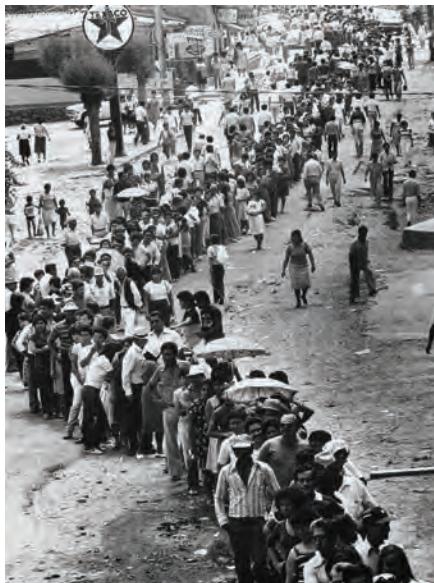
Lieutenant Colonel Monterrosa to borrow them. Now, we were able to see what was going on at night," said SSG Moosey.⁵⁷ Since almost all 3rd Brigade elements were being dispatched to guard voting sites in Morazán and San Miguel departments, *Cazador* training was suspended. Nationwide, commercial businesses were closed on election day.

The San Miguel OPATT officers, team leader LTC Smith, and his training officer, CPT Hawksworth (after being released from chicken pox quarantine), worked in the *cuartel* during the election watch. Sergeants Palmer and Janicki, who had come back from Panama, joined them in the San Miguel *cuartel*, alternating work shifts. SFC Davidson was sent to San Vicente to augment that OPATT team. The rest of ODA-7 stayed in the *Bosque* and pulled local security; two armed men on guard duty at all times through the election period. SFC Sena and SSG Moosey helped *Sección Dos* construct field-expedient "Claymore" mines to bolster their defense. Metal ammo cans were filled with C3 plastic explosive and machinegun ammo belt links. They used an old car battery to initiate them.⁵⁸

After dinner Sunday night, 25 March, CPT Leeker relaxed the *El Bosque* crew's alert status so the men could take showers and enjoy a slightly cool beer after the *cuartel* generators started up at sundown. Since it was still hot, most men stripped down to shorts and shower sandals before settling in for the evening. However, they would get no rest that night.⁵⁹

About 9:00 P.M., a staccato of small arms fire erupted as occupants in a truck on the Inter-American highway fired their weapons at the main gate of the *cuartel*. "Drive-by" shootings by FMLN mobile teams were common harassment, but this volley was immediately followed by telltale mortar "whump, whump" launching sounds and explosions in the *cuartel*. The generators were immediately shut off and the *cuartel* was plunged into total darkness. All seven SF soldiers in the *Bosque* knew that a major attack was imminent and that they were an ancillary part of the brigade's defense plan.⁶⁰

They hurriedly pulled on combat boots, grabbed weapons, LBE, and ammunition bags, and began moving to their defensive positions. SFC Sena scrambled up



Typical scene of voters waiting in line to vote in the national elections; Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte was the first popularly elected president in El Salvador's history.

into his hole as CPT Leeker and SSG Loyd Palmer, senior radioman off-shift from election watch duties in the *cuartel*, manned theirs. Leeker established communications with LTC Monterrosa. As Palmer began searching the darkness with the other NOD, the SF captain loaded the BAR. That's when the action started.⁶¹

"Staff Sergeant Moosey and I had no sooner gotten onto the rooftop position when it seemed like the entire field directly to our east was suddenly alive with hundreds of guerrillas as they rose up almost simultaneously from the darkened ground. Then they began charging towards us in a massive wave," said SFC Sena. "I warned Captain Leeker as I pointed them out to Pete on the A6 machinegun and yelled, 'Shoot! Shoot! The field is full

the ladder to the rooftop position with SSG Moosey, carrying extra ammunition boxes, close behind. The cacophony of barking dogs all around had grown louder as SFC Reyes jumped into his hole facing the walled fence along the Inter-American highway. SGT Beko checked his emergency treatment bay as he donned his medical vest. Then, he moved outside and dropped into his position at the corner of the building to the left of Reyes. Beko quickly turned on his AN/PVS-2 and began to sweep the area. MSG Dutton got

of them! When his tracers began to illuminate the guerrillas, Moosey poured it into them with the A6. But, the machinegun fire from us began to draw enemy fire from everywhere . . . 360 degrees. Unknowingly, we had disrupted the main attack and were attracting heavy small arms fire. Some of it was coming from the *cuartel*. I was changing ammo boxes like crazy and feeding the gun (the ammo boxes were missing the belt feeder shelf) while the two of us tried to keep our heads down," said Sena.⁶² CPT Leeker requested mortar illumination from the Salvadorans.⁶³

"Then all hell broke loose to the south where the *Sección Dos* manned the perimeter adjacent to the dry streambed, the favorite FMLN attack route," remembered SSG Moosey.⁶⁴ We heard loud explosive 'wham, wham, wham' reports as the homemade 'Claymore' mines were fired by the *Sección Dos* defenders, then the 'chug-chugging' of the BARs kicking in, and finally, the extended 'barup-ppppp' of the A6 light machinegun firing that long belt. Sena and I had helped them to position their 'Claymores' and interlock their A6 and BAR fires. They also followed our advice to whitewash the slanted concrete erosion wall under the bridge on the far side of the streambed. When that white space turned black (because it was filled with massing enemy infiltrators), they were told to fire the 'Claymores' and then cut loose with everything they had," said Moosey. "They did exactly that and the effect was devastating."⁶⁵ The two SF soldiers had no opportunity to cheer as the FMLN began zeroing in on the rooftop machinegun position.

"Moosey, in his boxers, was bitching about the expended brass and ammo links eating into him, when it got real interesting. About eight guerrillas managed to get onto the flat roof of the tractor dealership some fifty meters to our rear. They were determined to remove the major obstacle thwarting their attack. Pete, intently firing the A6, didn't hear the rounds pinging off the roof behind him. I did. Maybe they were hitting closer to me. I stopped balancing the ammo belt to feed the gun and crawled over him to get to our rifles [an M-1 Garand and an H&K G3] leaning against the rear sandbag wall. It was really tight between those two small walls of sandbags. The two of us traded leg kicks as I scooted from left to right to engage those Gs [guerrillas] with semi-automatic fire. It took about fifteen minutes, expending several magazines per gun, before I eliminated that threat. The shooters would pop up from behind a parapet, fire several shots and then drop down. It took a while to figure out their routine. My 'maneuvering' from left to right and right to left was really me clambering back and forth overtop of Pete who was firing the machinegun in the opposite direction," chuckled Sena.⁶⁶

Though the ODA was disrupting the main attack, it did not dissuade the ESAF defenders in the *cuartel*, two hundred meters to the northwest, from firing in the direction of the assaulting FMLN guerrillas. Consequently, a large portion of this fire was inadvertently directed towards the *Bosque*. The low ground in *El Bosque* provided scant



3rd Brigade cuartel front gate adjacent to the Inter-American highway. The FMLN "drive-by" shooting at this gate started the 25 March 1984 attack on the 3rd Brigade cuartel.



Artist rendition of Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena engaging snipers on the rooftops of buildings along the Inter-American Highway to the west while Staff Sergeant Peter Moosey fires into the banana grove where the ESAF junk vehicles had been dumped.

protection from “friendly fire” coming from the *cuartel* 200 meters to the north. The several 81mm mortar illumination rounds fired by the BIRI Arce located in San Miguel proper were insufficient. But, ODA-7 got some “top cover,” courtesy of the U.S. Air Force.

About 11:00 p.m., a U.S. Air Force AC-130 from Howard Air Force Base, Panama, arrived overhead. These aircraft began flying intelligence support missions over El Salvador after General Paul F. Gorman became the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command. The aircraft’s ability to discern enemy personnel groupings and to illuminate their exact locations with infrared light beams proved quite helpful to ODA-7 on the ground. Since the aircrew was unfamiliar with the layout of the *cuartel*, it was up to CPT Leeker, talking with them on the radio, to focus their search efforts. Then Sergeants Beko and Palmer, scanning with the NODs, could direct the A6 machinegun fire appropriately because they could see the AC-130 infrared marking beams. Beko and Palmer were the spotters for the rooftop machinegunners, somewhat masked by the trees. The two sergeants on the ground with NODs adjusted direction and range of the .30 cal tracer rounds according to the trajectory and ground impact points.⁶⁷ But by midnight, the guerrillas had gotten so close to the perimeter that the AC-130 crew could no longer distinguish friendly from enemy. It was at that point that two humorous incidents occurred.

First, CPT Leeker, concerned about their poor observation to the north, called to Palmer for a report about the guerrillas struggling to advance from that direction. After sweeping that sector with his NOD, Palmer called back in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, “They’re all wearing plaid shirts with the top button buttoned!” All of the seven Special Forces troopers erupted in riotous laughter, doubtlessly puzzling their FMLN attackers. A few days earlier the team had received a



Strict rules of engagement prevented use of the AC-130 aircraft weapon systems. The electronic sensors could be used to detect enemy activity. Reports of enemy locations were radioed to Captain Craig Leeker on the ground. Only the Salvadoran Air Force could engage the FMLN.

warning from the MILGP in San Salvador indicating that an FMLN assassin targeting Americans had been sent to the San Miguel area. The “hit man” was known to wear plaid shirts with the top button buttoned.⁶⁸ Obviously, the seven Americans were being attacked by several hundred assassins at the moment.

The second thing to happen was comical and wildly absurd, especially considering that it occurred in the middle of the fight. SSG Moosey, while firing his A6 machinegun, was quite taken aback when he caught sight of a vehicle lumbering down the road from the *cuartel* with a single headlight burning. As it got closer, he realized that it was an armored tracked vehicle, and through the beam of the headlight, he could see enemy small arms fire sparking as it ricocheted off the body. It was a moving bullet magnet. Still, on it lumbered down into the *Bosque* area and stopped alongside the ODA-7 billets. Then, with its engine running and headlight burning, the top hatch opened up, and the vehicle commander began shouting, ‘Gasolinero! Gasolinero!’ to get the fuel pump unlocked. Then, in the midst of incoming small arms fire, ‘Lo and behold,’ the *gasolinero* appeared from out of the dark to explain that the pump would not operate without electricity. With that the commander banged on driver’s hatch to explain the problem. Then, seemingly oblivious to the ongoing fight, the three Salvadoran soldiers proceeded to manually pump fuel into the idling armored vehicle. I was dumbstruck,” said Moosey. “But, that’s not all.”⁶⁹

“When the tank was full, the two crewmen climbed inside, closed their hatches, and with their headlight burning, clanked past Sergeant First Class Reyes and *Sección Dos* into the open field, adjacent to the dry streambed, where the main attack had started. As the vehicle lumbered into the field, you could hear the small arms fire pinging off and watch the tracers ricocheting



The homemade mini-armored vehicle was a "bullet magnet," that valiantly charged into the mouth of the FMLN, fired once, and beat a hasty, ignoble retreat to safety.

into the air. Then, the armored vehicle stopped and fired its .50 cal shielded machinegun. One round erupted and then, silence . . . the headspace and timing had not been adjusted on the heavy gun. The silence lasted about five seconds before every FMLN in the area began firing at the armored car silhouetted by its single headlight. You could hear gears grinding as the driver tried to reverse and escape. Fearing that the armored vehicle would be 'bum rushed' by the FMLN nearby, I put a steady stream of A6 fire behind it while Sena did the same in front with his G3. Then, back they came to the *Bosque* trailing small arms fire. They lumbered past us, up the road, and back into the *base*," said Moosey. "It was so surreal that we questioned whether it actually happened afterwards. But it did, because three days later we set the headspace and timing on that .50 cal. and the crew thanked us for saving their butts."⁷⁰

The M-1919A6 had been fired so much that it was becoming sluggish. The barrel was overheated and the headspace had to be adjusted. SFC Sena and SSG Moosey did not have a spare barrel. Motor oil was poured onto the bolt and barrel extension to lubricate it enough to remove the short flash hider to adjust the headspace—backing the barrel off a few clicks. The flash hider and barrel were red hot. While Moosey was delicately doing this with his tee shirt wrapped around an adjustable wrench, Sena returned fire with the rifles, tossed empty ammo boxes off the roof, accepted more ammo and water from MSG Dutton, and swept spent shell casings and belt links on his buddies below. As soon as Moosey finished the adjustment, Sena began reloading the hot machinegun.⁷¹ That was when CPT Leeker detected another major threat approaching the open field.

The AC-130 had spotted three trucks moving in convoy from San Miguel. The aircrew reported that the trucks were bringing heavy machineguns. CPT Leeker was no sooner alerted than he spotted a convoy of three trucks, headlights burning, heading east towards the *cuartel* just approaching the edge of the open field. Sena and Moosey, intently working on the A6, had not noticed the vehicles coming. Leeker shouted the type of threat and direction to the two men on the roof. "Shoot them! Shoot them! Take them out!" he yelled up.⁷² SFC Sena, behind the machinegun, waved Moosey aside, swung the barrel and engaged the lead five-ton truck with a steady stream of tracer fire. First, one headlight was knocked out, then the other, as Sena raked the first truck with fire. Amazingly, the other two trucks kept their headlights on. When Sena extended the trajectory of his fire to arc a stream of tracer bullets into the other two trucks, the rest of the detachment and *Sección Dos* joined in. "On the roof I felt the shock wave when the BAR and the G3s cut loose. A huge dust cloud rose up in front of the team positions," recalled SSG Moosey.⁷³ (Note: Burnout for .30 cal tracer rounds was about 400 meters.) Only small fires started by the tracers lingered to mark the devastation. Movement and firing around the trucks had ceased. From that point on, there was only sporadic small arms fire. That steadily diminished, ending as the dawn approached.⁷⁴

That was fortunate because the A6 machinegun barrel was "shot." Its well-directed firepower had been instrumental in the disruption and defeat of several hundred guerrillas.⁷⁵ While protecting themselves, the seven Special Forces soldiers of ODA-7 acquitted themselves well. LTC Monterrosa came down to the *Bosque* shortly after daybreak to "look around" as two ESAF A-37s swept overhead searching for the withdrawing FMLN columns. When the Salvadoran commander saw the piles of machinegun belt links and spent brass below the rooftop position, he said to CPT Leeker with a grin, "So, my guys got a little help last night," and left.⁷⁶

The Salvadoran presidential election had taken place as scheduled on 25 March 1984. But, it would be the 6 May 1984 runoff that elected José Napoleon Duarte president.⁷⁷ When the American ambassador, Thomas Pickering, visited San Miguel on Monday, 26 March, ODA-7 was maintaining a very low profile while it prepared to start training the conscripts of the third *Cazador* battalion, *León*, the next day.⁷⁸ The failed attack on San Miguel and the inability of the FMLN to disrupt the election



The WWII-era M-1919A6 light machinegun was capable of firing 600 rounds of .30 cal ammunition per minute.



Cazador León
battalion
shoulder patch



Christian Democrat presidential candidate José Napoleón Duarte



ARENA presidential candidate Roberto D'Aubuisson

were major setbacks after months of dominating the battlefield in Morazán and San Miguel. This was especially notable since the *cuartel* was being guarded by little more than a company on 25–26 March 1984. Most significantly, when the ODA-7 SUTT left San Miguel on 27 April 1984, that marked the finale for Special Forces MTT training of ESAF elements in country.⁷⁹

Contrary to what many Special Forces soldiers in Panama believed following the return of ODA-7, their defensive actions at *El Bosque* had no bearing on the termination of MTTs to El Salvador. By early 1984, the

FMLN newspaper photos were "doctored" to highlight guerrilla atrocities and win popular support for the government of El Salvador.

ESTE ES
EL QUE ASESINA,
ROBA, DESTRUYE Y
SECUESTRA A TU
FAMILIA.

EL QUE
QUIERE VIOLENCIA

TU ENEMIGO

SACALO DE TU COMUNIDAD
Denuncia donde se esconde
Tu familia tiene Derecho a estar Unida

expanded ESAF had been trained using Special Forces MTTs and units. Having helped the Salvadoran military survive the desperation period, the MILGP shifted its approach to sustain that momentum. COL Stringham had expanded the OPATT program to stabilize support and institute planning at the brigades as well as in the *Estado Mayor* staff sections. With the "force cap" in effect, this new approach allowed him to bring humanitarian (medical) and logistics support teams, which were critical to sustainment.⁸⁰ It was the beginning of a new MILGP military training philosophy designed to assist the Salvadoran Armed Forces to better wage their fight against insurgency. The "KISS" principle had been expanded and modified to "KISSSS" or "Keep It Simple, Sustainable, Small, and Salvadoran."⁸¹

This article revealed many overlooked aspects associated with expanding and sustaining a military built and rebuilt almost annually with conscripted citizens. While battalion names did not change, the personnel turnover in the units was almost 90 percent every year. U.S.-trained units had short lives, especially after 1984, yet the liberal U.S. and international media continued to blame American training for human rights abuses and to hold the MILGP and U.S. Embassy in San Salvador responsible.⁸² Since that label (U.S.-trained unit) was never refuted nor eliminated, it was perpetuated in revisionist histories

and is regularly used by media today to "explain" debacles by indigenous defense and police forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Uncertainty associated with annual U.S. military aid levels naturally caused the ESAF to hoard arms, ammunition, and supplies to cover lean years.⁸³ Resourceful SF NCOs at San Miguel doubled the firepower of LTC Monterrosa's 3rd Brigade by refurbishing WWII-vintage .30 cal BARs and M-1919A6 machine-guns. They also capitalized on unused "Starlight scopes" to spot massing enemy forces on a non-illuminated battlefield. ODA-7, while defending themselves, put a serious dent in FMLN ranks around San Miguel in 1984⁸⁴. Force protection cannot be over-emphasized when typical Special Forces ODAs of seven to ten stalwarts are regularly working alone in "Indian Country" worldwide. 7th SFG operational detachments did return to El Salvador in 1989, as Deployments for Training, but that practice ended with the November 1989 Offensive. ♣



U.S. government support of El Salvador during its thirteen-year counterinsurgency war was not popular on university and college campuses in America as shown by these button pins.

Endnotes

- 1 Colonel John D. Waghelstein, "El Salvador: Observations and Experiences in Counterinsurgency," paper for U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1985, Annex F, F-1, F-2. Colonel Joseph Stringham, the former 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger commander, served two years in Vietnam with Special Forces from 1963–1965 [XO ODA 725, Montagnard CIDG (Civilian Irregular Defense Group), Detachment Commander, ODA 301, and III Corps Mike Force] before serving a third tour with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade (Separate).
- 2 Iván C. Montecinos, *NO HAY GUERRA QUE DURE CIEN AÑOS...: El Salvador 1979–1992* (San Salvador: Algier's Impresores, 1993), 149, hereafter Montecinos, *NO HAY GUERRA*.
- 3 David E. Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America* (Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 88–90. Spencer's account, based on Greg Walker, "Sapper Attack!" *Behind the Lines*, July/August 1993, and Greg Walker, "Blue Badges of Honor," *Soldier of Fortune*, February 1992, is quite inaccurate. His date of 6 May 1984 is totally incorrect. The USAF aircraft overhead on 25–26 March 1984 was an AC-130, not an EC-130. ODA-7 did not have "some M-60 machine guns and M-16/M203 grenade launchers." And, the SF soldiers did not urinate on their guns "to cool them down." Author, based on numerous interviews with ODA-7 team members.
- 4 Sergeant Major (Retired) Peter J. Moosey, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 3 April 2007, Colorado Springs, CO, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Captain Rodger Kenneth Garrett (formerly Sergeant Kenneth Rodger Beko), interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 19 May 2007, Tierra Verde, FL, digital recording.
- 5 Garrett interview, 19 May 2007.
- 6 "At our first meeting, Ambassador Pickering told me that if I allowed the number of military trainers to exceed the 55-man limit, I would be 'canned.' We counted heads every day and I had to make a formal report of compliance to the ambassador or deputy chief of mission every Friday afternoon at 1700," recalled Stringham. Brigadier General (Retired) Joseph S. Stringham III, notes to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 June 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as Stringham notes, 21 June 2007; Command Sergeant Major (Retired) LeRoy R. Sena, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 March 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Command Sergeant Major (Retired) LeRoy R. Sena, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 6 June 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 7 Stringham notes, 21 June 2007. "My philosophy was that if they're armed, they could shoot! We immediately taught them how to load and fire their weapons so they could defend themselves. I'd worry about aimed fire and marksmanship later. We taught them basic survival skills. Then, I had them dig holes around their perimeter. When their *cabo* blew his whistle, they knew enough to grab their weapons and get in the holes," said Leeker. Colonel (Retired) Craig W. Leeker, telephone interview with Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 June 2007, Arlington, VA, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 8 Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.
- 9 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey e-mail, 25 June 2007.
- 10 Howard I. Blutstein, Elinor C. Betters, John Cobb Jr., Jonathan A. Leonard, and Charles M. Townsend, *El Salvador: A Country Study*, Department of Army Pamphlet 550-150, Washington, DC: The American University, 1979, 28, 38, 51, hereafter cited as Blutstein et al, *El Salvador*.
- 11 Blutstein et al, *El Salvador*, 28, 38.
- 12 Blutstein et al, *El Salvador*, 29.
- 13 Blutstein et al, *El Salvador*, 36.
- 14 Blutstein et al, *El Salvador*, 39.
- 15 Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey U. Cole, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 28 June 2007, subject: San Miguel, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 16 Master Sergeant (Retired) Allen B. Hazlewood, telephone interview by Dr.

Captain Craig Leeker (left) and ODA-7 stand behind his defensive position in El Bosque on 26 March 1984. The rooftop position was directly behind and above the group. Front left to right: Captain Leeker, Staff Sergeant Peter Moosey, Sergeant David Janicki (holding FMLN armband), Sergeant First Class Jorge Reyes, and Sergeant Kenneth Beko; Rear left to right: Sergeant First Class LeRoy Sena, Staff Sergeant Gary Davidson, Master Sergeant Rodney Dutton, and Staff Sergeant Loyd Palmer. Notice all the spent cartridges on the ground.



Charles H. Briscoe, 20 March 2007, Miami, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Captain Rodger Kenneth Garrett, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 19 June 2007, subject: San Miguel 1984, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

17 When the 3rd Brigade was installed in San Miguel, the DM-4 in San Francisco de Gotera was organizationally subordinated to the brigade. However, it continued to be the center of military authority in the department. This complicated operational coordination in the region. Colonel (Retired) Cecil E. Bailey, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 19 June 2007, subject: San Miguel 1984, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

18 Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 86.

19 Brigadier General (Retired) Joseph S. Stringham, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 29 May 2007, Woodville, AL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Cecil E. Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisers in El Salvador," *Special Warfare* (December 2004), 18-19; Waghelstein, "El Salvador: Observations and Experiences in Counterinsurgency," F-1, F-2.

20 The Venezuelan Army MTT was withdrawn abruptly after a U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense let it slip that the South Americans had been asked to help the ESAF and that this did not violate the Congressionally-mandated 55-man force cap. The resultant adverse international press caused the Venezuelan government to withdraw the MTT. Colonel (Retired) John D. Waghelstein, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 20 June 2007, subject: San Miguel 1984, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

21 Colonel Joseph S. Stringham, interview by Colonel Charles A. Carlton, 29 May 1985, Carlisle Barracks, PA, U.S. Army War College/U.S. Army Military History Institute Oral History Program, Carlisle Barracks, PA, transcription, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel (Retired) John D. Waghelstein, telephone interview by Colonel (Retired) Cecil E. Bailey, Annapolis, MD, 23 October 2003, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. The Venezuelan Army trained three *Cazador* battalions in the western departments of Santa Ana and Ahuachapan. The Venezuelans were pleased to help the Salvadorans, at U.S. urging, as a gesture of thanks for assistance provided to them during their fight against a Cuban-supported insurgency in the 1960s. It was the 8th Special Forces Group in Panama that provided the training. They organized and trained a conscript-filled force. Sergeant First Class (Retired) Jerald L. Peterson, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 6 April 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

22 Colonel (Retired) Rudolph M. Jones, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 3 August 2006, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Jorge M. Reyes, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 2 May 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. The period of obligatory service was twenty-four months by law. The practice was to keep the conscripted soldier in uniform for only twelve months. Under U.S. pressure, as the war wore on, the period of uniformed service was pushed to twenty-four months. Max G. Manwaring and Courtney Prisk, eds. *El Salvador At War: An Oral History of the Conflict from the 1979 Insurrection to the Present* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 295.

23 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Stringham interview, 29 May 2007.

