

TACTICAL MAGAZINE MILSIM

AUGUST 2009

EXCLUSIVE
Interview with
**DALTON
FURY**

HATCHET FORCE
A Look Inside the Few

SO TECH E&E BAG
Special Ops on the Go

**Nuclear Industry's
Mock Terrorists**
Turn to Airsoft Technology

The Chronicles of
MAD MAX

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Echo1 MOD4 CQB

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Summer 2009



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