24 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

25 Garrett interview, 19 May 2007; Colonel (Retired) Hugh Scruggs, e-mail to Dr. Briscoe, 13 July 2007, subject: San Miguel Article for Veritas, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

26 "SFC LeRoy Sena conducted his "Gun-a-Rama" every Sunday while ODA-7 was in country. It kept everyone proficient, demonstrated to the ESAF that we could really shoot, and served as a psychological deterrent to the FMLN sympathizers." Garrett interview, 19 May 2007; Sergeant Major (Retired) Peter J. Moosey and Captain Rodger Kenneth Garrett (formerly Sergeant Kenneth Rodger Beko), interview with Dr. Briscoe, 20 May 2007, Tierra Verde, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

27 Sergeant Major (Retired) Rodney F. Dutton, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 17 April 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. This SUTT deployment shows the difficulties associated with supporting MTTs rotating in and out of El Salvador. The 55-man "force cap" governed the size and composition of MTTs. Special Forces composite teams were formed to fit the mission and time frame requested by the MILGP. ODAs were rarely deployed as organic entities, but were composed of soldiers with the military and language skills needed. Lieutenant Colonel Peter Stankovich, who followed Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Scruggs as the 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG commander, only wanted to know who the detachment commander and team sergeant were. They were the constants on composite teams. Colonel (Retired) Craig W. Leeker, interview by Colonel (Retired) Cecil Bailey, 17 July 2003, Arlington, VA, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel (Retired) Craig W. Leeker, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 19 June 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel (Retired) Craig W. Leeker, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 20 June 2007, subject: San Miguel 1984, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

28 Reyes interview, 2 May 2007.

29 Garrett e-mail, 19 June 2007.

30 Per USMILGP policy, the "two-man rule" applied to Americans throughout El Salvador. To stay at San Miguel cuartel during the Christmas holidays, SSG Studley remained with CPT Leeker. Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

31 Garrett interview, 19 May 2007.

32 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007; Leeker interview, 17 July 2003; Stringham interview, 29 May 2007.

33 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

34 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

35 Professional Soldado Juan Antonio Gómez, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 19 July 2007, San Salvador, El Salvador, personal notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

36 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007; Leeker interview, 19 June 2007.

37 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Dutton interview, 17 April 2007; Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

38 Many of the *chucas* (second enlistment soldiers) were former Nicaraguan soldiers from Somoza's *Guardia Nacional*, who had escaped automatic imprisonment by the *Sandinistas*. The 3rd Brigade *Cazador* was the first battalion trained by the Venezuelans in 1982, and the *chucas* were extremely proud of this. Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

39 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007. Despite the land mine incident (actually a series of pressure-detонated mines) on the San Miguel airstrip in mid-February 1984, the ESAF did not guard the site, "sweep" the runway daily for mines, nor patrol in its vicinity. Thus, about three weeks later, an ESAF C-123 Provider twin-engine transport delivering the national election ballot boxes was ambushed in the same way. That was a serious loss. Colonel (Retired) René Magaña, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 22 July 2007, San Salvador, El Salvador, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007; Moosey e-mail, 25 June 2007. Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador*, 87-88.

40 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

41 The date of the C-123 ambush is cited erroneously in Montecinos, *NO HAY GUERRA*, 81; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

42 Leeker interview, 17 July 2003; Leeker interview, 19 June 2007; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Garrett and Moosey interview, 20 May 2007. Each night Sergeant First Class Sena, Staff Sergeant Moosey, and Sergeants Beko and Janicki rotated the duty of checking the timing and barrel calibration of the ESAF A6s and BARs of the Security Battalion manning the perimeter.

43 Ambassador Thomas Pickering insisted that Colonel Stringham get the Operations and Planning Assistance Training Teams (OPATT) identified, deployed, and in place for the March elections. Since it was impossible to cover all brigades in the time left, 3/7 SFG personnel were brought down TDY to serve as election observers. Stringham interview, 29 May 1985; Garrett interview, 19 May 2007.

44 Sena interview, 27 March 2007. Command Sergeant Major Sena served two tours in Vietnam. Both were classified special operations assignments. The second tour with Command and Control North, Military Advisory Command, Vietnam-Special Operations Group, he served on Reconnaissance Teams Cobra, Rhode Island, and Rattler.

45 Hazelwood interview, 20 March 2007; Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador*, 86; Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Magaña interview, 22 July 2007; Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) René Alcides Rodríguez Hurtado, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 July 2007, San Salvador, El Salvador, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

46 Master Sergeant (Retired) William Strobel, e-mail to Colonel (Retired) Cecil Bailey, 11 December 2003, subject: *Cazadores* in El Salvador, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel (Retired) Kevin Higgins, e-mail to Colonel (Retired) Cecil Bailey, 1 May 2003, subject: Monterrosa and *Cazadores*, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Though more *Cazador* battalions were created than any other type infantry battalion to satisfy U.S. aid quotas, they were no match for the well-armed and equipped 600-man battalions being fielded by the

FMLN in northern Morazán and Chalatenango in late 1982. Stringham interview, 29 May 1985.

47 Magaño interview, 22 July 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

48 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

49 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

50 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007. The *Estado Mayor* did not have secure radio and telephone communications with either the ESAF brigade *cuartel* or the *DM* (*destacamento militares*) *cuartel*s in each military district until 1987. A system of thirty-nine radio-telephone microwave relay towers to provide communications was completed in 1985. These relay towers, typically positioned on remote mountaintops like the one near Perquin in Morazán, were constantly attacked by the FMLN to disrupt communications. Their security was part of the National Campaign Plan. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Richard R. Pérez, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 9 February 2007, Tampa, FL, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

51 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

52 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

53 Colonel Stringham realized that he was keeping ODA-7 in a highly contested zone, yet thought it necessary to strengthen the command in the east during the election period. Stringham interview, 29 May 1985; Dutton interview, 17 April 2007; Reyes interview, 2 May 2007.

54 Stringham interview, 29 May 2007; Stringham notes, 20 June 2007. The DePuy fighting position was designed by then Major General William DePuy, 1st Infantry Division commander in Vietnam, to prevent American Fire Bases from being overrun by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attackers. Adopted by the senior leadership, it was promulgated Army-wide in defense doctrine in the early 1980s.

55 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

56 Leeker interview, 19 June 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

57 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

58 Sergeant Major (Retired) Peter J. Moosey, e-mail to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 June 2007, subject: San Miguel 1984, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Garrett interview, 19 May 2007.

59 Moosey e-mail, 18 June 2007; Dutton interview, 17 April 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

60 Sena interview, 27 March 2007.

61 Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

62 Sena interview, 27 March 2007.

63 Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

64 Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

65 Moosey e-mail, 18 June 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

66 Sena interview, 27 March 2007.

67 Captain Craig Leeker was talking to the AC-130 from *El Bosque*, but the aircrew's unfamiliarity with the *cuartel* made passing information to the Americans below difficult. Leeker interview, 19 June 2007; Moosey and Garrett interview, 20 May 2007.

68 Master Sergeant Peter J. Moosey, C Co, 3/7th SFG, Fort Davis, Panama, APO 34005, memorandum, 15 June 1994, subject: Significant Events in El Salvador, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

69 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

70 Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

71 Moosey e-mail, 20 June 2007. "Headspace can be adjusted from the breach under ideal conditions, but without the proper tool and with the gun so hot, I removed the flash-hider to get access to the muzzle. The conical flash-hider is not a suppressor; it doesn't do more than cover some of the flash. Held in place by a tension spring attached to a post it is difficult to remove when hot. The barrel muzzle is flat on two sides. An adjustable wrench can be used to adjust the barrel. The barrel was smoking like a charcoal barbecue grill. But, motor oil was the only lubricant we had. LSA in El Salvador was nonexistent. After I got the flash-hider off, I couldn't replace it, nor did I have the time because SFC LeRoy Sena was already firing." Moosey e-mail, 25 June 2007. Contrary to Greg Walker's account in *Behind the Lines* (July/August 1993), "Sapper Attack!" 9, perpetuated as truth in Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador*, 89, neither SFC Sena nor SSG Moosey, "urinated in the [empty oil] cans and then poured this over the guns" as an expedient method to keep them from overheating. Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

72 "The AC-130 'spotted' the guerrillas north of the *cuartel* using burros to carry the .50 cal machineguns and ammunition boxes. The aircraft 'tracked' the group and watched them transfer the weapons and ammunition to three five-ton trucks just north of the city. They were easy to follow because the three vehicles were driving with their headlights on. Anyone with any sense drove with their lights on [at] night because [the] roads in El Salvador were in such poor condition. You'd have been crazy not to." Leeker interview, 19 June 2007.

73 Leeker interview, 19 June 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007; Moosey e-mail to Briscoe, subject: San Miguel, 25 June 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

74 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

75 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007. Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador*, 89.

76 Leeker interview, 21 June 2007.

77 Federal Research Division, Online Country Study, El Salvador. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?r?frd@cstdy:@field\(DOCID+sv0093\).](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?r?frd@cstdy:@field(DOCID+sv0093).)

78 Sena interview, 27 March 2007; Moosey interview, 3 April 2007.

79 Actually, one more SF SUTT MTT deployed to El Salvador as a composite team. Captain William Ball and Master Sergeant Juri Stepheniak arrived at San Vicente with a team composed of ODA 783 and 784 soldiers. This composite element replaced ODA 783 to train units after the Operation *Bienstar* concluded. Leeker interview, 17 July 2003.

80 Stringham interview, 29 May 2007. With standardized battalion training programmed for the CREM, Stringham saw little point in continuing to commit as much manpower to Special Forces MTTs. Future MTTs would have to be selective and promise a high return. Establishing an advisory presence in the ESAF brigades revived the brigade Operations and Planning Assistance Training Team (OPATT) of 1981. Colonel (Retired) James Roach, e-mail to COL (Retired) Cecil Bailey, 11 April 2003, subject: OPATTs in El Salvador, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

81 Tommie Sue Montgomery, "Fighting Guerrillas: The United States and Low-Intensity Conflict in El Salvador," *New Political Science* (Fall/Winter 1990), 29, cited in Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 85.

82 John D. Waghelstein, "El Salvador and the Press: A Personal Account," *Parameters*, Autumn 1985, 67-68, 70.

83 Stringham interview, 29 May 1985.

84 Leeker interview, 19 June 2007; Sena interview, 22 January 2004; The valiant defensive actions of Captain Leeker and ODA-7 (four Bronze Stars for Valor) on 25-26 March 1984, and the individual bravery of Sergeant Beko (Army Commendation Medal for Valor) at the San Miguel airstrip on February 1984 were recognized fourteen years later at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (June 1998). Special Forces soldiers not previously awarded a Combat Infantryman Badge and Combat Medic Badge received them for El Salvador during the same ceremony.



(L) MAJ Rene Alcides Hurtado Rodríguez, FAES Airborne Company Commander, and (R) LTC Domingo Monterossa, 3rd Brigade Commander, at Ciudad Barrios.

The 151st Airborne Tank Company at Camp Mackall, NC

by Troy J. Sacquety

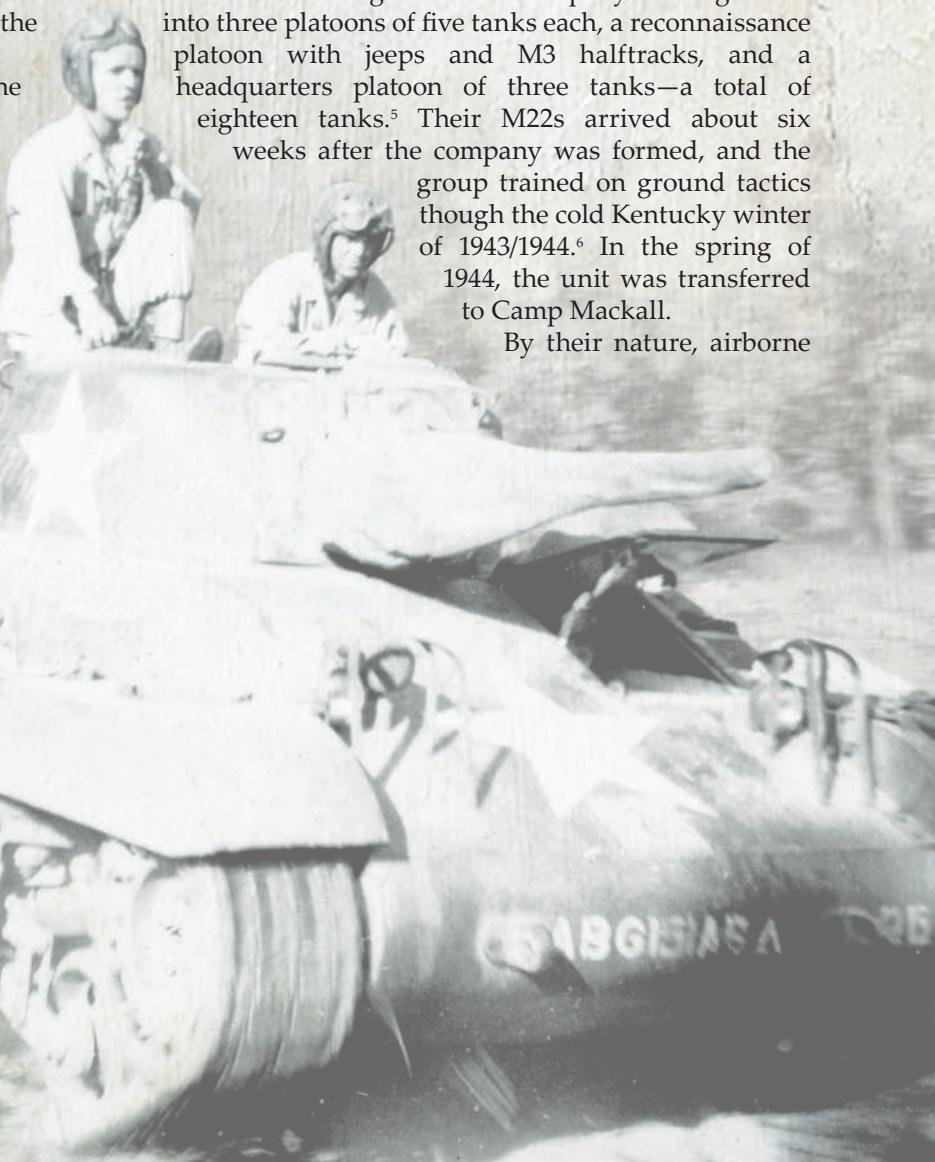
CAMP Mackall, North Carolina, now a training center for Army Special Operations Forces, was the headquarters of the U.S. Army Airborne Command during World War II. Several airborne divisions trained there, notably the 11th, 13th, and 17th Airborne. Airborne forces were still in their infancy in World War II, and the United States did all that it could to increase their potency. The Army established the Airborne Test Board at Camp Mackall to evaluate airborne tactics, techniques, and equipment. Sometimes these experiments were unusual. The acquisition of a veteran's photographs revealed a nearly forgotten experiment at Camp Mackall: the 151st Airborne Tank Company.

Formed at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in May 1943, the 151st Airborne Tank Company was to provide airborne forces with an organic armor capability.³ The unit was not meant to engage enemy tanks, but instead was an attempt to give airborne units at least a semblance of being able to fight off enemy probes with something other than light anti-tank weapons. The M22 tanks of the 151st were to be delivered to the field via gliders or belly-slung under a C-54 cargo aircraft.⁴ Neither method proved practical. The largest glider in U.S. Army service,

the CG-13, was not large enough to accommodate the M22. The tank was eventually abandoned for consideration in combat operations by the U.S. Army.

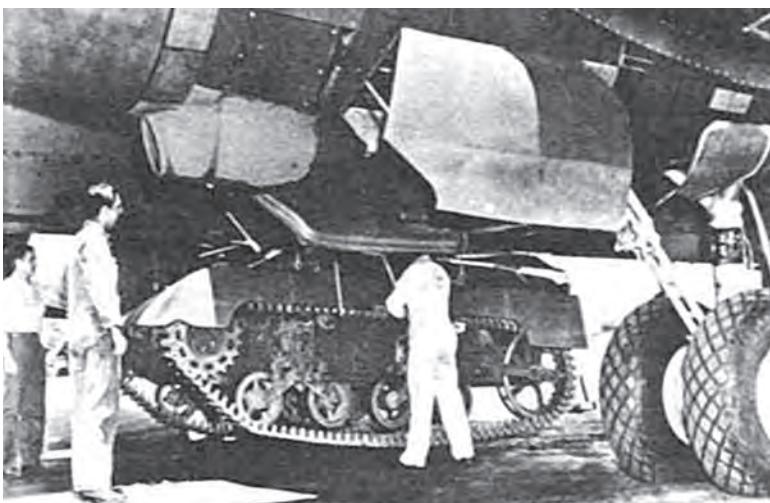
The 151st was commanded by Captain Felix Hege; four other officers and fifty enlisted men were assigned as cadre.² Early members of the 151st joined from various armor units in training around the United States. Private Roger Justesen joined because of the extra incentive pay that the "airborne" tankers received.³ Another 120 enlisted recruits, many from Iowa, served to fill the remaining slots.⁴ The company was organized into three platoons of five tanks each, a reconnaissance platoon with jeeps and M3 halftracks, and a headquarters platoon of three tanks—a total of eighteen tanks.⁵ Their M22s arrived about six weeks after the company was formed, and the group trained on ground tactics though the cold Kentucky winter of 1943/1944.⁶ In the spring of 1944, the unit was transferred to Camp Mackall.

By their nature, airborne

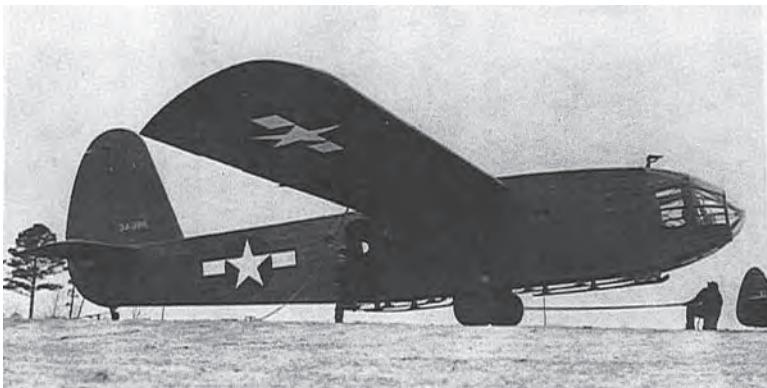




The C-54 Skymaster could be used to deliver M22 tanks to the field.



An M22 belly-slung under a C-54 cargo aircraft. This method of transport required that the turret be removed and placed inside the aircraft while in transit.



The CG-13 glider was the largest used by the U.S. Army. Its use in combat was very limited. Despite its size, it could not carry the M22 tank.

units—especially in WWII—were lightly armed. Their mission was to seize and hold an objective until more heavily armed and supported regular Army units arrived. Before this link-up, the greatest threat that an isolated airborne unit could face was an enemy armor force. This possibility was greatly feared in WWII. Although the Japanese were not great proponents of tank warfare and, as such, did not have very capable tanks, the



A soldier firing the M1A1 "Bazooka". "The rockets simply bounced off the sides of the German tank vehicle or exploded to no effect unless it hit an opening or perhaps just the right angle of a track to disable it" recalled SGT Douglas Dillard of the 551st PIB (Parachute Infantry Battalion).

Germans had large and well-trained armor units. Their tank development was years ahead of the Allies.

For much of the war, U.S. airborne forces only had limited means at their disposal to protect against armor attack. Hand-held weapons included various grenades and the Rocket Launcher, M1A1, commonly known as the "Bazooka." Introduced in 1942, the M1A1 fired an eight-pound M6 2.36-inch rocket that had an effective range of 300 yards. The rocket had a hollow shaped-charge that—under ideal circumstances—could penetrate up to four inches of vertical armor plate. But late in the war, the M1A1 proved relatively ineffective against the thick, angled armor of German heavy tanks.

This was not a failing of the airborne, because the Army had largely ignored anti-tank warfare. Although tanks had been used in WWI, the interwar French, British, and U.S. militaries employed them as infantry support. It wasn't until 1939, after the German Blitzkrieg in Poland, that the U.S. Army took a 37mm German anti-tank (AT) gun design and reengineered it as the M3. It was fielded in 1940. Still, by doctrine, these AT guns were to support infantry divisions. The fall of France and the Low Countries in 1940 forced the Allies to take notice that tanks employed en masse could punch holes through enemy defenses that were then exploited by following



11th Airborne SSI



17th Airborne SSI



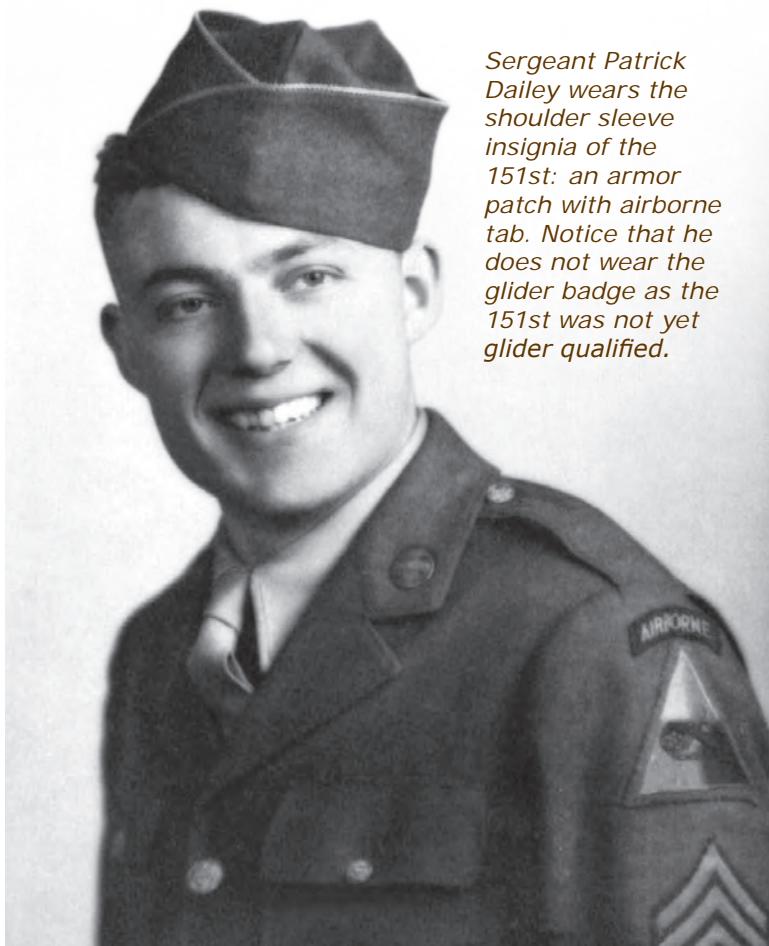
13th Airborne SSI



The CG-4A Waco glider was the basic U.S. Army glider of WWII. This example, being loaded by OSS Detachment 101 in Burma, has the nose flipped open to allow easier access.



M3 37mm Anti-Tank gun. This was the basic U.S. Army airborne anti-tank weapon for the early war period.



Sergeant Patrick Dalley wears the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 151st: an armor patch with airborne tab. Notice that he does not wear the glider badge as the 151st was not yet glider qualified.

infantry. However, the U.S. stop-gap solution to counter this was to rapidly equip their formations with anti-tank guns. The German armor improved throughout the war whereas U.S. counter-measures, improved AT guns, tank destroyers, and better tanks, came slowly. Unfortunately, pre-war thinking and capabilities dominated what was supplied to the Army's airborne forces.

Airborne units were also equipped with towed anti-tank guns. These, along with a jeep to tow them, were to be delivered to the drop zone via CG-4A Waco gliders (see Troy J. Sacquety's "The CG-4A Waco Glider" in *Veritas* 3:2). The standard anti-tank gun in U.S. service at the beginning of the war was the 37mm M3. Its small size meant that it was already obsolete when it entered service and the gun could not effectively engage anything but softskinned vehicles or the smallest of tanks. Although it remained in use in the Pacific throughout the war, its utility in Europe was severely limited by the larger German armor. By 1944, attempts were being made to replace it with the larger British-made 57mm M1 anti-tank gun, although this too was only a stop-gap measure to use a weapons system that had already been developed. The airborne forces needed a new capability.

In 1941, to complement these weapons, several manufacturers were asked by the Army to develop an air-transportable tank. The design submitted by the



The headquarters sign for the 151st Airborne Tank Company at Fort Knox, Kentucky.



The M22 had three crewmen: a driver in the hull, and a commander/loader and gunner in the turret.



M22s in the motor pool at Camp Mackall, NC.

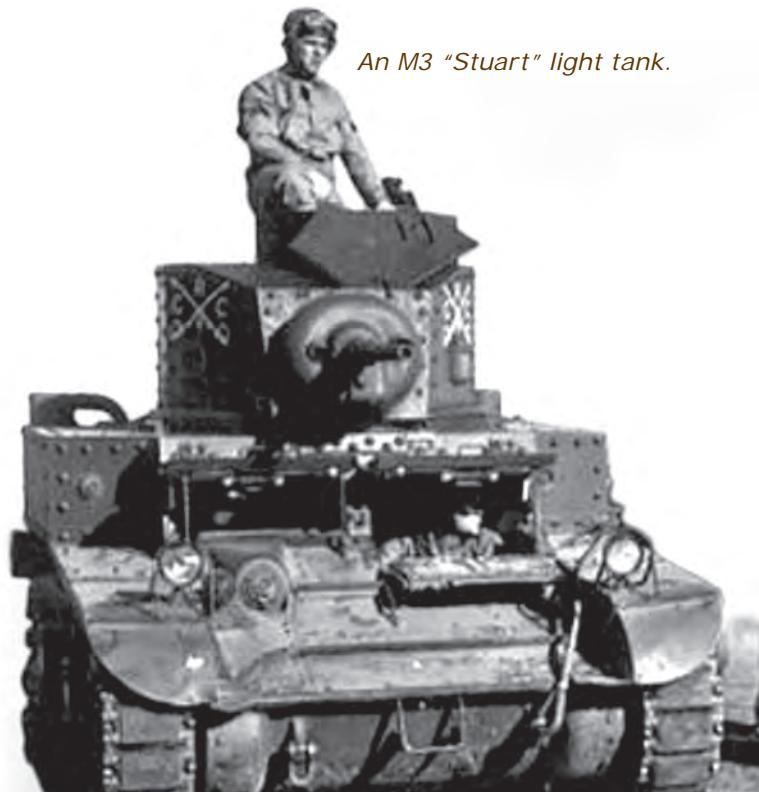


The M22's 37mm main gun fired the small shell held in the crewman's hand. Such shells would have had little effect on German armor.

Marmon-Herrington Corporation of Indianapolis, Indiana, was chosen and designated the T9E1. In U.S. Army nomenclature, it was named the M22, and was known in British parlance as the "Locust." More than 800 of these tanks were built from April 1943 to February 1944. The M22, crewed by three, was less than thirteen feet long and weighed just under eight tons. In comparison, an M4 Sherman medium tank, crewed by five, was nineteen feet long and weighed thirty-three tons. The M22 was lightly armed with a 37mm M3 as the main gun (a variant of the M3 anti-tank gun) and a .30 caliber machinegun. It carried fifty rounds of 37mm and 2,500 rounds of machinegun ammunition. The strengths of the M22 were speed (35 mph), a low profile that made it a difficult target, and an operational range of over one hundred miles. In reality, the tank was not capable of engaging anything but the lightest of enemy vehicles. Yet it could serve as an effective mobile pill box for infantry protection or assault.⁷

The problem with the M1A1, M3, and M22 was that, like U.S. anti-tank warfare, they had not kept pace with German armor development. At the time of their design, the main tanks in German service were the *Panzerkampfwagen I* and *Panzerkampfwagen II*. Only limited numbers of *Panzerkampfwagen III*s and *Panzerkampfwagen IV*s were then in use. This rapidly changed. By 1943, an up-gunned and up-armored *Panzerkampfwagen IV* was the main German battle-tank, and large numbers of *Panther* and *Tiger* tanks were entering service. By 1944, the Germans were fielding even heavier tanks and tank destroyers. American anti-tank weapons simply could not compete against these new armor vehicles.

American tanks could do little better. Among the main types of tanks in U.S. service, the M3 "Stuart," was armed with only a 37mm main gun developed from



An M3 "Stuart" light tank.



The Panzerkampfwagen II was used in large numbers for the invasions of Poland in 1939 and France in 1940. It was to counter tanks like the Panzerkampfwagen I and Panzerkampfwagen II that the U.S. M3 anti-tank gun was developed.



The Panzerkampfwagen IV had the added protection of armor sideskirts. Measures like these greatly increased the tanks' protection against anti-tank weapons.

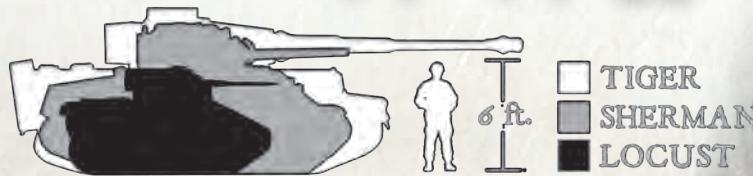


The Panther tank was intended to replace the Panzerkampfwagen IV. It was heavily armored, had sloped armor that decreased its vulnerability, and had a high-velocity 75mm main gun with tremendous penetrating power.



The M4, more popularly known as the Sherman, was the standard U.S. Army medium-tank of the war. It was produced in large numbers and was easy to maintain, but was it out-classed both in armor and armament by many German tanks.

Tanks of WWII



The Tiger tank, armed with an 88mm main gun, was the most feared German tank of WWII, although several later designs were more heavily armored. The Tiger armament and armor completely outclassed American and British tanks, but they were difficult to mass produce, consumed large quantities of scarce gasoline, and were maintenance intensive.





Front view of the M22 showing the 37mm main gun and .30 cal. machinegun in the turret. The driver's viewing port is raised.



An M22 coming out of a Hamilcar glider. The British used limited numbers of Hamilcar-delivered M22s in Operation VARSITY.



A "company street" at Camp Mackall, North Carolina with tarpaper-covered barracks buildings.



Pvt. William Rasbold sits in a jeep of the 151st Reconnaissance Platoon at Camp Mackall, 1944. Of interest is the unit designation on the front bumper, Airborne Command 151st Airborne Tank (ABC-151ABΔ).

the M3 anti-tank weapon. It was completely inadequate against any German tank it might meet. The United States needed heavier tanks. Even later in the war, after being fitted with a larger gun, the main American battle tank, the M4 Sherman with a 76mm gun, was no match for the German tanks coming into service.⁸ Despite being horribly outclassed while it was on the drawing board, operational tests with the M22 continued.

When they arrived at Mackall, the non-glider qualified tankers wore their pants bloused airborne style. This caused quite a stir among the airborne troopers already training at Mackall. "Many an altercation took place."⁹ S/SGT Gabriele Sciabarasi, a 151st veteran, later mused, "The airborne didn't like us and they resented us due to the fact that we weren't jumpers but bloused our boots and wore the airborne [tab] in town. We got into fights and had bloody noses . . . nobody got killed . . . they just had fun, it was a rivalry."¹⁰ Rasbold remembers that Camp Mackall was rustic, had lots of sand, and that "police call" and "pine needles" occupied their time. He remembered that the tar paper barracks were heated with a single pot-belly iron stove, and were so cold that when someone went on leave, the remaining soldiers would inch their bunks that much closer to the stove to savor its heat.¹¹

Most of the unit's time at Camp Mackall was spent on field exercises. Sciabarasi recalled that other than in town, there was "no intermingling with other troops at Mackall. We were more or less like a secret organization—there was not a lot of publicity on us." Referring to the British use of airborne tanks in the Normandy Invasion on 6 June 1944, he added, "We were supposed to have been a surprise unit but the English spoiled it."¹² The group mainly exercised apart from the airborne and glider units at Camp Mackall. Occasionally, they would split the company in two and maneuver against one another.¹³

In September 1944, the 151st members received their glider wings for training in the CG-4A Waco. They did not test their methods by using the much larger CG-13 glider, but several members did take orientation flights

in the craft.¹⁴ In late October 1944—at the same time that the British 1st Airborne Division and the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade of the 1st Allied Airborne Army was being shattered by the Germans in Operation MARKET-GARDEN—twelve 151st members, along with representatives of other airborne units, were sent to Washington DC to demonstrate their potential capabilities.¹⁵ Despite the demonstration, the 151st was disbanded around Christmas 1944.¹⁶ By this time, it had become self-evident that the M22 was not combat-capable, and the 151st Airborne Tank Company became an unheralded “casualty” of the Germans last-ditch offensive in the Ardennes, Operation *Wacht am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine)—popularly known as the Battle of the Bulge. This left the U.S. Army short of combat replacements.

When the 151st broke up, all but two members (who stayed behind to work on the Airborne Test Board) were sent overseas. One of the members who stayed was Sciabarasi, while Justesen and Rasbold were sent to Europe with the 13th Armored Division and XVIII Airborne Corps, respectively. The U.S. Army’s WWII experiments with airborne armor were over.

The remaining tanks were used for training purposes or given to the British, who had a longer history of using airborne tanks.¹⁷ The British had the Hamilcar glider, which was capable of carrying a vehicle as heavy as a light tank. Several Tetrarch tanks had even been brought in by Hamilcar glider in the Normandy Invasion, and the British were interested in further combat experiments with airborne tanks. The British landed several Tetrarchs and M22s via Hamilcar gliders in Operation VARSITY, the Allied airborne invasion over the Rhine River on 24 March 1945, but only a few got into action.¹⁸ Since Operation VARSITY was the last airborne operation in the European theater, it was the first and only time the M22 saw action in WWII. Remaining examples in the U.S. inventory were given to Allied nations. Several M22s were used, unsuccessfully, by the Egyptians against Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. ♣

I would like to thank Gary E. Banas for the use of his photographs, Les Hughes, and 151st veterans Gabriele Sciabarasi, Roger Justesen, and William Rasbold for their help with the article, and the staff of the Don F. Pratt Museum.

Endnotes

- 1 Les Hughes, “The 151st Airborne Tank Company,” *Trading Post*, 1987.
- 2 The tank had four “lifting lugs” built into the side of the hull to attach the tank to the belly of the C-54. This was accomplished with the turret removed and stored in the plane. While the method ensured that the tank would arrive in the field, it was in no sense combat ready as crews had to attach the turret. For more information on the M22, see <http://www.robertsarmory.com/m22.htm>.
- 3 Hughes, “The 151st Airborne Tank Company.”
- 4 Roger Justesen, telephone interview by Troy J. Sacquety, 19 June 2007, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 Captain Felix D. Hege, “Company Roster,” USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Hughes, “The 151st Airborne Tank Company;” William Rasbold, telephone interview by Troy J. Sacquety, 19 June 2007, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



Tetrarch air delivered tank easing out of a British Hamilcar glider.



S/SGT Gabriele Sciabarasi was a platoon sergeant with the 151st. When the 151st was broken up, he remained at Camp Mackall to serve on the Airborne Test Board.

- 6 Hughes, "The 151st Airborne Tank Company;" Sciabarasi interview, 5 May 2007; Gabriele Sciabarasi, telephone interview by Troy J. Sacquety, 8 June 2007, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 7 Gabriele Sciabarasi, telephone interview by Troy J. Sacquety, 5 May 2007, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Sciabarasi had been a T/SGT in the 9th Armor Regiment, Camp Campbell, Kentucky, but took a voluntary demotion so that he could join the 151st as cadre. He was also present on 7 December 1941 at Schofield Barracks on Oahu when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.
- 8 In general, the United States favored ease of production and maintenance with its tanks. This allowed them to be mass produced. The Germans preferred "quality over quantity," with technologically better tanks, but they were hard to produce, heavy, and required much maintenance. While German tanks saw limited post-war use in other nations' service, American WWII tanks stayed in the service of several nations until quite recently.
- 9 Sciabarasi interview, 8 June 2007.
- 10 Gabriele Sciabarasi as quoted in Hughes, "The 151st Airborne Tank Company."
- 11 Sciabarasi interview, 8 June 2007.
- 12 Rasbold interview, 19 June 2007.
- 13 Sciabarasi interview, 8 June 2007. He is referring to the British use of airborne tanks in the Normandy invasion of 6 June 1944.
- 14 Sciabarasi interview, 8 June 2007.
- 15 Sciabarasi interview, 5 May 2007; Sciabarasi interview, 8 June 2007; "Headquarters Airborne Center Army Ground Forces Camp Mackall, North Carolina," 1 September 1944, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Sciabarasi glider certificate, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 16 Major H.J. Dietenhofer, Headquarters Airborne Center, "Travel Orders," 25 October 1944, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 17 Justesen interview, 19 June 2007.
- 18 The British experimented with airborne tanks more than the United States. They had three other types, the Tetrarch, the Alecto, and the Harry Hopkins.
- 19 The after action report can be read online at <http://www.thelocustpage.tk/#> [7 June 2007]. Some eight to twelve of these tanks were landed.

A platoon of M22s on maneuvers at Camp Mackall, Summer 1944.



This 151st member is hitch-hiking from Camp Mackall to Southern Pines, North Carolina. Notice that the 151st has now received its glider qualification badges.



Wolfpacks and Donkeys:

Special Forces Soldiers in the Korean War.

by Kenneth Finlayson

A noteworthy aspect of the Korean War was the first combat employment of U.S. Army Special Forces. North Korean partisan units, known as WOLFPACKS and DONKEYS, were advised by Americans as they raided the enemy from islands off both coasts of the Korean Peninsula. Special Forces soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group advised the partisans and conducted unconventional warfare operations on the mainland.

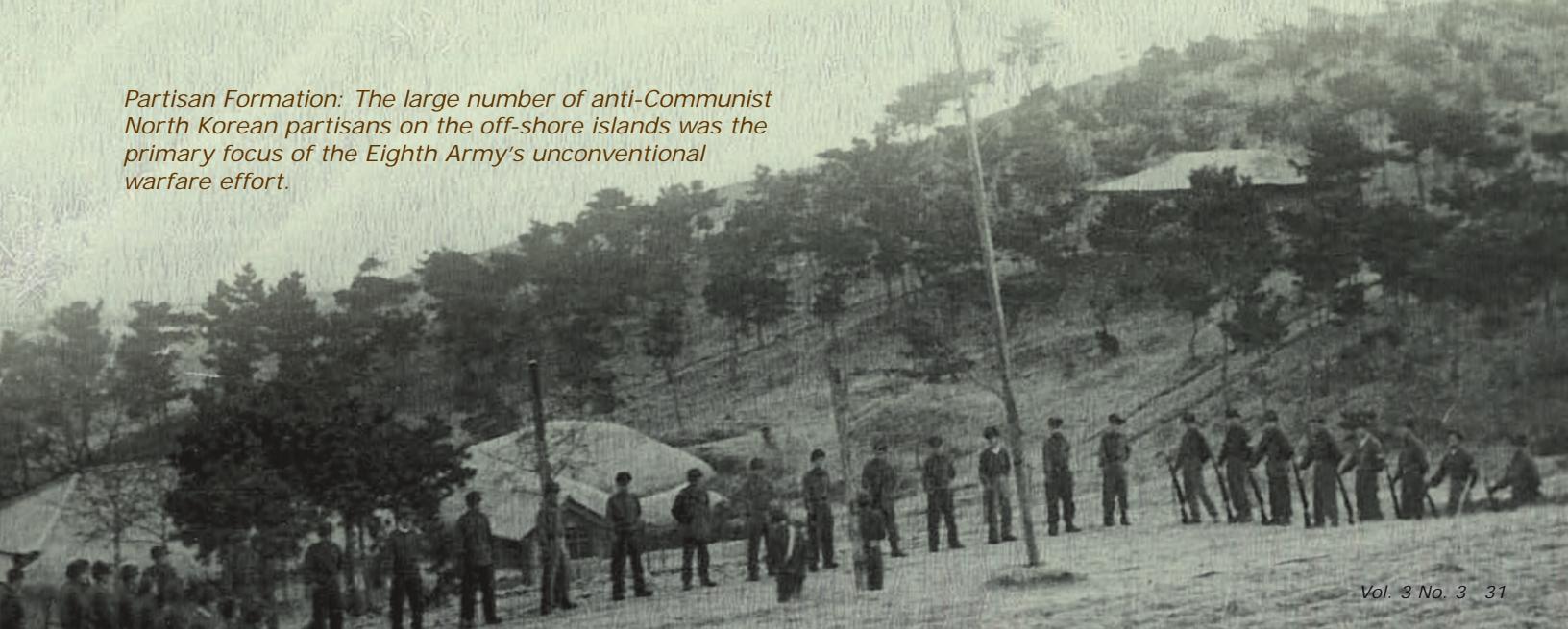
The Korean War (1950-1953) ended in an armistice with the armies of North Korea and Communist China facing the forces of South Korea, the United States and the other countries of the United Nations coalition across the 38th Parallel. The first year of fast-paced, fluid, conventional combat up and down the Korean peninsula was followed by a gradual stalemate as the armies of both sides hardened their defensive positions and jockeyed for the most advantageous terrain. The armistice agreement of 27 July 1953 brought an end to active combat, but did not end the war. Today the 38th Parallel remains the most heavily defended border in the world.

Unconventional warfare was a feature of combat

By 1951 the Korean War had reached a stalemate with both sides improving defensive positions in the vicinity of the 38th Parallel. The partisan forces occupied the off-shore islands on both coasts.



Partisan Formation: The large number of anti-Communist North Korean partisans on the off-shore islands was the primary focus of the Eighth Army's unconventional warfare effort.



operations throughout the war, which began when the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) invaded the Republic of Korea in June 1950. The NKPA rapidly overran the south during this first year resulting in a large number of anti-communist North Koreans fleeing their homes in the north and moving into South Korea. A significant percentage of these anti-Communist refugees formed guerrilla bands and fled to the islands off the east and west coasts of Korea near the 38th Parallel. The training and employment of these partisan units became a major part of the U.S. Army unconventional warfare (UW) effort.

The organization and conduct of unconventional warfare in Korea was complex and involved not only the U.S. Army, but the Navy, Air Force, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Republic of Korea as well as the United Nations, and began to take shape before the war started. Formed after World War II, the United States Far East Command (FEC) was responsible for combat operations in Korea. FEC was a joint headquarters operating from the Dai'ichi Building in Tokyo, Japan.¹ General Douglas MacArthur commanded FEC and was "triple-hatted" to serve as the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers (SCAP) and as the commander of the U.S. Army Forces, Far East, (USAFFFE). His G-2 (Intelligence), Major General Charles A. Willoughby, formed the Korean Liaison Office (KLO) during the interwar period to collect information about North Korea by inserting agents across the border. In June 1950, the KLO was virtually the only U.S. organization collecting intelligence on Kim Il Sung's Communist government.²

FEC began to develop an unconventional warfare capability in 1950 to take advantage of the large number of North Korean partisans who had settled on the off-shore islands. This led to the formation of the 8240th Army Unit by the Miscellaneous Group of the Guerrilla Section, G-3, Eighth U.S. Army in late 1950.³ The unit went through a series of name changes; starting as the Miscellaneous Group, 8086th Army Unit (AU) on 5 May 1951, and becoming the Far East Command Liaison Detachment Korea (FEC/LD/K), 8240th Army Unit on 10 December 1951.⁴ After the signing of the armistice, the unit was carried as the 8007th Army Unit and in September, 1953 it became the 8112th Army Unit.⁵ These changes were made for security reasons. There was no significant alteration in the unit's mission. The 8240th was the Eighth U.S. Army's unit responsible for employing the partisans in an unconventional warfare role.

The build-up of the 8240th AU occurred concurrently with a steady increase in unconventional warfare activities conducted by the CIA, the UN Command, the ROK Army, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force. Within HQ FEC was a special staff section called the Documents Research Division headed by a representative of the CIA. The Joint Advisory Commission Korea (JACK) managed the CIA operations in Korea and the deputy commander, Major (MAJ) John K. Singlaub, was a military officer attached to the CIA.⁶ In an attempt to get



The headquarters building for the 8240th Army Unit in Seoul. The 8240th was the Eighth Army unit responsible for the employment of the partisans.



Major Jack Singlaub and JACK advisors observe training. From right to left, Major Dutch Kramer, Lieutenant Tom Curtis, Major John Singlaub and Lieutenant George Atcheson.

a handle on theater unconventional warfare operations and eliminate duplication, HQ FEC had created the Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities Korea (CCRAK) under the staff supervision of the G-2.⁷ Directed by Brigadier General Archibald Stuart, whose deputy was from the CIA, CCRAK's mission was to deconflict the various unconventional warfare operations run by the different commands and organizations in Korea.⁸ CCRAK was a coordinating headquarters and had no command authority over JACK or the other elements engaged in UW activities. MAJ Singlaub, the Army officer detailed to be the deputy of JACK noted that "JACK had neither the responsibility nor the inclination to coordinate its independent covert activities with CCRAK."⁹ Consequently CCRAK only exerted minimal influence by controlling FEC aviation and maritime assets essential to the units conducting UW operations. The number of organizations engaged in unconventional warfare activities required constant coordination by the 8240th. MAJ Richard M. Ripley, commander of the 8240th's



JACK Shoulder Patch. This unofficial patch appeared in the postwar period.



Partisan Units: TASK FORCE KIRKLAND controlled the partisan activities on the east coast. On the west coast, the DONKEY elements of LEOPARD BASE worked generally north of the 38th Parallel and those of WOLFPACK, south of the 38th. LEOPARD BASE was organized first. Both units concentrated their activities in Hwanghae Province on the mainland.

WOLFPACK guerrilla group remembers; "There was a period when people were working on top of each other. I counted 15 or more different U.S. and Allied organizations working in our area."¹⁰ In most cases, the different organizations had missions similar to those of the 8240th.

The mission of the 8240th, as defined in the unit Table of Distribution (TD), was twofold. First; "to develop and direct partisan warfare by training in sabotage indigenous groups and individuals both within Allied lines and behind enemy lines," and second; "to supply partisan groups and agents operating behind enemy lines by means of water and air transportation."¹¹

Troops of WOLFPACK 8 moving on the beach at Chumen-do to board junks for Kanghwa-do, 1953.

To accomplish these missions, the 8240th established four sections between 1951 and 1952. Three sections controlled guerrilla operations, WOLFPACK, LEOPARD, and TASK FORCE (TF) KIRKLAND. Geography determined the location of these sections. The fourth, BAKER SECTION, provided aerial resupply, airborne training, and inserted agents using C-46s and C-47s. Aviation support for the 8240th was the responsibility of the AVIARY team of BAKER SECTION, located at the ROK Ranger Training School at Kijang near Pusan. BAKER SECTION later moved to the K-16 Airfield outside Seoul.¹²

On the west coast, LEOPARD, originally called WILLIAM ABLE BASE, was located on Paengnyōng-do. Formed in February 1951, it supported roughly 12,000 men organized into 15 units called DONKEYS. The origin of the term "DONKEY" is uncertain. It is sometimes said to be a derivation of the Korean term *dong-il* (leader). It was adopted soon after Colonel John McGee took command of the 8240th in early 1951 and may have come from a speech McGee gave to the guerrillas telling them to follow the example of the "wise mule" in avoiding confrontations. Wise mule became donkey in translation.¹³ The LEOPARD area of operations was generally north of the 38th Parallel to the west of the Ongjin Peninsula, reaching as far north as Taehwa-do at the mouth of the Yalu River on the Chinese border.¹⁴ Eight DONKEYS were located on Cho-do and the remaining seven on other islands. LEOPARD was organized a year before WOLFPACK.

Established in January 1952, WOLFPACK was composed of eight units initially totaling 3,800 partisans.¹⁵ The units were called WOLFPACK 1 thru 8. They occupied various islands south of the 38th Parallel on the west coast. WOLFPACK headquarters was on the large island of Kangwha-do due west of Seoul, with the units on adjacent islands. WOLFPACK conducted operations behind enemy lines in the southern portion of the Ongjin Peninsula northwest of Seoul.¹⁶ Major



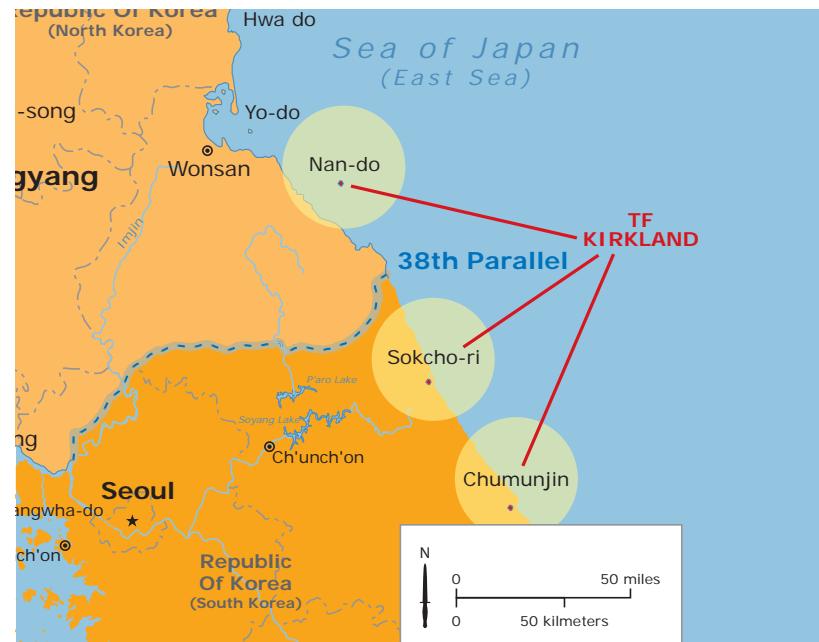
Richard M. Ripley commanded WOLFPACK in the spring of 1952. "Our mission was to harass and interdict the rear areas. We conducted raids and ambushes and laid mines along the MSRs [Main Supply Routes]."¹⁷ By late 1952, the LEOPARD unit reported a strength of 5,500 partisans and WOLFPACK, 6,800.¹⁸ A compilation of the two unit operational reports for the week of 15-21 November 1952 recorded 63 raids and 25 patrols against the North Korean coast resulting in an estimated 1,382 enemy casualties.¹⁹ By official policy, Americans were prohibited from accompanying the partisans on their missions. Thus the numbers associated with enemy casualties were inaccurate. The robust partisan forces on the west coast were difficult to control and supply. This later resulted in the 8240th initiating an organizational change. Partisan operations on the east coast were the responsibility of TF KIRKLAND.

TF KIRKLAND was the smallest of the three partisan commands, comprising five units and 6,000 troops. Based on the mainland 40 miles south of the 38th Parallel in the eastern coastal village of Chumunjin was the TF KIRKLAND headquarters and the sub-unit called AVANLEE. Twenty miles up the coast to the north in the village of Sokcho-ri were two other elements, STORM and TORCHLIGHT. Further north on the island of Nan-do was the TF Forward Command Post with partisan forces on some of the surrounding islands.²⁰ TF KIRKLAND conducted amphibious insertions of agents and raids along the east coast between the 38th Parallel and the North Korean port city of Wonsan.²¹

Initially, Eighth Army manned the 8240th with U.S. Army volunteers from within the theater. Colonel John McGee, the original head of the Miscellaneous Group was the first commander of the 8240th in Taegu. He industriously recruited veterans to serve as advisors to the partisans on the islands. When the five numbered Ranger companies and the Eighth U.S. Army Rangers were disbanded on 1 August 1951, the men were distributed among the American infantry divisions and the 8240th.²² First Lieutenant (1LT) Joseph Ulatoski, the former Executive Officer of the 5th Ranger Company, joined the 8240th and was assigned to TF KIRKLAND.



The arrival of the 10th Special Forces Group soldiers in 1953 coincided with the reorganization of the partisan units. The partisan units were now better equipped and more uniformly attired. Kangwha-do, Spring 1953.



TF KIRKLAND operated on the east coast of Korea, primarily against the North Korean port city of Wonsan. TF KIRKLAND inserted agents that collected intelligence and target information in the area.

"I'd just been released from the Swedish Red Cross hospital and my friend Phil Lewis from the 7th Ranger Company signed me up for the 8086th [later the 8240th]. After a month as assistant G-2, I was sent up to Sokcho-ri and then out to one of the islands."²³ The island, Song-do, near the TF KIRKLAND forward base on Nan-do, lay 700 yards off the mainland. Arriving on a motorized sampan, Ulatoski found a tent city and three different groups of partisans on the island.

"We had no real briefing or training to prepare for this. It was one hundred per cent 'fly by the seat of your pants.' There were three groups on the island including the East Coast Patriotic Volunteers, under a Major Han. I had a corporal, Cyril Tritz from the 4th Ranger Company, with me and we began to collect intelligence as well as gather food, weapons and communications gear."²⁴ Located so close to the mainland, the island was not immune to North Korean attacks.

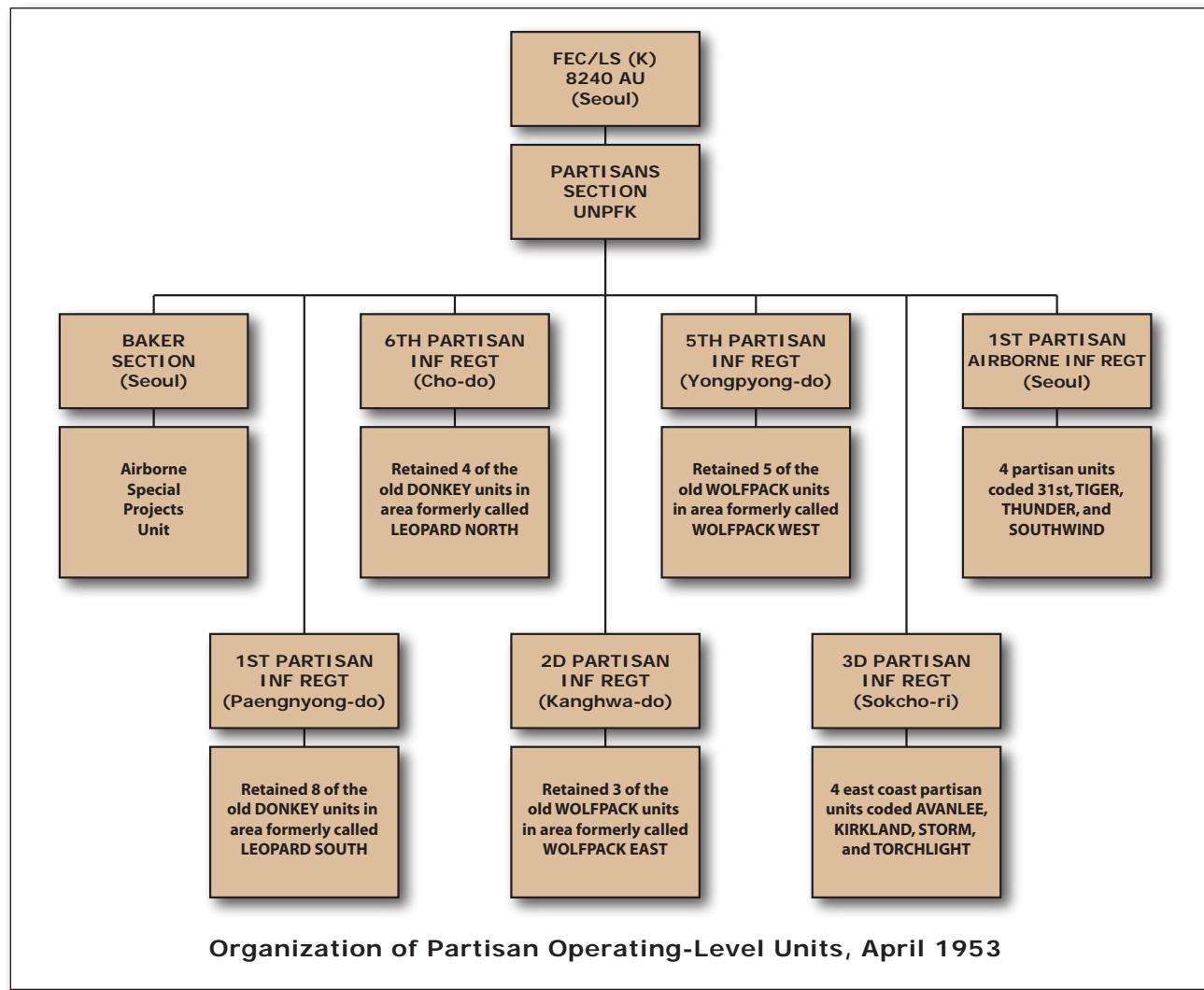
"We got hit a couple of times, just probes, no major attacks. The partisans were not the most observant group of people and during the raids we Americans took up a position away from the action to avoid getting shot up by either side."²⁵ 1LT Ulatoski served on the islands for ten months, during which time he noted "there was no command and control capability with the partisans."



UNPKF Patch. The unofficial shoulder patch of the United Nations Partisan Forces Korea.



5th Ranger Co scroll. The Korean War Ranger Companies saw service between October 1950 and August 1951.



The reorganization of the Partisan Units by the 8240th in April 1953.

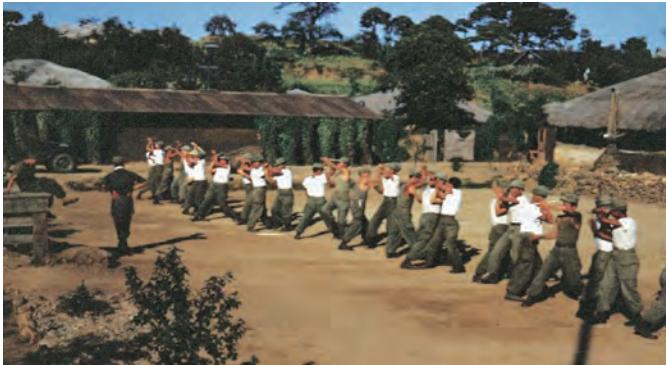
These North Koreans were strangers to the area and there was no vetting of them. Still, we managed to keep up the insertions of the five or six-man teams. We were able to supply the Navy with [gunfire] targets, probably our best contribution.²⁶ The experience of 1LT Ulatoski with TASK FORCE KIRKLAND mirrored that of other officers serving with WOLFPACK and LEOPARD on the west coast.

In 1953, the 8240th reformed the various partisan elements into the United Nations Partisan Forces in Korea (UNPKF), using cadre from WOLFPACK and LEOPARD.²⁷ Five infantry regiments and one airborne infantry regiment were organized on the west coast. TFKIRKLAND remained unchanged. The regiments retained the original Korean leadership, but with American officers advising at the regimental level and below and serving as the UNPKF staff. It was during this period that the action to bring Special Forces soldiers to Korea was initiated.

Brigadier General Robert A. McClure, the Chief of Psychological Warfare, was responsible for the conduct of Psychological Operations in the Army. He had been closely monitoring the unconventional warfare operations in Korea since the beginning of the war. He was dissatisfied with the conduct of the partisan

operations, calling them "minor in consequence and sporadic in nature."²⁸ Within his office McClure created the Special Operations Division staffed with veterans of World War II unconventional operations like COL Aaron Bank of the OSS, COL Melvin R. Blair of Merrill's Marauders, and COL Wendell Fertig and LTC Russell W. Volckmann, both of whom led guerrilla forces behind the lines in the Philippines. After nearly a year of staff work, the Army approved the establishment of the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, that included the Special Forces Department, to instruct the new Special Forces soldiers. Shortly after this move the 10th Special Forces Group was stood up under COL Bank in June 1952. McClure encouraged the Far East Command to request Special Forces troops in November 1952 and again in January 1953.²⁹ FEC finally requested fifty-five officers and nine enlisted men from the 10th Special Forces Group be levied for Korea in early 1953. Ultimately, 99 Special Forces volunteers, 77 officers and 22 enlisted men, were sent from Fort Bragg between February and September, 1953.³⁰

Recruitment and training were the top priorities in the early days of the 10th SFG. In the first year the number of new recruits exceeded the capacity of the Special Forces



Partisans training in hand-to-hand combat, Summer 1953, Kangwha-do.

Department of the Psychological Warfare Center to teach them. With the classes full, many of the new Special Forces soldiers got their training in the 10th Special Forces Group.³¹ Five separate groups of SF-qualified personnel were levied for assignment to Korea while the 10th SFG deployed to Bad Tolz, Germany in September 1953. Those SF officers and NCOs (slightly less than half the SF contingent) left behind at Fort Bragg became the cadre of the new 77th SFG.

After graduating from Class #2 of the Special Forces Qualification Course, newly promoted 1LT Charles W. Norton took leave before reporting to Camp Stoneman, California for his assignment to Korea. Along with the other members of the fourth shipment of Special Forces soldiers from Fort Bragg, Norton flew by Air Force C-54 aircraft to Camp Drake, Japan, where they received additional schooling before deploying to Korea.

"We were put in the Far East Intelligence School. The three-week course covered maritime operations, raids, ambushes, demo and put a lot of emphasis on the Korean tides and their effect on operations."³² Not everyone in the class was Special Forces. Norton recalled, "There were Military Intelligence guys in the class who were going to run agents into North Korea. We had maybe thirty guys in the class."³³ 1LT Rueben Mooradian's impression of the preparatory class was of "two ridiculous weeks of intelligence training and a mission planning exercise to capture a North Korean general."³⁴ After the class, the Special Forces soldiers were sent to the 8240th headquarters in Seoul where they received their assignments.

1LT Norton was assigned to the 2nd Partisan Infantry Regiment (2nd PIR) on Kangwha-do (on the west coast) to serve under LTC Paul Sapieha. "My first job was as the S-3 [operations officer], which I held for about six weeks. [2LT] Joe Johnson came out with me. He was the S-4 [supply officer]. His job was to keep track of rice."³⁵ Rice and salt were the two principal commodities for supplying the partisans. Stored under guard, rice replaced money as payment to the guerrillas. The 2nd PIR had three battalions; the 3rd battalion functioned as a training unit for new recruits. They received marksmanship and demolitions training. After his brief stint as Regimental S-3, Norton was assigned to WOLFPACK 1, across the island.



Fishing junks off Kangwha-do. A motorized "M" boat is seen to the left. The "M" boat was used to ferry supplies and personnel. Post-armistice, Spring 1954.



10th SFG soldiers in Japan with their United Nations counterparts, L to R 1LT Brian Passey, 1LT Murl Tullis, 1LT Reuben Mooradian, CPT Bliss Croft, 1LT Charlie Norton (in Australian hat), Captain John Sullivan Australian Army, Lieutenant Johnston Australian Army (in U.S. Overseas cap) 1LT Mike Layton (pg.37), Lieutenant George, British Army. Photo taken at Camp Ebisu, Japan, Spring 1954.



The supply building of the 2nd Partisan Infantry Regiment on Kangwha-do. The rugged terrain of the island and the snow of the Korean winter are evident in this photo from late 1953.



Some of the partisans were accompanied by their families when they occupied the islands. Young children are present in this photo of a detail loading rice bags on Kangwha-do.



Motorized fishing trawler, "LB-24." The motorized vessels were used to tow sailing junks on missions to the mainland.



Two sailing junks at Chumen-do. A motorized junk could tow three of the sailing junks, each carrying up to 30 partisans. The junks were "volunteered" by the local fisherman who were paid in rice.

By then, the late spring and summer of 1953, the armistice talks were nearly completed. The ranks of the original North Korean partisans, some of whom had been on the islands since 1950, had been greatly thinned by losses. Many of the replacements were South Korean. "The leadership was still people who came out of the north," noted Norton, "but the replacements were made up of guys from Seoul and Inchon who were dodging



(L) 1LT Murl Tullis and (R) 1LT Mike Layton, were members of 10th Special Forces Group advising the 2nd Partisan Infantry.

the ROK Army [draft]. The partisans were a lot better deal."³⁶ MAJ Richard Ripley of WOLFPACK recalled that, "things were locked in as far as the war went. The guerrillas knew the country was going to be divided in the end, so it was tough to ask them to sacrifice too much."³⁷ Still, raids on the mainland continued right up to the signing of the Armistice on 27 July 1953.

"When we got there in the Spring of 1953, there wasn't much of the war left," noted 1LT Norton. "The Koreans could sense it was winding down. Still, we continued to run operations against the mainland. Usually about 90 partisans would go. This number was dictated by the number that could fit on a fishing [sailing] junk. Usually 30 per junk and 1 motor junk could pull three fishing junks. We gave the fisherman rice to use their junks."³⁸ The raids were against the North Korean Army, the Border Constabulary units, and the Chinese Communist Forces guarding the coast. The experiences of 1LT Norton were typical of those who served with the PIRs.

In the five levies of Special Forces personnel, those who came in the final two shipments experienced the war's drawdown. Those in the first three groups dealt with a faster operational tempo and a greater threat from the Communist forces. However, two Special Forces soldiers were killed during operations in 1953. Second Lieutenant (2LT) Joseph M. Castro was killed in a daylight operation with WOLFPACK 8 when he was shot in the head crossing a rice paddy dike on the mainland. 1LT Douglas W. Payne was killed at night when his island was attacked by North Korean forces. They were the first two Special Forces troops to die in combat. Not all the Special Forces soldiers that went to Korea were assigned to the 8240th. The insertion of agents into enemy territory was another unconventional warfare mission for the Special Forces.



10th Special forces Group Officers assigned to the 8007th Army Unit at Camp Drake, Japan. From left to right, 1LT Sam C. Sarkesian, 1LT Warren E. Parker, CPT Francis W. Dawson, 2LT Earl L. Thieme and 1LT Leo F. Siefert.

2LT Earl L. Thieme was part of the third group of 10th SFG soldiers levied for Korea in March 1953. Trained in the 10th SFG, Thieme recalls that “there was very little done to prepare to go. No special training, no advance briefings. Once we were on orders, we got some leave and reported to Camp Stoneman.”³⁹ When he arrived at Camp Drake, Japan, Thieme found that he was being assigned to the 8007th Army Unit Recovery Command. Their mission was to gather information on POW camps where Americans might be held in North Korea. Four other Special Forces soldiers, CPT Francis W. Dawson, 1LT Warren E. Parker, 1LT Sam C. Sarkesian and 1LT Leo Siefert also served along with Thieme in the 8007th. “The FECOM G-2 gave us the mission, told us it was Top



Winter, 1953, 2LT Earl Thieme and an unidentified enlisted man are on reconnaissance to locate potential cache sites for weapons and equipment. Caches were determined to be unfeasible because they could not be buried without detection.

Secret and to get over there ASAP.”⁴⁰ Arriving in Seoul at the 8007th headquarters, the men got their assignments. The 8007th conducted agent insertions on both coasts, separately from the missions conducted by the 8240th.

1LT Sam Sarkesian was to command the 8007 AU Recovery Command Team #1. He was sent to Cho-do on the west coast with a sergeant and two other enlisted men.⁴¹ His mission was two-fold: to establish escape and evasion nets for downed U.S. and UN pilots, and to gather intelligence. This was accomplished by inserting Korean agents on the mainland. They were to return to a pre-arranged pick-up point after a set number of days. There the collected intelligence would be exchanged. Most of the agents Sarkesian inserted failed to show up at the rendezvous point for extraction.⁴²

With the signing of the Armistice, Sarkesian moved his operation from Cho-do south to Paengnyōng-do and continued to insert agents until he left Korea in March, 1954. “We learned a lot of lessons, but we did not accomplish very much. Unfortunately, the lessons learned were not put into any official documents. We expended a lot of energy for little result. I wish we had better briefings and training before we went. There was a total lack of coordination.”⁴³ Similar missions were run on the east coast by other detachments of the 8007th.

1LT Warren Parker commanded a detachment on the east coast at Sokcho-ri. He coordinated for the Navy to escort his motorized junks during insertion and extraction operations.⁴⁴ The detachments on the islands did not do agent training. The agents only appeared on the islands prior to their insertion. The 8007th did provide some of the support to the agents before they left on their mission. 1LT



Cho-do was the island used by 1LT Sam Sarkesian for inserting agents onto the North Korean mainland. Other 8007th personnel operated on the east coast from Yo-do and out of Sokcho-ri.



Unofficial 8112th Shoulder Patch.



Range firing, Chumen-do in the Fall of 1953.



Partisans of WOLFPACK loading USNS 548 Landing Ship Tank (LST). The partisans were relocated to Cheju-do and inducted into the ROK army.

Earl Thieme recalls going back to Tokyo on occasion to collect watches and gold for use by the agents as items of barter.⁴⁵ Thieme remained with the 8007th through two unit name changes, from the 8007th to the 8112th on 24 September 1953 and finally to 8157th on 5 January 1955.⁴⁶ The airborne insertion of agents ceased with the Armistice though the ground and sea insertion of agents continued until 1955.

The signing of the Armistice did not end the mission for advisors to the Partisan Infantry Regiments. With the cessation of hostilities, the South Korean government was faced with the dilemma of dealing with the well-armed and trained partisan units that were not part of the ROK Army. The South Korean solution was to incorporate the units into their military, but it took time to accomplish. 1LT Charles Norton recalls, "The transition was a very messy thing. The ROKs needed to get control, but it took from July 1953 to April 1954 to process the partisans for the transition. They did not replace the U.S. forces [advisors] so we stayed with the partisans, keeping them supplied and trained until the spring of 1954."⁴⁷ Some of the partisan leadership were commissioned as officers in the ROK Army, a move which helped maintain command and control over the units.

1LT Rueben Mooradian had to move off Yo-do with his partisan element at the signing of the Armistice, as that was one of the islands returned to North Korea. He relocated south to Yuk-do where he assisted with the training of the 1st PIR until he returned to the 77th SFG at Fort Bragg in July 1954.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the partisan units were removed from the coastal islands and replaced with ROK Marine and Army units. 1LT Charles Norton's WOLFPACK 1, numbering some 500 partisans, and the 700-man WOLFPACK 2 were shipped to Cheju-do, the primary receiving and processing point for transitioning the partisans into the ROK Army.⁴⁹

The Korean War provided the setting for the first employment of Special Forces soldiers as unconventional warfare specialists. All the SF soldiers were employed as individuals. No Operational Detachments were sent to Korea during the war. "There was never any plan to run 12-man teams," recalls 1LT Norton. "We could have effectively employed one ODA per regiment, but the teams were all back at Fort Bragg or enroute to Germany."⁵⁰ The arrival of the Special Forces advisors in the last months of the war makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the Special Forces training programs. What the war demonstrated was that the mission of advisor and trainer of the partisan forces was a necessary unconventional warfare skill and validated the concept of Special Forces. Those same skills are the cornerstone of the Special Forces' Foreign Internal Defense and Counter-Insurgency missions today. ♣

Endnotes

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- 3 Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., "The 8240th Army Unit: Unconventional Warfare in the Korean Conflict" *Special Forces: The First Fifty Years*, (Tampa, FL: Faircount, LLC, 2002) 84-91.
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- 12 Colonel (retired) Douglas C. Dillard, *Operation AVIARY: Airborne Special Operations -Korea, 1950-1953*, (Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2003), 12.
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15 Ripley interview.

16 HQ, United States Army Forces, Far East, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-64, *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951-1954*, dated 19 September 1956, Army War College, copy in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, 31.

17 Ripley interview.

18 HQ, United States Army Forces, Far East, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-64, *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951-1954*, 69.

19 HQ, United States Army Forces, Far East, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-64, *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951-1954*, 69.

20 Dillard, *Aviary*, ii. **TASK FORCE KIRKLAND** also underwent a name change to **TF SCANNON** later in the war.

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22 Gordon L. Rottman, *Korean War Order of Battle: United States, United Nations, and Communist Ground, Naval, and Air Forces, 1950-1953* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 16.

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24 Ulatoski interview.

25 Ulatoski interview.

26 Ulatoski interview.

27 Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, 106. **United Nations Partisan Forces Korea** was another organization prone to name changes. It is often referred to as the **United Nations Partisan Infantry Korea (UNPIK)**.

28 Paddock, *The 8240th Army Unit*, 85.

29 Paddock, *The 8240th Army Unit*, 85.

30 A comprehensive list of the 10th Special Forces Group personnel who deployed to Germany and Korea in 1953 compiled from the original orders is contained in *Special Forces: The First Fifty Years*, (Tampa FL: Faircount LLC, 2002), 94-101.

31 Major (retired) Earl L. Thieme, 8007th Army Unit, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 6 February 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

32 Colonel (retired) Charles W. Norton, 8240th Army Unit, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 9 April 2004, MacLean, VA, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

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34 Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Rueben L. Mooradian, 8240th Army Unit, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

35 Norton interview.

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37 Ripley interview.

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39 Thieme interview, 6 February 2006.

40 Thieme interview, 6 February 2006.

41 Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Sam C. Sarkesian, 8007/8112th AU, interview by Dr. Richard Kiper, 8 October 2003, Lake Zurich, IL, transcribed notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **In Sarkesian's recollection there was no Team #2.**

42 Sarkesian interview.

43 Sarkesian interview.

44 Major (retired) Earl L. Thieme, 8007th Army Unit, interview by Dr. Richard Kiper, 11 August 2003, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

45 Thieme interview, 11 August 2003.

46 Thieme interview, 11 August 2003.

47 Norton interview.

48 Mooradian interview.

49 Norton interview.

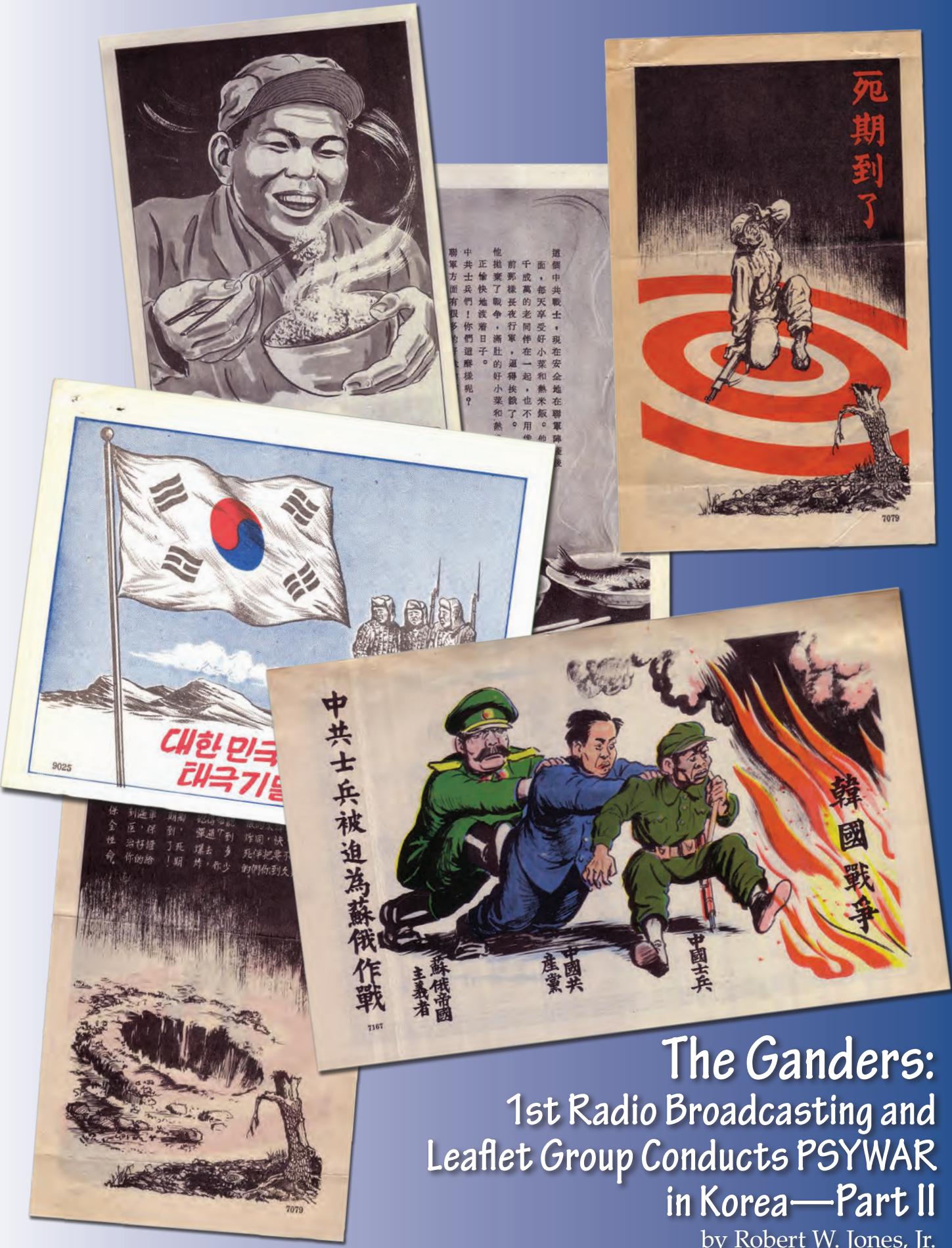
50 Norton interview.



1LT Reuben Mooradian, 10th Special Forces Group. In 1953 the men of the 10th Special Forces Group were the first Special Forces soldiers deployed to combat.



2LT Earl L. Thieme, Private John J. Hodorovic and three Korean partisans under tow. Reported missing on a voyage between islands in November, 1953, Thieme and Hodorovic were marooned on an island for three days in bad weather before being rescued.



The Ganders: 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group Conducts PSYWAR in Korea—Part II

by Robert W. Jones, Jr.

WITH the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950 the U.S. Army was ill prepared for war in many crucial areas, one being Psychological Warfare. The Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) of the Far East Command quickly adapted to the situation, taking on responsibilities far beyond the scope of a small staff section. The PWB staff performed Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) at the tactical and strategic levels for the first few months of the war (after 1951 the PWB became the Psychological Warfare Section, PWS). The ever-increasing requirements quickly overwhelmed them. The U.S. Army's solution was to form two new units, the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company (for the tactical mission) and the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group to fill the strategic void. This article is the second of two about the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (RB&L) and its contributions during the Korean War.¹



The mainstay of Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) operations in Tokyo were dedicated civilians. Sang Moon Chang (Korean calligrapher, on the left) and David An (translator on the right) of the PWB prepared copy for leaflets to be disseminated in Korea. Both men would work with the 1st RB&L.

Brigadier General Robert A. McClure, the Chief of Psychological Warfare for the Army, was best known as the driving force behind PSYWAR units and doctrine. One part of PSYWAR was the Special Operations Division where the staff created an unconventional warfare capability that later became Special Forces.

The term Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) was the doctrinal standard for the U.S. Army and later the Department of Defense from World War II through the Korean War. The term Psychological Operations (PSYOP) came into effect by the mid-1960s. For historical accuracy the term PSYWAR is used throughout the article

Kim Il Sung's North Korean People's Army (NKPA) invaded South Korea in the early morning of 25 June 1950. The numerically superior and better armed North Korean units quickly pushed aside the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army.² President Harry S. Truman ordered U.S. forces to assist the South Koreans on 27 June 1950.³ American advisors with ROK units continued to fight while in Japan the U.S. occupation forces prepared to deploy. In the meantime, Republic of Korean and the advance elements of U.S. forces were pushed south, to what became known as the "Pusan Perimeter." The tactical and strategic situation rapidly changed with the simultaneous execution of Operation CHROMITE, the Inchon invasion, and the





The 1st Radio Broadcasting & Leaflet Group would establish elements in Japan and Korea.

Allied breakout from Pusan on 15 September 1950. United Nations (UN) forces pushed the NKPA back across the 38th parallel and seized large sections of North Korea. The strategic situation changed in late October 1950 when the "Chinese Peoples Volunteer Army" crossed the Yalu River. As the combined Chinese and North Korean forces pushed the UN command south towards Pusan, Seoul was abandoned a second time. This was the situation when the 1st RB&L Group got to Japan.

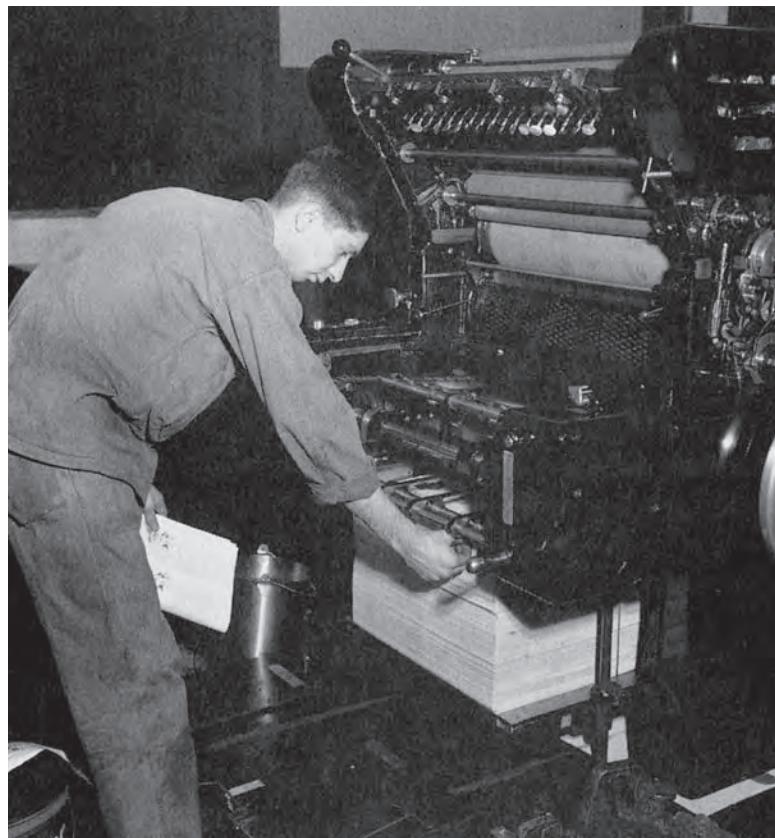
To provide a strategic PSYWAR capability, Brigadier General Robert A. McClure, the newly appointed Chief of Psychological Warfare, directed the formation of a new unit called a Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group to conduct radio broadcasts and produce leaflets.⁴ The mission to conduct strategic PSYWAR encompassed the creation, production, and dissemination of PSYWAR products. Three Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Groups were authorized with plans to form additional groups in the Active Army and Reserves. The 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (RB&L) was formed at Fort Riley, Kansas, from reservists and draftees and sent to Japan. The 301st RB&L, a Reserve unit from New York, was quickly mobilized, and joined the 1st RB&L at Fort Riley for training. They were headed for Europe.⁵ After the 1st RB&L deployed, the 6th RB&L Group was formed to support the school at Fort Riley and later the PSYWAR Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Since Korea was the priority for BG McClure, the Army PSYWAR program had to be organized quickly.

The 1st RB&L Group consisted of three companies. The Headquarters Company was the largest, with 19 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 111 enlisted men. It was responsible for the group's administration, maintenance, and logistical support.

Two sections provided the Group



Once in Japan the RB&L was assigned to the FEC General Headquarters (GHQ)



CPL Dick Crimer operates a Harris printing press at the FEC print plant in Motosumiyoshi, Japan. Crimer was assigned to the 1st RB&L Group's 3rd Reproduction Company.

with specialized capabilities. The Operations Section had linguists, artists, draftsmen, and scriptwriters to prepare strategic leaflets and radio broadcasts.⁶ The Research and Analysis Section was "responsible for the preparation and composition of propaganda material" at the theater level.⁷

The 3rd Reproduction Company, with 3 officers and 54 enlisted men, produced strategic leaflets, newspapers, and other paper products using four high-speed Harris offset printing presses. With a strength of 16 officers and 99 enlisted men, the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company's mission was to broadcast PSYWAR from both fixed and mobile radio stations.⁸ The three radio platoons were organized to repair and operate "... captured or indigenous fixed transmitters," and to operate its mobile transmitters mounted aboard 6x6 trucks.⁹

At Fort Riley, the division between tactical and strategic operations was blurred. In Japan it was determined that the 1st RB&L's area of operations for printed products began where the 1st L&L Company's ended, forty miles behind the line of contact.¹⁰ Although the entire Group was authorized 305 soldiers, it deployed overseas in three increments with less than 250 men.

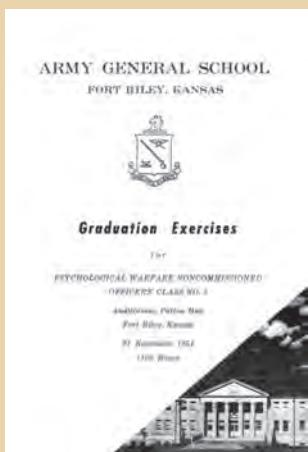
Between June 1950 and June 1951 the Army was trying to simultaneously fill staff positions worldwide, establish the PSYWAR school, and fill the newly-formed units. Recruits were primarily draftees and mobilized reservists having civilian skills related to PSYWAR (i.e. journalists, artists, printers, graphics designers, etc).¹¹

Unlike World War II, many of the recruits had college educations and better technical skills. Some

In the Spring of 1951,

the Psychological Warfare Department of the Army General Ground School at Fort Riley began training students with an emphasis on producing propaganda. The course was six to seven weeks long, covered psychological warfare, strategic intelligence, foreign army organization, and intelligence. Four officer and two NCO classes produced 334 graduates from all four services and some Allied nations. When Army Reservists and draftees with PSYWAR skills (psychologists, journalists, illustrators, advertising executives, newspapermen, commercial radio technicians, etc) were called up, they were sent to Fort Riley for training and assignment. The Reservists received no theater-specific training until they arrived in Japan or Korea. The Psychological Warfare Department at the Army General Ground School became an independent Army School, the Psychological Warfare Center, when it relocated to Fort Bragg, North Carolina in early 1952.

The Psychological Warfare Center, the predecessor of today's U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, was the proponent for Psychological Warfare training, doctrine, and equipment. The Center's Psychological Warfare Board evaluated PSYWAR tactics, techniques, procedures, doctrine, and equipment. During the Korean War, the board conducted over forty evaluations of radio receiver/transmitters, loudspeakers, mobile print shops, and improved leaflet dissemination techniques.



Reservists called-up were World War II veterans who had used the GI Bill for college and who had acquired new job skills. To capitalize on the situation, the Army established a Classification and Assignment (C&A) station at Fort Myer, VA, to screen basic trainees with a college education and/or specific job skills. During the C&A process, the men were usually asked questions about their civilian background (i.e. education, job experience, language ability). Some soldiers did not have to produce evidence; their qualifications were accepted as given.¹² Others had to present proof of education or professional certification. While the evaluation relied on interviewers "gut reactions," they seemed to have "... terrific insight in who would fit into the 1st RB&L," said Tom Klein, one of the many draftees slated for PSYWAR.¹³ The Fort Myer pool provided soldiers, while officers were often assigned directly.

The majority of the 1st RB&L officers were Reservists, with World War II combat experience. Most officers did not have "official" PSYWAR experience. Instead their education and work experience between WWII and Korea was critical. Other officers were college graduates fulfilling their ROTC obligation. Captain (CPT) Robert Horn had a Ph.D in political science from Princeton. He was a professor at the University of Chicago when he received his recall notice. The WWII veteran became the head of the Group's Operations Research Section.

Captain Fred Laffey was another veteran. He worked a variety of civilian radio jobs at home in Massachusetts. Laffey was assigned as a radio program manager in the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company.

First Lieutenant (1LT) Eddie Deerfield had earned a Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals, and a Purple Heart as a B-17 radio operator/aerial gunner in Europe. After the war, he used his GI Bill to attend Northwestern University and earned a journalism degree. He also received a direct commission in the Reserves. Deerfield was working as a reporter for the *Chicago Times* when he got orders to report by April 1951 to the 1st RB&L at Fort Riley.¹⁴ Deerfield became the officer in charge of the Pusan radio detachment.

1st Lieutenant Alvin Yudkoff had been assigned to a Japanese Language Detachment in the Pacific. It was filled primarily with Nisei (2nd generation Japanese-American) soldiers. He was in the invasion of Okinawa and served in the occupation of Japan. After the war he became a writer. He had begun documentary filmmaking when he was recalled to active duty with orders to the 1st RB&L Group where he was put in charge of radio script production.¹⁵

Princeton ROTC graduate Robert Carlisle had been a field artillery officer in WWII. After the war he was a journalist for the *Passaic* (New Jersey) *Herald-News* for three years. Then he joined *Newsweek*, working in New York City and Detroit.¹⁶

Other officers were recent college graduates. 2LT Jim

Haynes, armed with his Princeton degree, reported to Fort Riley on 1 April 1951. He would serve as a liaison officer to the Air Force planning leaflet drops. 1LT Bill Barry, a Princeton graduate with an English degree, had been working as a reporter for the Bureau of National Affairs when he got his call-up notice. After serving in Panama during most of WWII he was commissioned through Officer Candidate School.¹⁷ 2nd Lieutenant Arthur Holch, with a Masters degree from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, had worked as a print reporter for the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* and CBS and NBC radio when he was drafted in 1948. After only a year in uniform as an *Armed Forces Press Service* reporter in New York, Holch went to work for NBC television in New York as part of the *Camel News Caravan* with John Cameron Swayze. He received a direct commission and recall notice with orders to report to Fort Riley.

Over one-third of the enlisted men were college graduates and some had advanced degrees.¹⁸ Gudmund Berge had served in the Navy, before completing an architecture degree at the University of Washington. He was working as an architect in Seattle when he was drafted to serve as a combat engineer.¹⁹ Jim McCrory, with a degree from Marquette University was working as a reporter for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* when drafted. He was sent to a transportation truck company at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin.²⁰ Draftee John Davenport, an experienced commercial artist, was at Artillery basic training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana when he received orders for 1st RB&L.²¹

Hanno Fuchs had earned a Bachelors degree in Journalism from Syracuse University and attended Columbia University's Graduate School of Business before he started working at the advertising firm of Young and Rubicam.²² Bob Herguth, a graduate of the University of Missouri's School of Journalism was working for the *Peoria Star* newspaper when he got his draft notice.²³ Thomas Klein, with a Masters degree in economics (University of Michigan) reported to Fort Sheridan, Illinois in December 1950 and was immediately shipped to Fort Meyer for classification.²⁴ There, he first heard of "this PSYWAR outfit and it seemed pretty interesting." Klein was shipped to the 1st RB&L and assigned to the Research and Analysis Section.²⁵ These experiences of only a few men are a "snapshot" of the varied backgrounds, education and job experiences of the unit members.

Not all 1st RB&L Group soldiers were screened through Fort Myer. Tony Severino was in infantry basic training at Fort Jackson. When his company commander denied a reclassification request, stating, "It is an honor to die for your country," Severino and another college graduate visited the classification building that night. There they found "... a lone corporal working overtime. He listened to our plea and the next day we were transferred," said Severino.²⁶ Sig Front had been trained to be an infantry platoon radio operator in the 31st Infantry ("Dixie")

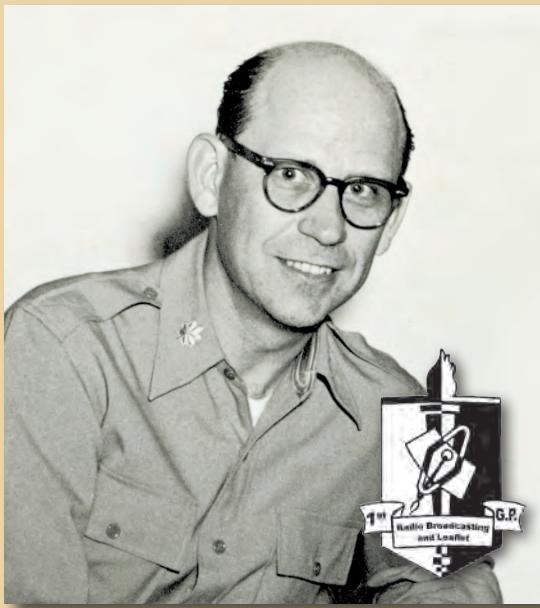


The mobile radio station at Fort Riley: During the graduation of PSYWAR Class #1 the mobile radio station was set up for visiting dignitaries. This was the prototype system. It would take a few months to produce the systems for the 1st RB&L in Korea. The two vans on the left are production studios; on the right are the radio transmitter and receiver, each mounted in a truck shelter. In the center of the photo are BG McClure, the Chief of PSYWAR (indicated by arrow) and COL Greene, the Chief of PSYWAR for FEC.

Division. He became a replacement for Korea when the unit was demobilized. En route to Korea, the graduate of the School of Radio and Television Techniques (in New York) and former West Virginia radio announcer found himself transferred.²⁷ Equipment and training became the next step for the 1st RB&L.

The individual soldier's equipment came primarily from World War II stocks. As a major training and mobilization base, Fort Riley had plenty of uniforms, boots, and field gear. The M-1 carbine and M-1911 .45 caliber pistols were the primary weaponry. While individual equipment was readily available, the unit equipment was a problem.

Because PSYWAR had languished after WWII most of the equipment had been declared surplus and sold. "With the end of World War II, the U.S. Army ... rapidly dismantled its extensive psychological operations network. PSYWAR was dropped from Army training programs, from military schools and curricula, and from Tables of Organization and Equipment for Army units."²⁸ Faced with the presence of war the Psychological Warfare Board developed new requirements for equipment and arranged to buy "off the shelf." Two of the critical items for the Group were printing presses and truck-mounted radio transmitters. The printing presses could be purchased from civilian companies, but it took a few months for assembly. Printers had to be trained on the idiosyncrasies of the presses. The mobile radio sets were built from scratch, with new technology, based on old WWII designs. The operators and maintenance personnel had to be trained on the equipment which did not yet exist. The 1st RB&L received its radio vans (as they were



LIEUTENANT COLONEL HOMER E. SHIELDS, a European PSYWAR veteran was selected by Brigadier General McClure to command the 1st RB&L. Mobilized with the Indiana National Guard in 1942 as an infantry lieutenant, Shields later served as the executive officer of the 7th Army Combat Propaganda Team in March 1944. After service in North Africa, Italy, and Southern France, then Major Shields became chief of PSYWAR for the 6th Army in October 1944. Afterward he became Brigadier General McClure's executive officer at Supreme Headquarters until the end of the war in Europe. Following the war, Shields returned to Indianapolis and the newspaper business as a circulation manager, but maintained his commission in the Indiana National Guard.

commonly called) in Japan in late December 1951. Despite a shortage of unit equipment Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Homer E. Shields, the 1st RB&L Group commander, had to provide FEC with interim reinforcements.

LTC Shields and his small staff, had less than four months to field the unit. The three-phase training program consisted of basic military training, a general introduction to PSYWAR, and specialty training. The basic military training included the standard military subjects, common soldier tasks, and weapons marksmanship. Not knowing where they would be assigned, base defense was taught to the mobile radio company. With other units also preparing for deployment the 1st RB&L competed for tight resources.²⁹ PSYWAR training was less competitive.

Formal training for PSYWAR was not universal in the



En route to Japan on the USNS General Brewster the soldiers put on a variety show to pass the time. (L to R: Hall Weed, Bud Perfit, Gerry Deppe)

1st RB&L. Some officers attended the first Psychological Warfare Unit Officers' Course at Fort Riley. European theater PSYWAR veterans, most recalled to active duty, filled the course with their World War II experiences. When the students asked about Korea "the instructors were not allowed to talk about current operations," said Arthur Holch.³⁰ Since many officers had been selected because they were journalists for both radio and print, this was a surprise.³¹ There was no enlisted PSYWAR course, so the 1st RB&L soldiers developed their own curriculum under the guidance of LTC Shields. The internal classes ranged from "Introduction to PSYWAR" to "News Writing." "1LT Jack Morris took the writers and conducted drills on how to think and write with limited information. But we were also soldiers and had to go to bivouac and the rifle range," said Tony Severino.³²

In the final phase of training at Fort Riley, LTC Shields integrated all unit capabilities. Based on intelligence reports, artists and writers prepared leaflets. The leaflets were lithographed by the photographers and printed by the press operators. Radio scriptwriters wrote programs that were presented by radio technicians.³³

With the 1st RB&L Group training at Fort Riley, Kansas nearing completion, the unit was divided into three increments. A twelve-man advance party flew to Tokyo in June 1951 to augment the PWS staff. The main body moved by train to Camp Stoneman, CA and then boarded the USNS *General Brewster* for Japan. Their voyage lasted from 12 July to 6 August 1951. The last element followed two months later, on the USNS *John Pope*. They arrived in Japan the first week of October 1951. Soldiers completed training courses while they waited for unit equipment, notably the mobile radio vans.

As it settled in, the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group became absorbed in the Far East Command's (FEC) effort to support the United Nations fight in Korea. In Japan the 1st RB&L underwent an administrative redesignation. It was "tagged" the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group, 8239th Army Unit, signifying that it was assigned to the FEC.³⁴ LTC

Shields received a formal mission statement in Japan. General Order 61, FEC Headquarters and Service Command, specified that the unit was to "... conduct strategic propaganda operations in direct support of military operations, support the national world-wide propaganda effort, and provide operational support to tactical propaganda operations in the Far East Command."³⁵ This meant that the 1st RB&L would conduct radio broadcasting in Japan and Korea and produce strategic leaflets in Japan for dissemination in Korea.

As the Group commander, LTC Shields became the liaison with the FEC PWS, while retaining command. Recognizing that the unit needed more cultural training, Shields implemented a program from 31 August through 22 October 1951. One hour, four days a week were devoted to Chinese and Korean culture, geography, economics, history, and politics classes. Attendance was mandatory for all enlisted soldiers and optional for officers.³⁶ Subsequent soldier training included military intelligence and tactics classes. As a supporting commander, LTC Shields "conducted several orchestras," each with its own requirements and capabilities, simultaneously.

The 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group scrambled to support the Psychological Warfare Section campaign in Tokyo and re-establish and operate radio stations in Korea. The majority of the group



Shopping district near the Finance Building in Tokyo.

supported FEC general headquarters in Tokyo. The 3rd Reproduction Company was co-located with the Far East Command's Printing and Publications Center (print plant) in Motosumiyoshi, south of Tokyo.³⁷ Radio programming for the Voice of the United Nations Command (VUNC) became a major priority for the unit. The first missions were conducted from Japan.

The 1st RB&L soldiers worked and lived in different conditions in Japan. Although large sections of Tokyo had been destroyed by bombs during WWII, the business district surrounding the Japanese Imperial



The 3rd Reproduction Company building in Motosumiyoshi. The company HQ and the billets were here, and the soldiers worked nearby in the FEC print plant.

Palace was intact. The U.S. bombing raids avoided the area. Living quarters and work space were located in that district.

The soldiers were billeted in the "Finance Building," a five-story structure that was the old Imperial government Ministry of Finance (it would be like living in the Treasury Building in Washington DC). It was close to the moated Imperial Palace. Occupation duty in Japan was a relief for most soldiers. Japan was rebuilding after the war and for Americans the cost of living was very inexpensive. This prompted some officers and NCOs to bring their wives to live on the economy.³⁸

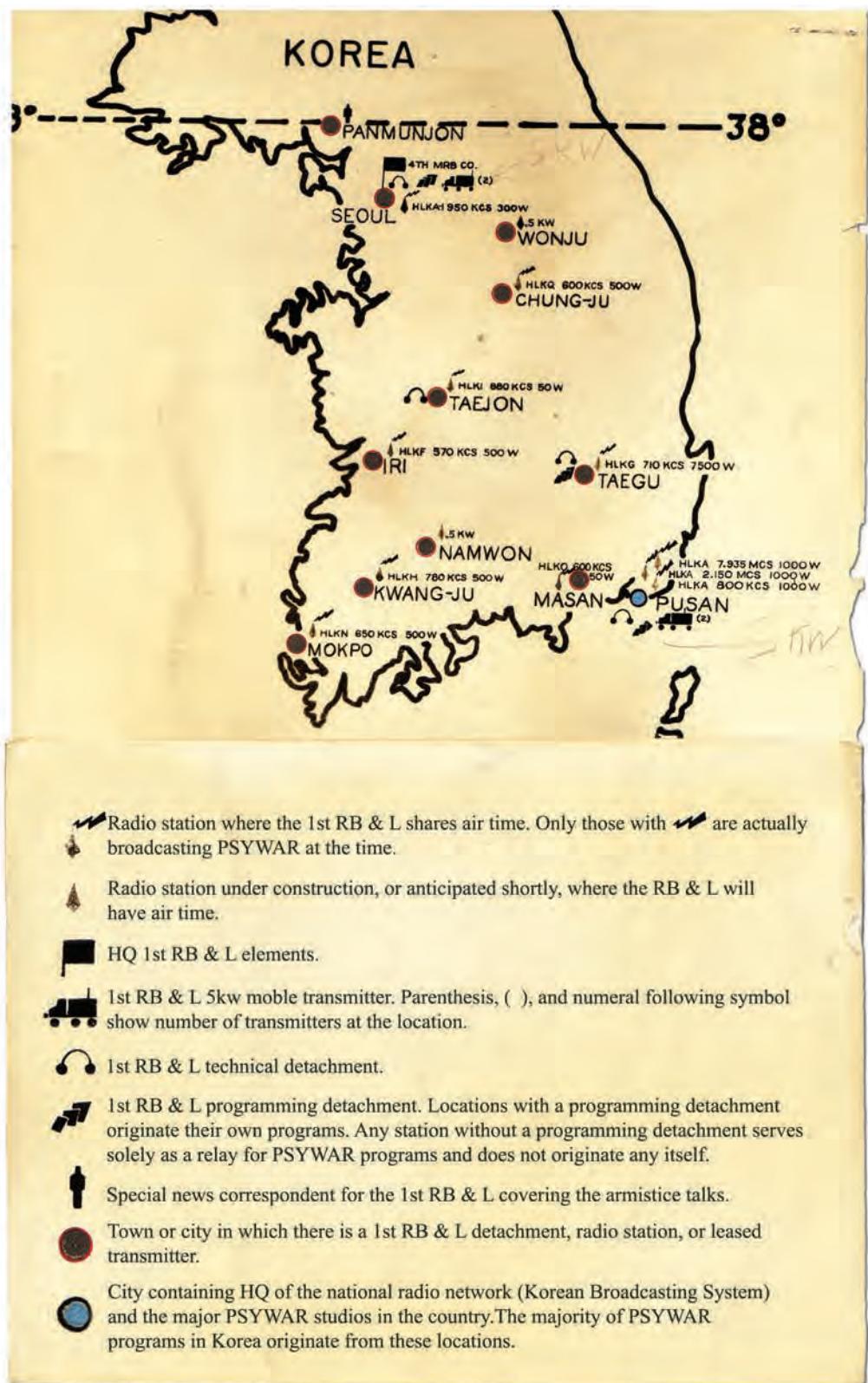
The Finance Building was better than the Fort Riley barracks. The soldiers slept in 15-to-30 man open bays. They had a mess hall, bowling alley, pool hall, post exchange, library, and barbershop available in the building.³⁹ Officers lived in officers' clubs and private quarters throughout Tokyo. The 1st RB&L's daily routine in Tokyo began with physical training on the roof of the building. Following breakfast, the soldiers either walked or rode a bus to the Empire Building where the PSYWAR offices were located.⁴⁰

The 3rd Reproduction Company was based in Motosumiyoshi, halfway between Tokyo and Yokohama.⁴¹ Though its four high-speed Harris offset presses were co-located with the print plant in the fixed site, the company remained a separate unit.⁴² They stayed in Japan while the radio detachments of the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company began moving to Korea.

Mountainous Korea required VUNC to rely on low-power transmitters/repeaters on mountaintops throughout the country. Eventually there were twelve of these transmitter/repeater stations. Broadcasts to China and North Korea were serviced by nineteen Broadcasting Corporation of Japan sites on the Japanese islands. By late 1951,

VUNC was broadcasting ninety minutes of programming countrywide, twice daily.⁴³

The radio detachments of the 1st RB&L Group began deploying to Korea in August and September 1951. They had to refurbish, and reestablish Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) facilities for use by the United Nations and the South Korean government as VUNC. Beginning in Pusan, new Japanese-built radio transmitters were installed. Transmission quickly followed. Pusan was the



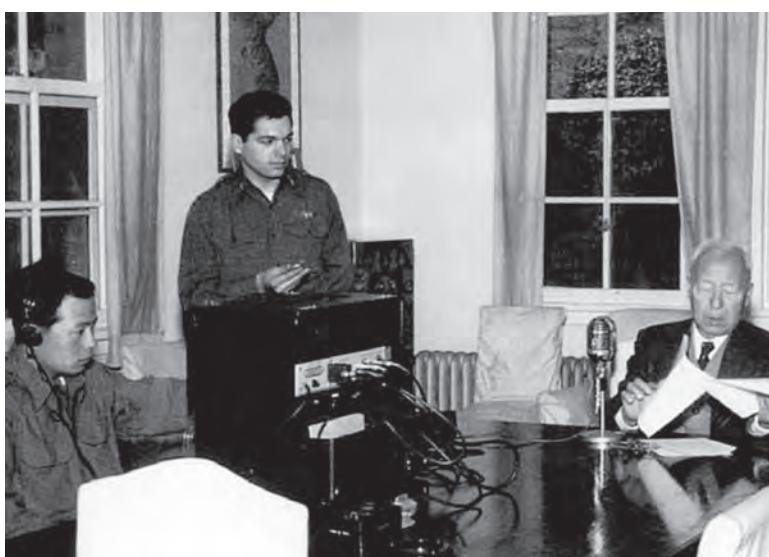
This hand drawn map shows the location of the 1st RB&L units in Korea circa 1952.



The officer's quarters in "Paradise Pines" (Pusan), a lone wood-framed tent. The soldiers' Quonset huts are visible to the rear.



In Pusan translators prepare scripts in Korean and Chinese for broadcast from copy written in English by 1st RB&L soldiers. 1LT Eddie Deerfield is shown in the rear.



South Korean President Syngman Rhee (in front of the microphone) records a speech for broadcast on the Korean Broadcast System. In the center of the photo is 1LT Eddie Deerfield. On the left is radio technician Lee Tuk Bin.

temporary South Korean capital since the North Koreans captured Seoul in July 1950. New stations in Taejon and Taegu followed.⁴⁴ Eventually five sites were established in Korea (Pusan, Seoul, Munson, Taejon and Taegu). While all produced good work, two radio detachments stand out, Pusan and Seoul.

The key to successful PSYWAR was a detailed target audience analysis and maintaining a series of themes. At each radio station in Korea, the broadcasts were locally controlled. Separate staffs prepared news broadcasts, commentaries, and special features. At first the soldiers gathered news from open sources. Sometimes this included a short telephone call to the 1st RB&L Group headquarters. Eventually teletype machines linked each radio station with the 1st RB&L headquarters in Tokyo and with the U.S. wire service news.⁴⁵ However, the soldiers continued to gather "local news" to inform the population.

In late August 1951 1LT Eddie Deerfield's detachment went to Pusan. Deerfield had to set up the radio station, prepare programs with the Korean staff, and coordinate with South Korean officials at the highest level. From his residence in Pusan, President Syngman Rhee prepared speeches for broadcast that had to be cleared. Taped speeches were reviewed by Deerfield and his soldiers before being aired. President Rhee continually pressed for the reunification of Korea, while the UN only supported the restoration of the 38th parallel as the border.⁴⁶

Americans and Koreans operated the Pusan radio station. Four to six Korean translators worked side-by-side with Deerfield's soldiers in the newsroom. "Supervision of the Korean staff of the Pusan station of the Korean Broadcasting System, was jointly done by the Korean government official who served as station Director and the Commanding Officer of the Pusan Detachment," said Eddie Deerfield.⁴⁷

In Pusan the Americans lived at the radio station in three Quonset huts and a tent.⁴⁸ The RB&L soldiers dubbed their compound "Paradise Pines." Eighth U.S. Army headquarters and the UN Civil Assistance Command Korea (UNCACK) provided administrative support. "At meal times the soldiers would drive down the hill to the UNCACK mess hall," said Tony Severino.⁴⁹ On Saturdays the soldiers got a projector from Special Services to show a Hollywood film. Movie night became the social event of the week for the Korean staff, their families, and the soldiers.⁵⁰

By the end of September 1951 the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company had expanded into Seoul, Taejon, and Taegu. Seoul was the most important because it was the symbol of the South Korean government.⁵¹ "We arrived at our HLKA building [the station call sign], which had been RCA's [Radio Corporation of America] headquarters in Korea prior to the fighting. RCA originally had a 10,000-watt transmitter near a huge tower in the heart of the city," said PFC Sig Front.⁵² The RCA Building, near the Capitol Building and City Hall, was pockmarked by shellfire. The North Koreans had stolen most of the equipment

and radio tubes. However, some Army radio engineers pieced together salvaged transmitting equipment from throughout the city and had a station capable of transmitting at 5,000-watts an hour a day in Korean.⁵³ Living conditions in Seoul were spartan.

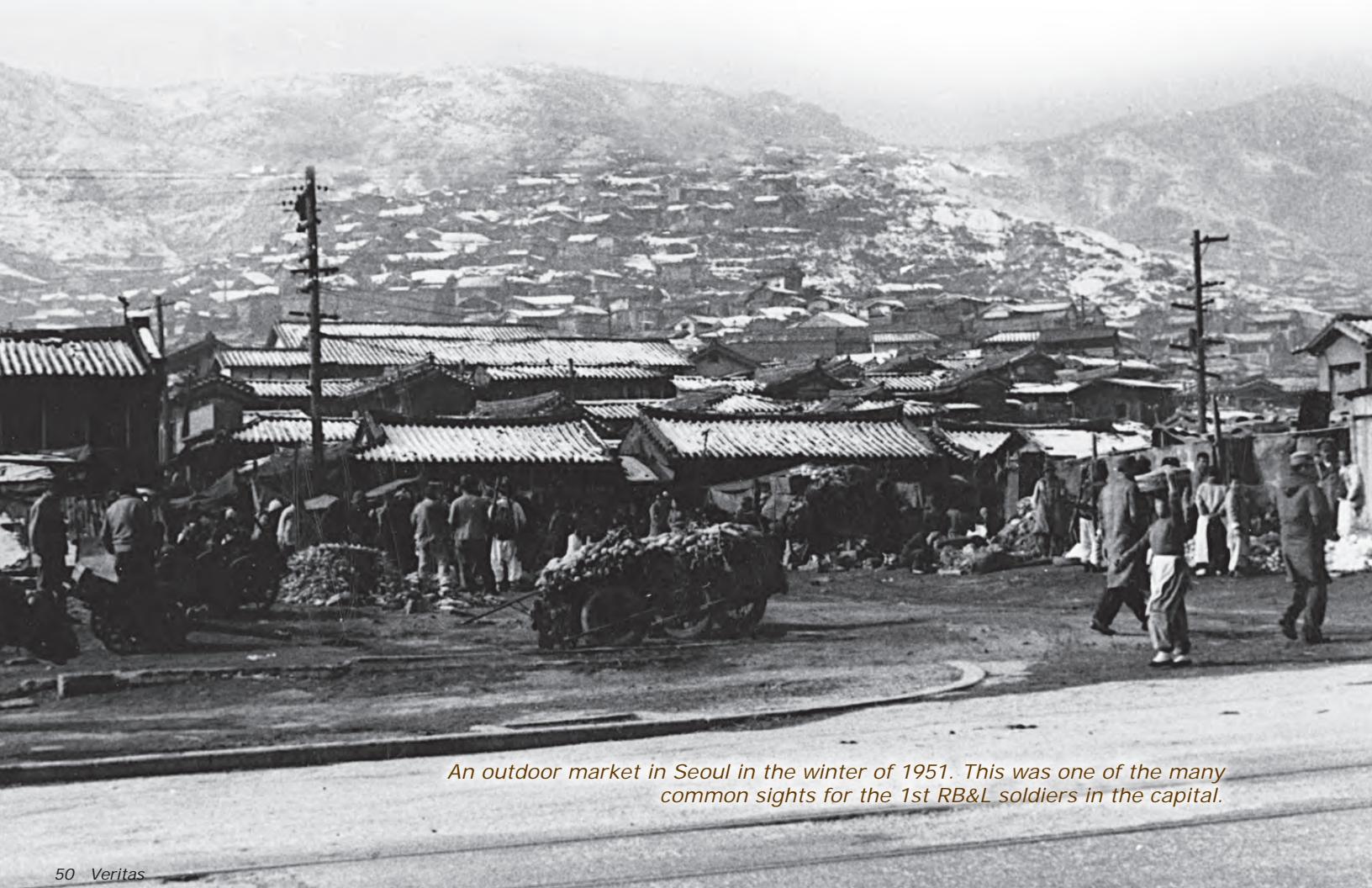
"When I arrived in Seoul, there was no running water, little electricity except from military generators, little fuel for cooking and none for heating comfort," wrote PFC Sig Front.⁵⁴ "We had cots and sleeping bags. Much of the time the temperature was below zero. We had a Coleman burner to heat C Rations for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I never had a hot meal created by cooks until I did a story on the 1st Marine Division. The Marines at that time had not only plenty of meats, potatoes, canned fruits and vegetables, but also peanut butter and fresh bread. They gave me a huge can of peanut butter, similar in size to a gallon of paint, which I shared with the guys and many Koreans who had begun to live in our building since they did work for HLKA."⁵⁵

To operate the Seoul radio station Lieutenant Thomas Glowacki enlisted local help. The Koreans worked for food which Glowacki got from UNCAK. However, with the workers came their families. "We fed some forty people, families with young children, with the father working at some support job for the station," said Sig Front. One day a well-dressed Korean in a suit walked into the station looking for a job with HLKA. "I needed someone who would copy TASS [Telegraph Agency of

the Soviet Union -- *Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza* in Russian, the Communist propaganda station] in Korean and translate it into English for me. He knew CW code and English. It took him four hours to transcribe TASS, and then four hours to translate it into English. Following that, he would have a very stiff drink right after handing me the copies," said Sig Front.⁵⁶ Radio Seoul could then "scoop" Communist broadcasts.

Another practice was to tape radio news in the field. The "Tape Team" consisting of Sig Front and two interpreters; one Korean and one Chinese, loaded up in a jeep, "covering the same stories as all foreign correspondents," said Front.⁵⁷ "We devised specific broadcasts we thought would discourage the North Koreans."⁵⁸ "The North Koreans had not had biscuits [a staple all Koreans liked with their meals] for several years, and we learned when they realized the South was getting biscuits again, they were depressed about it," said Sig Front.⁵⁹ "Our Korean tape teams interviewed farmers, workers in factories, shop keepers and others to make people in the North realize they were losing the war. There was no better way then to let them hear such statements first hand from citizens like themselves."⁶⁰ The tape team also did stories about the various United Nations units in Korea.

With over twenty countries fighting in Korea there were plenty of stories. One example stands out. "... the Turks returned to Korea after being nearly wiped out by



An outdoor market in Seoul in the winter of 1951. This was one of the many common sights for the 1st RB&L soldiers in the capital.



These photographs show a snapshot of the devastation wrought on South Korea's capital after being occupied and liberated twice in a year (North Koreans capture July 1950; UN liberation September 1950; Chinese and North Koreans capture January 1951; and UN liberation 15 March 1951). The photo at the bottom left shows the lone streetcar working in the capital.

the Chinese. Their general got on the radio and taunted the Chinese Army Command in the North. He told them where the Turks were going to be on the line, and dared them to attack," said Sig Front. A day later the VUNC repeated the taped broadcast. "They went across the line that night, with the old style knives [the] Turks used for hundreds of years, and butchered a lot of Chinese that night. The Chinese never challenged them again," said Sig Front. "I admired those Turks and will never forget them."⁶¹

In Tokyo the 1st RB&L soldiers operated differently. The Psychological Warfare Section (PWS) offices in the Empire Building were on the 6th floor. They included a modern radio studio and production facilities. While some soldiers worked on radio scripts, others developed printed products. A dedicated team of Chinese and

Korean civilians (working as Department of the Army employees) translated the works into Korean, Mandarin, and Cantonese.⁶²

The central theme for all 1st RB&L Group radio broadcasts was "Truth and News."⁶³ The VUNC radio broadcasts centered on three themes. The first was the illegality of the Communist actions in invading South Korea; the second was how the Communists exploited the Koreans; the third theme was providing information and news about the free world to both North and South Korea.

The 1st RB&L had guidelines to improve the reception of messages. They tried to broadcast on schedule. Messages had to be long enough to get the themes across, but not so long they put listeners at risk or became boring.



Bik Cha Kim, a Korean actress-announcer makes a radio broadcast from VUNC in Tokyo. Women were often used for radio broadcasts aimed at the North Korean soldiers and civilians.

Finally, writers hunted for topics that would be of interest to the listener and still get the UN theme across. The writers had to remember that the broadcasts were heard on both sides of the line of contact.⁶⁴ There were sufficient stories, international and national, to go around.

To improve quality, panels of native speakers listened to recent VUNC broadcast tapes. The panel evaluated reactions to the message, accuracy of the translation, and appropriate level of language for the target audience. As the Chinese presence in Korea grew this became more important and difficult at the same time.⁶⁵



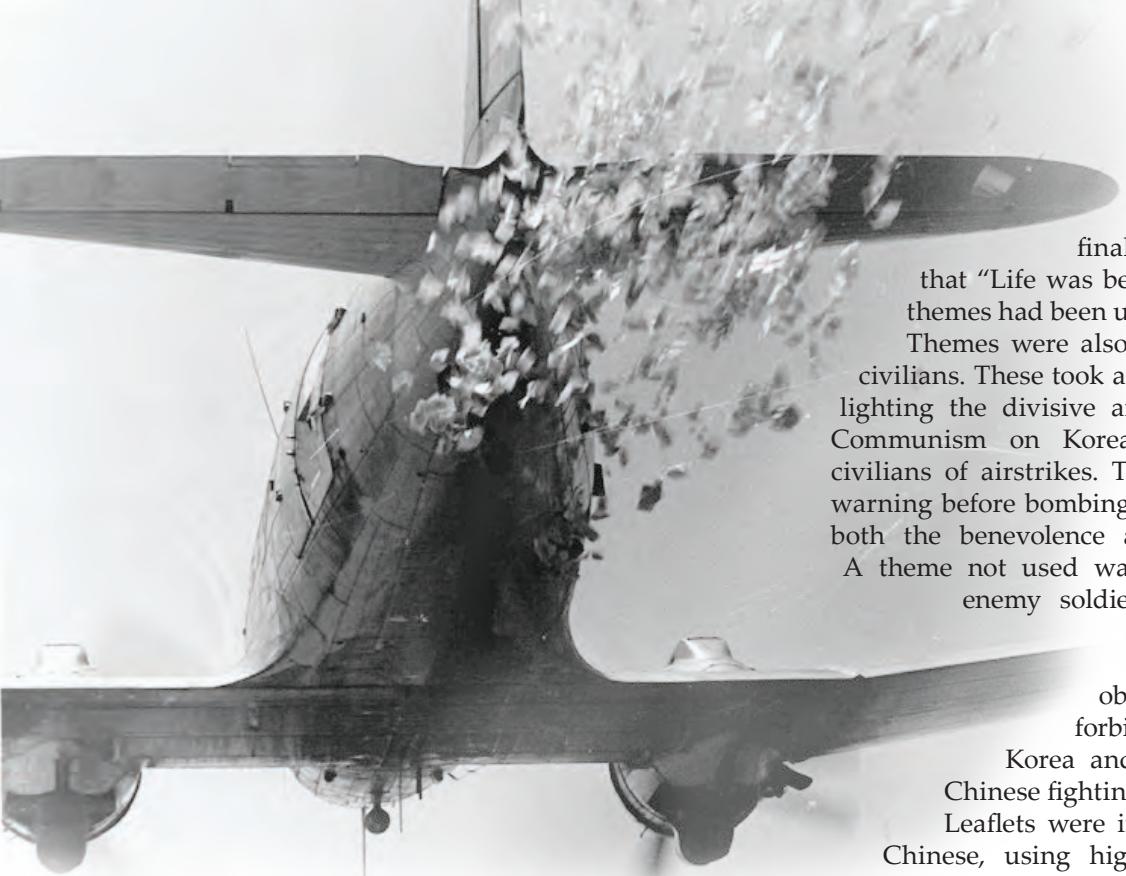
Korean workers load newspaper leaflets into bombs (September 1952)

The RB&L sometimes used enemy broadcasts. Analysts in the 1st RB&L Analysis and Evaluation Section concluded that some enemy broadcasts were in certain languages but not in others. The omissions indicated that the enemy wanted to keep the truth from specific audiences. Monitored broadcasts could be translated into the missing language and rebroadcast to Communist-held areas. The best part was citing Radio Moscow, Radio Peking, or Radio P'yongyang as the source.⁶⁶ By "scooping" the Communist stations or broadcasting a counter message before the initial enemy broadcast, PSYWAR delayed Communist broadcasts by forcing them to courier important messages.⁶⁷

The United Nations forces in Korea produced over two billion leaflets during the war; sometimes as many as 20 million a week.⁶⁸ With information from many sources, and current policy and themes, 1st RB&L writers drew



Leaflets were flown to Kimpo Air Base, outside of Seoul, where they were loaded aboard cargo aircraft for dissemination.



Rear view of a C-47 dropping leaflets in Korea.

up scripts for leaflets after weekly planning meetings. Written in English, they translated the strategic PSYWAR leaflets. Chinese and Korean artists worked side-by-side with the Americans. They were attuned to subtleties and nuances of Asian design. Upon receiving an assignment, the soldiers designed rough layouts and then discussed the product design with Chinese, Korean, and Japanese civilian artists.⁶⁹ Once the finer points had been resolved, the draft product was reviewed at the PWS offices on the 3rd floor.⁷⁰

Once approved, the proofs were taken by courier to the print plant in Motosumiyoshi, protected by an armed guard.⁷¹ At the print plant, the artwork proofs were photographed and then made into lithograph plates. With these plates, the leaflets could then be mass-produced. Once printed, the leaflets were then either packaged for air delivery or rolled and packed inside leaflet bombs. The bombs were taken to Tachikawa Air Base. Leaflets were flown to Kimpo Air Base, outside of Seoul, where they were loaded aboard cargo aircraft for dissemination.

The PSYWAR leaflet effort targeting enemy soldiers centered on four themes. The first was, "Surrender and get good treatment." The second closely resembled the first, "Surrender and return home

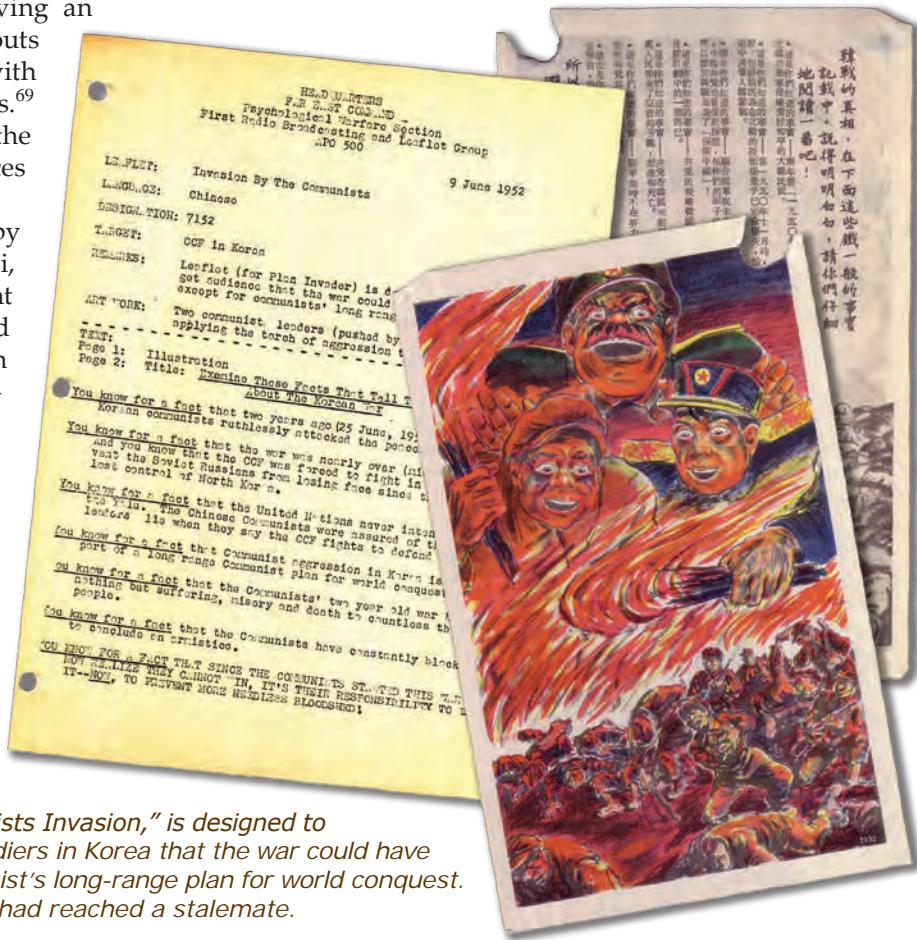
This leaflet, with the theme "The Communists Invasion," is designed to convince the target audience of Chinese soldiers in Korea that the war could have been over long ago, except for the Communist's long-range plan for world conquest. It was dropped in June 1952 when the war had reached a stalemate.

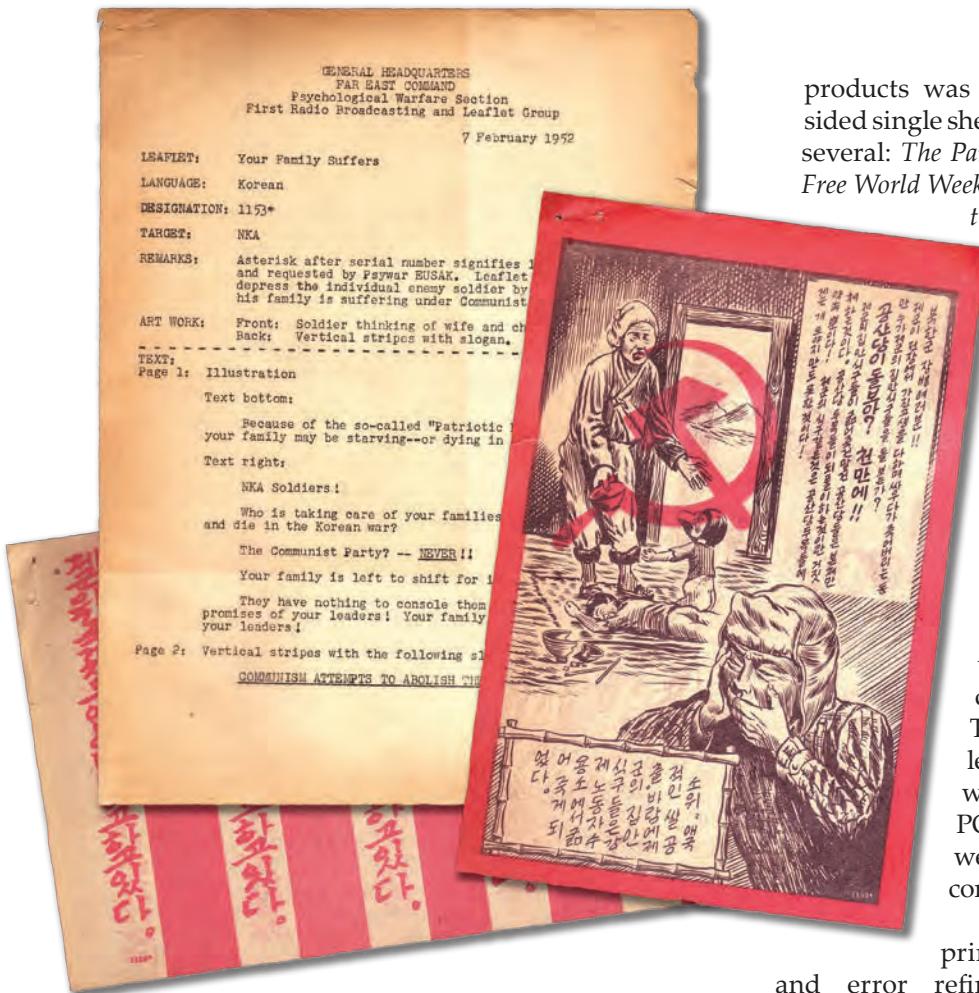
alive after the war." The third stressed "The invincibility and strength of the UN." The final theme was "Survival," stressing that "Life was better than dying in war." These themes had been used during World War II.

Themes were also successfully oriented towards civilians. These took a different approach, often highlighting the divisive and exploitative role of foreign Communism on Korea.⁷² Strategic leaflets warned civilians of airstrikes. The UN *modus operandi* to give warning before bombing strikes and then do it showed both the benevolence and the power of the UN.⁷³

A theme not used was a negative portrayal of the enemy soldier.⁷⁴ As with other American operations, PSYWAR concentrated primarily on military objectives.⁷⁵ However, the UN forbid any reference to a unified Korea and targeting former Nationalist Chinese fighting in Korea.⁷⁶

Leaflets were initially printed in Korean and Chinese, using highly academic language. This alienated much of the target population who only read at a basic level or were illiterate. To compensate, in the summer of 1951 leaflet designers simplified their messages and relied more on illustrations.⁷⁷ Leaflets were usually specific to Koreans or Chinese. Significant cultural differences made simple translations less than effective.⁷⁸





Leaflet number 1153* was targeted at North Korean soldiers, to depress them by suggesting that their families were suffering under Communist domination. The leaflet was requested by the Eighth U.S. Army in Korea and developed by the 1st RB&L Group. Red was a common color used in leaflets for the visual effect. The leaflet numbering system enabled PSYWAR elements to assess effectiveness thru enemy surrenders.

In the summer of 1952, to deal with the language problems, members of the 1st RB&L constructed a basic Chinese dictionary of more than 1,400 characters. Common Chinese soldiers understood the simplified language.⁷⁹ Based on prisoner interrogations and information from tactical commanders, some leaflets contained specific messages. New leaflets with dated information were printed on paper that dissolved when exposed to the elements. Safe Conduct Passes were printed on more durable paper. They often resembled currency so enemy soldiers could conceal them from their superiors.⁸⁰ "When intelligence revealed that Chinese soldiers were short rolling paper for cigarettes, a leaflet was printed on cigarette paper," said John Davenport.⁸¹ "Later we were told by Lieutenant Mickelsen [the graphic art OIC] that the Chinese were also short toilet paper, so we hoped they used the right leaflet type for the right purpose."⁸²

One of the most successful strategic printed

products was newspapers. They were just double-sided single sheet products, but the 1st RB&L produced several: *The Parachute News*, *The Free World News*, *The Free World Weekly Digest*, *Free Korea*, and *The Rehabilitation News*. On 17 July 1950, the first issue of *The Parachute News* in Korean fluttered into enemy-held areas. Nineteen issues of the 5" x 7" newspaper were distributed. In late November 1950, it became the *Free World Weekly News*, with a Mandarin version. The themes of the *News* centered on industry, agriculture, textiles, housing, food, and the ROK military. *The Free World Weekly News* was also delivered to friendly areas in the summer of 1951.

Distribution in the North ceased with the Armistice, but publication continued for the South until 1957.⁸³ The United Nations went to great lengths to present true, verifiable facts, which, coincidentally, were pro-UN. POW feedback revealed that these papers were their only source of news and they considered it unbiased.⁸⁴

1st RB&L leaflets were delivered primarily by USAF aircraft. Trial and error refined dissemination techniques. At the beginning of the war, leaflets were loaded unbound and then shoveled out the open cargo door. Once the door opened large volumes of loose paper swirled around the cargo compartment creating a maelstrom of leaflets. This was hazardous.⁸⁵

To solve the that problem leaflets were wrapped in paper bundle "bricks" and secured with twine. Once the brick was tossed outside the door, the twine was supposed to break in the slipstream. 1st Lieutenant Jim Haynes from the Group Operations Section decided to accompany a leaflet drop. When given the chance to throw some leaflets, Haynes stepped up. "Except no one told me to aim for the lower left corner of the door, so I threw about chest high and the string broke before it got out the door, blowing the leaflets back into the cargo compartment of the aircraft," remembered Haynes.⁸⁶ A better system was to attach a blasting cap, short length of fuse, and a fuse igniter to the string. Crewmen at the cargo door pulled the fuse igniter before they threw the brick out. It opened outside the aircraft when the fuse ignited the blasting cap. Flying at six to eight thousand feet, a foot of time fuse blew the bundles apart at one or two thousand feet.⁸⁷

A variety of USAF aircraft were used for leaflet dissemination by the 1st RB&L. On some occasions small liaison and artillery spotter aircraft were used. The most commonly used aircraft were the Douglas C-47 Skytrain, the Curtiss C-46 Commando, and the Douglas A-26 Invader medium bomber. The B-29 bomber also dropped



Korean soldiers assigned as "door kickers" wait for the time to drop. Visible on the leaflet "bricks" or bundles are fuse igniters. Before throwing the brick, the fuse igniter was pulled. Once clear of the aircraft the time fuse would ignite the blasting cap and the leaflets would scatter.

leaflet bombs. Each type of aircraft had advantages and disadvantages. The Skytrains and Commandos could carry more cargo, but they were slow, unarmored, and unarmed. The A-26 was fast, but had a limited payload. The B-29 could carry up to a million and a half leaflets, instead of sixteen tons of bombs, but at 10,000 feet dispersion was highly erratic.⁸⁸

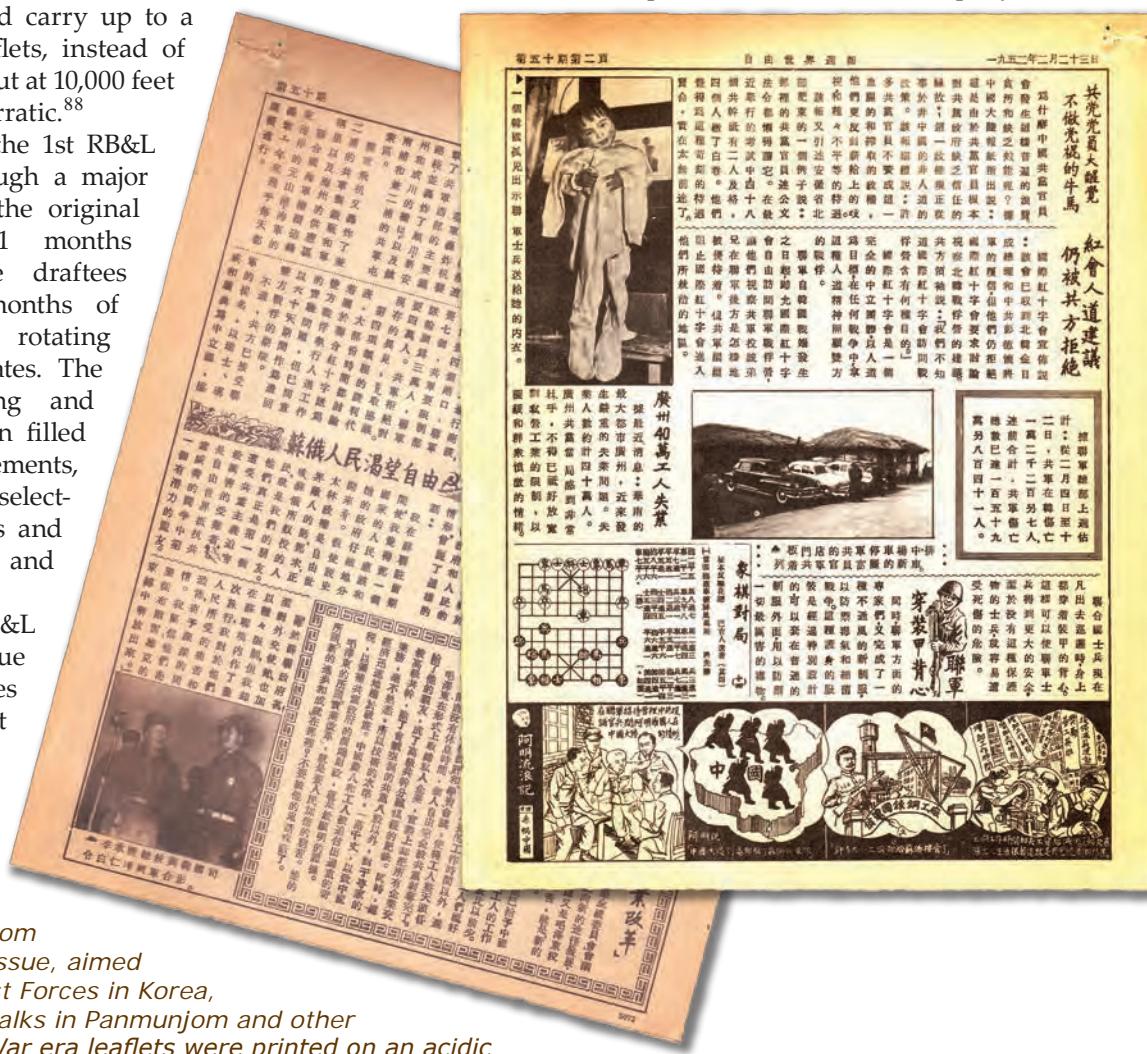
By the end of 1952 the 1st RB&L Group was going through a major personnel change. As the original reservists reached 21 months active duty and the draftees completed their 24 months of service, they started rotating back to the United States. The 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group was then filled with individual replacements, many of whom were selected by the C&A process and trained at Fort Riley and Fort Bragg.

The original 1st RB&L Group was a unique unit. The mix of draftees and Reservists brought with them education and experience that the Army could not quickly



"Door kickers" preparing leaflets for airdrop.

provide during wartime. The classification and analysis (C&A) process identified soldiers with skills to support PSYWAR operations not only for the 1st RB&L, but also for the 2nd Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company and



An example of the "Free World Weekly Digest." Issue #50, from February 1952. This issue, aimed at Chinese Communist Forces in Korea, discusses the peace talks in Panmunjom and other news items. Korean War era leaflets were printed on an acidic paper that discolored and eventually decayed.



Operation MOOLAH

One of the most well-known PSYWAR operations was also highly controversial. In November 1950, the Communists introduced the MiG-15 jet fighter. It was superior to all U.S. aircraft flying over Korea and was especially effective on B-29 bomber formations. In response, the United States Air Force (USAF) quickly dispatched the F-86 to counter the MiG. But tactical air equality was not enough. What the USAF needed was a superior aircraft with a tactical "edge." They wanted an intact MiG-15 for research and analysis to get that "edge." However MiGs avoided UN territory (lending credence is the belief that the pilots were Red Chinese or Russian). The first captured MiG-15 had crash landed on a sandbar in enemy territory. While this was helpful, the USAF still wanted a flyable MiG.¹

In March 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a plan to acquire a MiG from a defecting pilot. The plan was simple; the first pilot to deliver a working MiG to UN forces would get \$100,000. Any subsequent MiG defections would receive \$50,000. A defecting pilot would be granted political asylum. The campaign would be promulgated by radio broadcasts and leaflet drops²

The originator of the plan, which became known as Operation MOOLAH, is in some dispute. One source indicates that the idea originated in Brigadier General Robert A. McClure's Office of Psychological Warfare in the Pentagon.³ General Mark W. Clark claimed Edward Hymoff, the Bureau Chief of the International News Service in Korea, hatched it over a bottle of brandy as the two were flying to Korea in late 1952.⁴ There are several other versions.

Regardless of where the idea originated, the 1st RB&L Group designed and printed the leaflets in Korean, Chinese, and Russian. In an earlier version of "Reach Back," used by PSYOP units today, the theme was presented to the 1st RB&L in Tokyo. On 1 April 1953, the UN Joint Psychological Warfare committee approved Operation MOOLAH. The writers and artists of the 1st RB&L went to work, finishing the leaflet products on 20

April 1953.⁵ The UN Commander in Korea, General Mark W. Clark made the first radio broadcast in English. The message was repeated in Russian, Chinese, and Korean. The campaign used radio broadcasts and aerial leaflets in Russian, Chinese, and Korean. Before the end of April 1953, a million leaflets had been dropped on North Korean airfields. A half million more followed in May 1953.⁶ The results were not immediate.

While no defectors with planes appeared, MiG operations over North Korea ceased for eight days after the initial drop of leaflets. Radio broadcasts in Russian were jammed. Strangely those in Chinese and Korean were not. When the MiGs did return to the sky, they were hesitant to engage. UN pilots noticed a decided downturn in flying skills and aggressiveness. Finally, in September 1953 a North Korean pilot landed a MiG 15 at Kimpo Airbase near Seoul, South Korea. Ironically he had never heard of the reward offer, by leaflet or radio broadcast. The defecting pilot eventually got the \$100,000 reward and received political asylum in the U.S.⁷ It was later determined that the MiGs were based in China along the border and flew missions into North Korea.

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The MiG-15 (left) and the F-86 (right) were considered the top jet fighters of their day. The U.S. Air Force wanted to analyze the capabilities of the Communist MiG-15.

the 6th and 301st RB&Ls. LTC Shields effectively balanced the skills of the highly creative individuals to fulfill diverse PSYWAR missions in Korea and Japan. The 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group is a historical legacy for Psychological Operations soldiers today. ♣

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24 Thomas Klein, 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones Jr., 1 March 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, telephone interview notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

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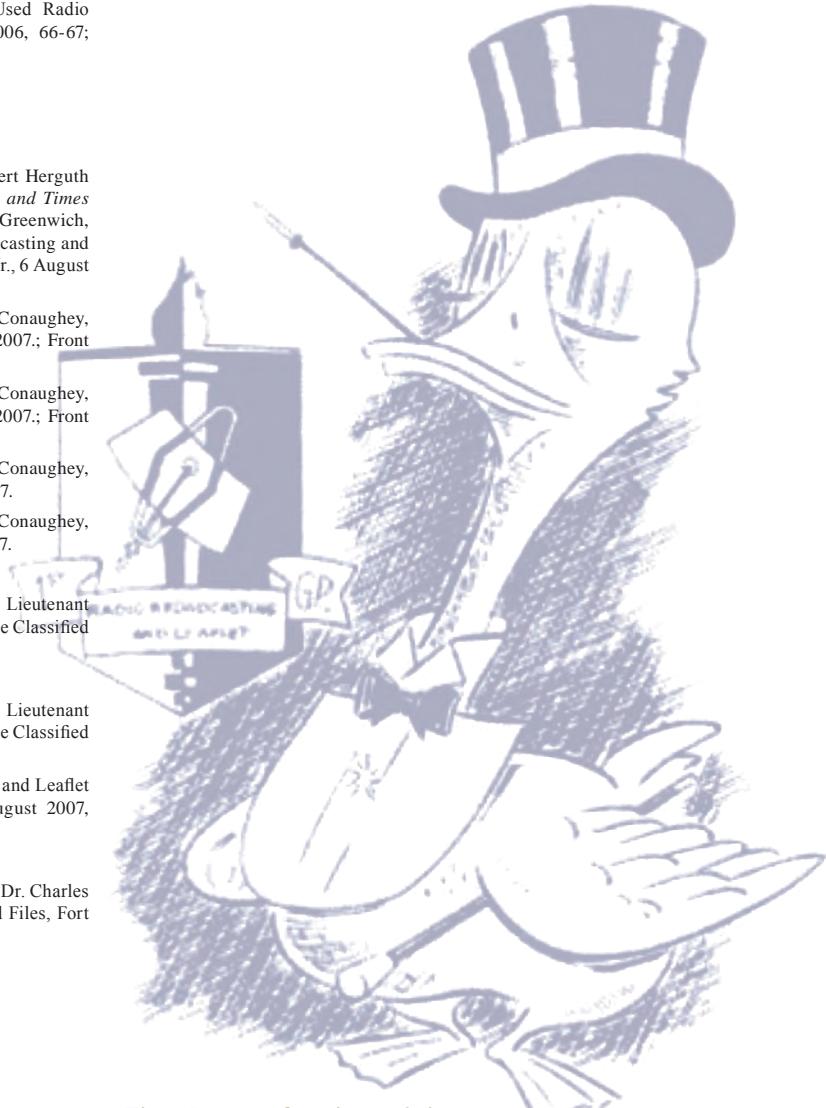
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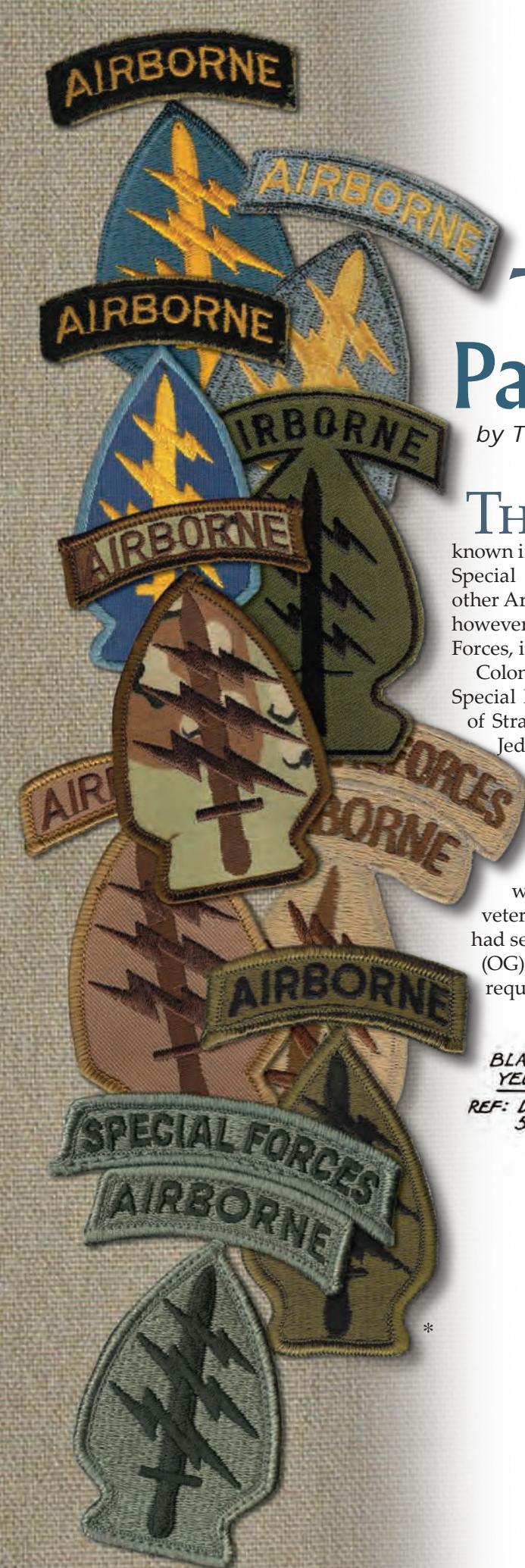
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The “Proper Gander” of the 1st RB&L Group.

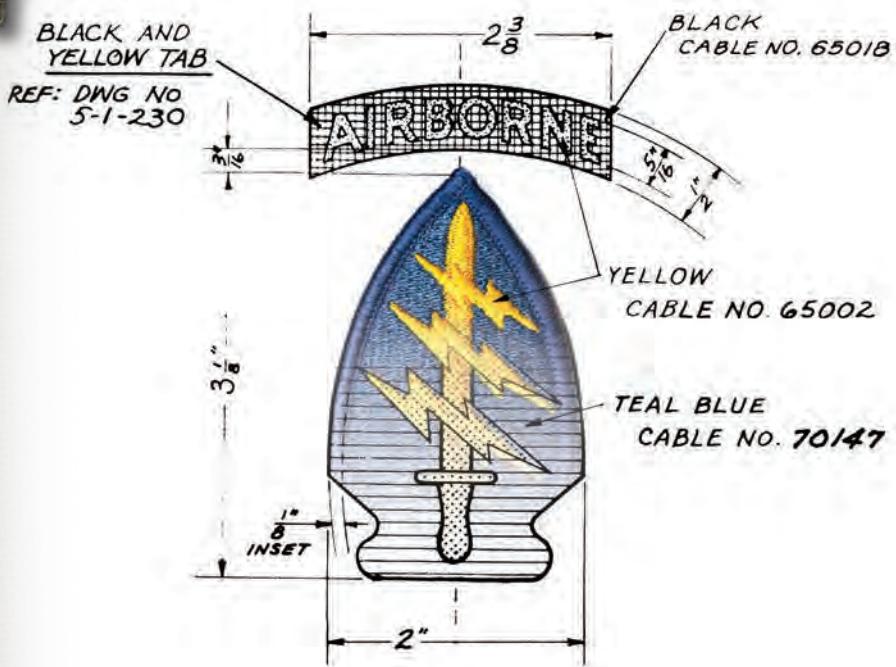


The Special Forces Patch: History and Origins

by Troy J. Sacquety

THE Special Forces distinctive shoulder sleeve insignia (SSI) is well known in U.S. military circles, but its origin is not. From its inception in 1952, Special Forces (SF) sought a distinctive symbol to distinguish itself from other Army units. The most significant symbol is the Green Beret. This article, however, will address the origins of an equally important identifier of Special Forces, its shoulder sleeve insignia (SSI).

Colonel Aaron Bank was the first commanding officer of the U.S. Army Special Forces. Bank served in the Special Operations branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in World War II as the commanding officer of Jedburgh Team PACKARD, and in Laos as the commanding officer of Team RAVEN. The OSS did not have an approved SSI.¹ As a result, personnel who had been detailed to the OSS from the U.S. Army and who were airborne qualified chose to wear the Airborne Command SSI on the right sleeve as their combat patch.² After Bank formed the 10th Special Forces Group (SFG), and while Special Forces was assigned to the Psychological Warfare Center, many Army OSS veterans joined the organization. The majority of these OSS veterans had served in either the OSS Special Operations (SO) or Operational Group (OG) branches and had become airborne qualified during the war.³ The requirement for SF personnel to be airborne qualified, ideally with





Colonel Aaron Bank was the first Commanding Officer of the 10th Special Forces Group. He served in France and Laos with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in WWII.



Lieutenant Colonel Jack T. Shannon was Colonel Bank's executive officer in the 10th SFG and remained at Fort Bragg to become the interim commanding officer of the 77th SFG. In WWII, he served with the OSS in France on the inter-Allied BERGAMOTTE mission, and in Burma with Detachment 101.



Colonel Edson Raff was the Commanding Officer of the 77th Special Forces Group. In WWII, Raff led the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion when it jumped into North Africa in 1942 during Operation TORCH.



Captain Herbert R. Brucker, one of the original 10th Special Forces Group members, in 1952. He is wearing the Airborne Command SSI. He is also wearing collar brass meant to signify the 10th SFG, but which was "borrowed" from the 10th Infantry Regiment.

combat experience, also attracted WWII paratroopers and veterans of the First Special Service Force. They were already

familiar with the Airborne Command patch from their Airborne and Glider School days during the war. Thus, this patch was adopted by the Special Forces and worn by the newly formed 10th SFG before its movement to Germany in late 1953. Because this patch was already associated with another organization, the Special Forces soldiers soon wanted their own distinct insignia.

The first Special Forces insignia was not a shoulder patch. Instead, it was the background oval for the parachute wings. In WWII, the various airborne units had adopted distinctive background ovals in their unit colors for their parachutist or glider wings. These ovals identified the wearer as a member of a specific unit, and the SF soldiers wanted this distinction as well. On 20 August 1952, Colonel Bank requested that the Department of the Army authorize a distinctive background oval for the 10th SFG (Airborne). This was approved on 19 September 1952.⁴

When the bulk of the 10th SFG moved to Germany in September 1953, the remaining SF personnel at Fort Bragg formed the cadre around which the 77th SFG was organized. Though they were no longer part of the 10th SFG, the initial 77th SFG troopers still wore the 10th SFG oval. In early 1954, Colonel Edson Raff succeeded interim commander Lieutenant Colonel Jack Shannon as the head of the 77th. Raff decided that his unit should have its own



The 77th SFG Oval (top) and the 10th SFG Oval (bottom).



Sergeant Major Gordon Shearer, then a Sergeant First Class, received the certificate at top from the 10th SFG in 1956. Notice that the 10th is still using the Airborne Command SSI. The next year, Shearer received another certificate. The Special Forces SSI had been added, but the airborne tab is not the one approved in 1958.

background oval. On 23 March 1954, he requested that an oval be based on the colors—teal blue with a diagonal yellow stripe—of the authorized “distinguishing flag” of the 77th SFG, which had been created and approved by the Department of the Army.⁵ On 16 June 1954, the 77th SFG background oval was approved.⁶ This measure was still insufficient.

The 77th SFG again took the initiative. A design for an SSI, submitted by Captain John W. Frye of the 77th

SFG, was approved by the Army on 22 August 1955.⁷ Frye’s design remains the SSI worn today. In 1955, the symbolism of the patch was officially recorded by the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry. That description reads: “The arrowhead alludes to the American Indian’s basic skills in which Special Forces personnel are trained to a high degree. The dagger represents the unconventional nature of Special Forces operations, and the three lightning flashes, their ability to strike rapidly by air, water, or land. Teal blue and yellow are the colors of unassigned units.”⁸

On 20 November 1958, after some experimentation with airborne tab colors—including yellow letters on teal to match the SSI—the patch was amended to add the airborne tab as an integral part of the SF SSI. The airborne tab, a black background with the word “AIRBORNE” in yellow letters, was to be placed $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch above the SF insignia.⁹

The patch was originally authorized to be worn by active duty Special Forces personnel only. This created problems with the Army Reserve and National Guard SF detachments. Consideration, but not approval, was given to allowing these USAR and ARNG units to wear the SSI, but possibly with a “different color background” than that of the active duty units.¹⁰ On 2 March 1960, the issue was resolved by the Department of the Army. The Special Forces SSI would be worn by all Army SF detachments.¹¹ With the formation of U.S. Army Special Forces Command in 1989, that headquarters adopted the basic SSI.

Soldiers of the Special Forces were immediately



There are many examples of theater-made versions of the SF Shoulder Sleeve Insignia. These two were made in the Republic of Vietnam.



The sign from Exercise FORMER CHAMP, held in 1968 on Taiwan. Notice that the Republic of China's Special Forces badge looks very similar to that of U.S. Army Special Forces.

recognized by their new insignia. Their professionalism inspired foreign militaries worldwide. An example of this inspiration was found in the USASOC History Office files—photographs of “FORMER CHAMP,” a 1968 combined U.S./Republic of China (ROC) exercise on Taiwan. The photographs show the insignia of U.S. Special Forces and Republic of China (Taiwan) Special Forces side-by-side. The ROC's Special Forces had adopted a patch similar to that worn by the U.S. Army Special Forces that trained them. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

The insignia and headgear of Special Forces are important identifiers that mark a soldier as belonging to an elite organization. Many may recognize various SF insignia, but few know their historical background. The history of its insignia is as much a part of the legacy of Special Forces as are its operations. ↑

I would like to thank the following for their help in this article; Mr. Caesar Civitella, Mr. Les Hughes, Mr. Geoffrey Barker, and Mr. Harry Pugh for providing critical comments; Mrs. Jane Hess, daughter of LTC Shannon, for the photo of her father, and SGM Gordon Shearer (ret) for the use of his certificates.

Endnotes

- * The introduction page features Special Forces Sleeve Insignia (SSI) from the earliest days of SF to the most current. Included are theater-made examples from the Gulf War and Vietnam. Also shown is a pre-1958 SF patch with the blue airborne tab, and at the top, one of the post-1958 examples. At the bottom is the current Army Combat Uniform (ACU) SSI. Thanks to Mr. Harry Pugh for providing these examples.
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- 2 For a brief time, Special Forces wore the Third Army patch with an airborne tab. Geoffrey T. Barker, *A Concise History of US Army Special Operations Forces With Lineage and Insignia* (Fayetteville, NC: Anglo-American Publishing, 1988), 143.
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The Special Forces SSI as amended in 1958.



A close up of the Republic of China Special Forces insignia. This example is a small metal pin.

cover purposes. The Airborne Command patch was typically worn by stateside personnel involved in training activities.

- 4 Arthur Dubois, letter to Colonel Aaron Bank, subject “Distinctive Insignia,” 19 September 1952, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. These ovals were sometimes worn on the unofficial beret.
- 5 Colonel Edson D. Raff, letter to Office, Quartermaster General, Washington DC, “Authorization for Distinctive Wing Background,” 2 March 1954, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 Arthur E. Dubois, letter to [Colonel Raff], subject “Distinctive Background Trimmings for Ground Badges,” 16 June 1954, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Quartermaster General, Washington DC, “Authorization for Distinctive Wing Background,” 2 March 1954, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 7 Lieutenant Colonel Ian Sutherland, *Special Forces of the United States Army: 1952–1982* (San Jose, CA: R. James Bender Publishing, 1990), 412–13.
- 8 Major John G. Goodlett Jr., “Shoulder Sleeve Insignia and Tab for the Special Forces Groups (Abn),” 20 November 1958, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 9 Goodlett Jr., “Shoulder Sleeve Insignia and Tab for the Special Forces Groups (Abn),” 20 November 1958, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 10 Colonel George M. Jones, letter to Colonel William H. Kinard, 15 September 1959, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 11 Colonel T.J. Marnane, “Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for Special Forces Detachments,” 2 March 1960, (also see LTC James S. Cook, Jr. “Shoulder Sleeve Insignia and Tab for the Special Forces Groups (Airborne),” 13 Jan. 1960, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

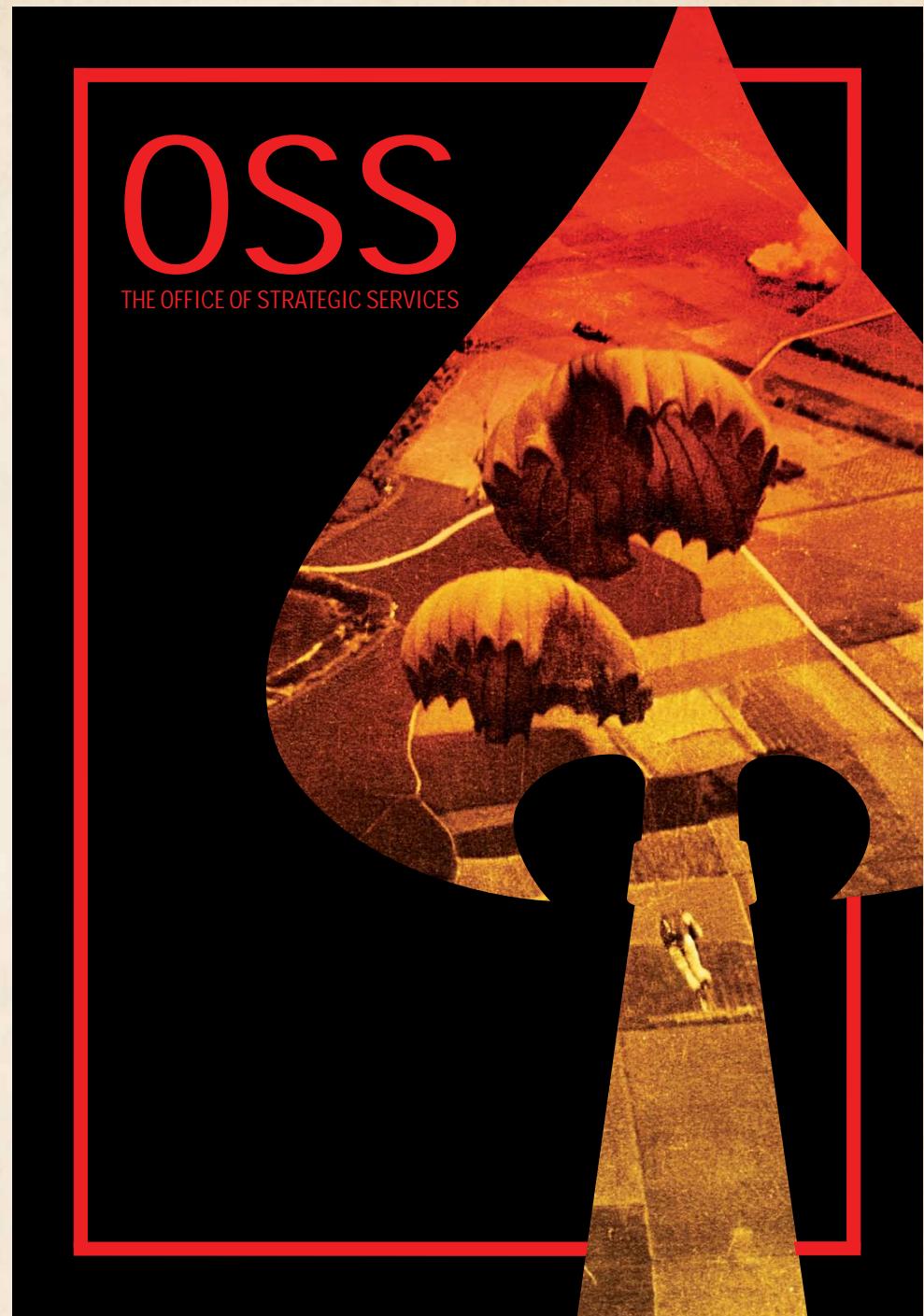


The current ACU (Army Combat Uniform) Special Forces SSI. It includes the Special Forces Tab, which was approved in 1983.

The OSS Exhibit

*Presented by the
Airborne and Special Operations Museum,
collaborating with
the USASOC History Office and
the North Carolina Museum of History.*

The creation of Major General William "Wild Bill" Donovan, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) became America's premier agency for intelligence collection and covert warfare during WWII. It inspired the formation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and U.S. Army Special Operations. The USASOC History Office has collaborated with the North Carolina Museum of History to present an exhibit on the special operations capabilities of the OSS at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This exhibit highlights the paramilitary branches of the OSS: Special Operations (SO), Secret Intelligence (SI), Morale Operations (MO), Maritime Unit (MU), Operational Groups (OG), and Research and Development (R&D). It also showcases distinct OSS projects like the Jedburghs, Detachment 101, Detachment 202, and Detachment 404. Their stories are explained with photographs and displays that include specialized OSS equipment, uniforms, insignia, and other operational artifacts. This important exhibition reveals the legacy left to today's U.S. Army Special Operations by the OSS.

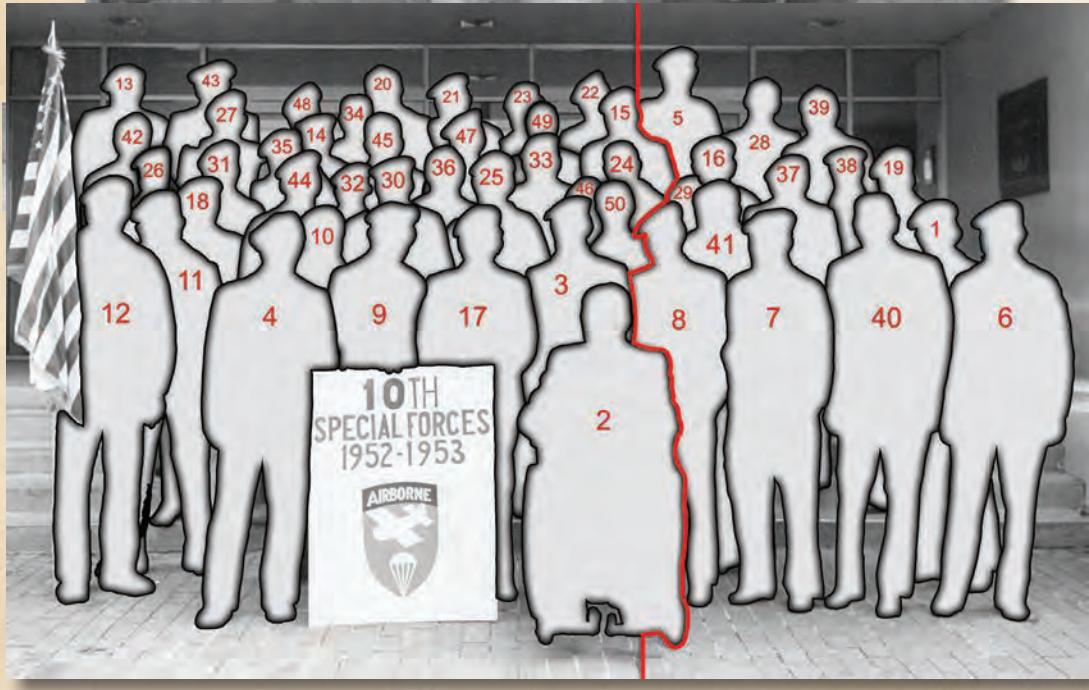




FTX FREE LEGION III

30th Anniversary Reunion, 1973

Assistance please! The SF Association would like to display this photo of original 10th SFG members who met at Fort Bragg in 1982 for their 30th Anniversary. Please verify and provide the full names of the soldiers listed by number and identify those unnamed men. POCs: Troy Sacquety at 910-432-9324 & sacquett@soc.mil and Dorsey Mellott at 910-432-3119 & mellottd@soc.mil. Thanks.



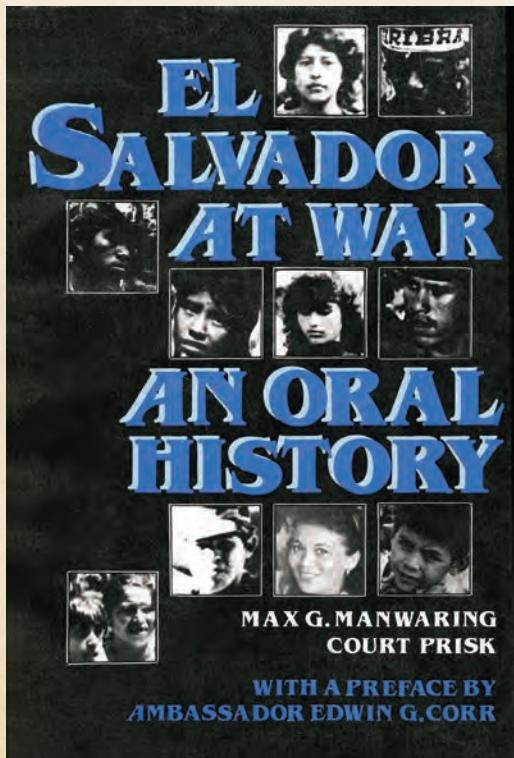
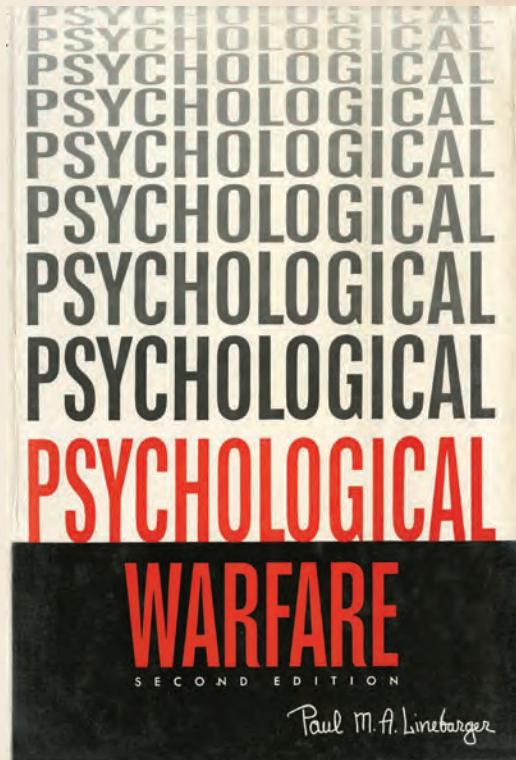
- 1- Herbert "Nasty" McCaskey
- 2- John K. Alderman
- 3- Jan Wiatr
- 4- Herbie Brucker
- 5- Charlie Norton
- 6- John W. Burdge
- 7- Lewis E. Brown
- 8- Gerhart Kunnert
- 9- Jan J. Strek
- 10- John R. Arbasetti
- 11- Walter Rubel
- 12- James Tryon
- 13- Timothy Gannon
- 14- Willie Queen
- 15- Francis L. Mahon
- 16- Peter V. Astolos
- 17- Max Munoz
- 18- Alexander Paduch
- 19- Al Maggio
- 20- Harry McLaughlin
- 21- Ed McDougal
- 22- Anthony G. Kusilka
- 23- Pete Sanchez
- 24- Roy "Beetle" Bailey
- 25- William Crysell
- 26- Unknown
- 27- Moe Frander
- 28- John E. McCloskey
- 29- Bronislaw Binas
- 30- David H. Weddington
- 31- Joe Brook
- 32- Reuben Mooradian
- 33- Earl Macintosh
- 34- Fred Bezonia
- 35- Dutch Wingert
- 36- Warren Parker
- 37- Sparks
- 38- John Manthey
- 39- Bliss Croft
- 40- James P. Kuhn
- 41- Russel E. Franklin
- 42- Andre Carson
- 43- Ed Meeks
- 44- Nelson
- 45- Green
- 46- Richard E. Taylor
- 47- Adams
- 48- Jesse Branch
- 49- John Keefe
- 50- Unknown

Books in the Field

"Books in the Field" provides short descriptions of books related to subjects covered in the current issue of *Veritas*. Readers are encouraged to use these recommendations as a starting point for individual study on topics related to Army Special Operations history.

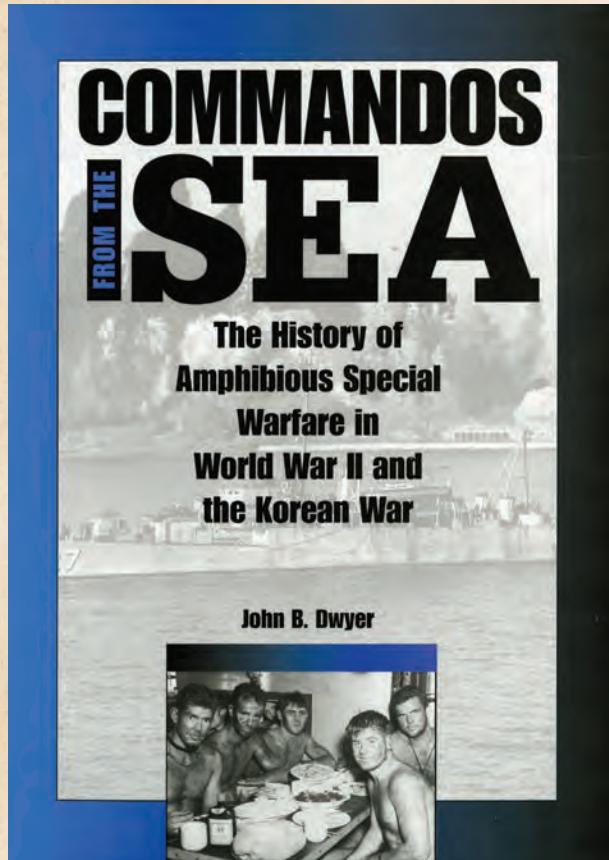
Paul M.A. Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare, 2nd edition* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1954).

This is a primer on the history of Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) from Biblical times through the Korean War, with heavy emphasis on World Wars I and II. The section on Korea, however, is a little sparse. Despite being blind in one eye, Linebarger was commissioned during WWII, and was a founding member of the Office of War Information (OWI), which guided the U.S. Army PSYWAR effort in WWII. Last printed in 1954, *Psychological Warfare, 2nd edition* is still available in libraries and archives. Though very dated, *Psychological Warfare* is one of the few scholarly studies on the subject. Includes photos, leaflet examples, appendix, and an index.



Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, eds., *El Salvador at War: An Oral History of Conflict From the 1979 Insurrection to the Present* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1988).

El Salvador at War is an oral history based on interviews from dozens of key participants that span the spectrum from guerrillas to Salvadoran and U.S. government and military officials. Manwaring and Prisk furnish the "connective tissue" in the chronological presentation. Causes and "evolving lessons" are highlighted. What makes the work particular noteworthy is that the contributors provided their opinions and experiences while the war was ongoing. As a snapshot in time (1979-1987) it only covers the war before 1988. A revised edition covering the entire war has not been done. Still, it is one of the few balanced scholarly sources on the war in El Salvador. Contains maps and photographs.

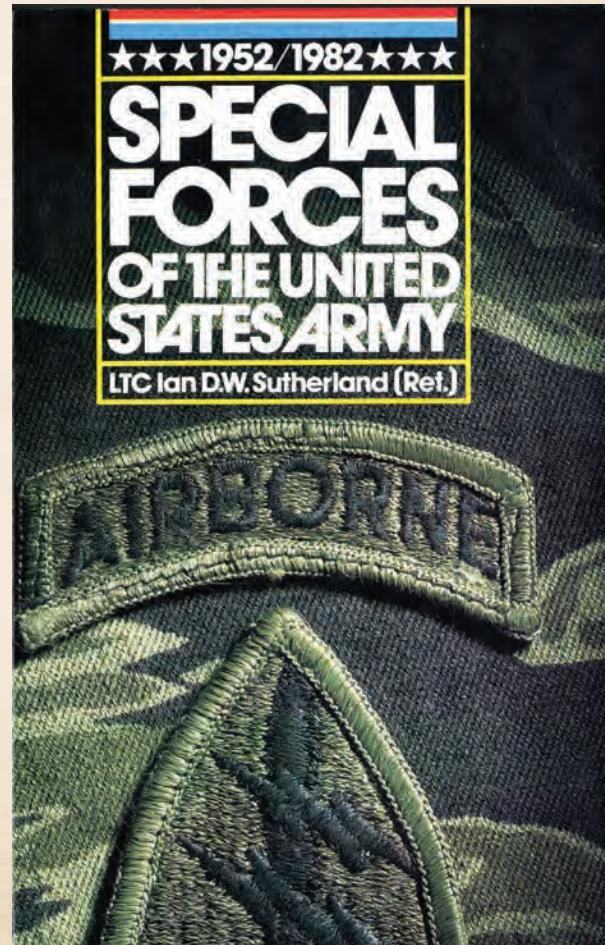


John B. Dwyer, *Commandos From the Sea: A History of Amphibious Special Warfare in World War II and the Korean War* (Boulder, CO: Paladin, 1998)

Dwyer's focus is Maritime Warfare, the least documented part of special operations. He divides his book into two parts. Part One contains histories of several Marine, Army, and Navy maritime special warfare components from WWII through Korea. Units receiving special attention are the Maritime Unit of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Alamo Scouts, the U.S. Navy Group, China, and the U.S. Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs). Dwyer devotes the second part of his book to "Warriors' Sagas." These are the operational experiences of special operations maritime teams in WWII and Korea based on after-action reports and veterans' recollections. Contains photographs, notes, and an index.

Ian Sutherland, *Special Forces of the United States Army: 1952-1982* (San Jose, CA: R. James Bender, 1990)

Sutherland's work is one of the best references on U.S. Army Special Forces available. The lack of end/footnotes and its limited availability, however, reduce its usefulness. A Special Forces veteran of Vietnam, Sutherland tirelessly sought to document the history of Special Forces after his retirement as a LTC. His work summarizes the organization, mission, and selection and training of Special Forces. It is where one starts to research American SF. Also included are brief histories of legacy units like the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The more useful aspects of the book are the sections devoted to the histories of individual Special Forces Groups, uniforms, equipment, and insignia. Several high quality color reproductions of locally-made and unusual SF insignia are featured, making this book critical for collectors. Contains photographs, color plates of insignia, appendices, bibliography, and an index.



In the Next Issue of Veritas

Operation MEDUSA: 3rd Special Forces Group in Afghanistan

by Alan Meyer and Kenneth Finlayson

From August 2006 to January 2007, 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group, designated Task Force 31, was engaged in clearing the Taliban out of the Panjwayi Region near Kandahar in Afghanistan. Working with Afghan National Army and National Police, TF-31, the "Desert Eagles", supporting NATO, drove the Taliban from their strongholds in the Panjwayi. A second foray was necessary because the NATO forces could not keep the area Taliban-free.



Detachment 101 and the Campaign for Myitkyina Part I

by Troy Sacquety

From March to August 1944, Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) played a critical role in the campaign to wrest the north Burma provincial capital of Myitkyina and its airfield from Japanese control. They provided guides and liaisons for Merrill's Marauders, the First Air Commando, and the British Chindits. In addition, they waged a guerilla war using locally-recruited Kachin tribesman. By these actions, Detachment 101 was a critically-needed force multiplier in the multi-national drive to recapture north Burma.

1st L & L in Korea, 1952-1953: A Photographer's Record

by Charles H. Briscoe

The 1st Loudspeaker & Leaflet Company was the only tactical PSYWAR unit that supported Eighth U.S. Army, U.S. Marines, and United Nations forces in Korea from 1950-1954. While its Loudspeaker Teams were on the front lines with the infantry, the Propaganda and Publications Platoons prepared and printed leaflets that were delivered by artillery and aircraft throughout North Korea. Daily activities in 1952-1953 were captured by photographer/photolithographer SGT Herbert Shevins from Brooklyn, New York.



Commander, USASOC
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Fort Bragg, NC 28310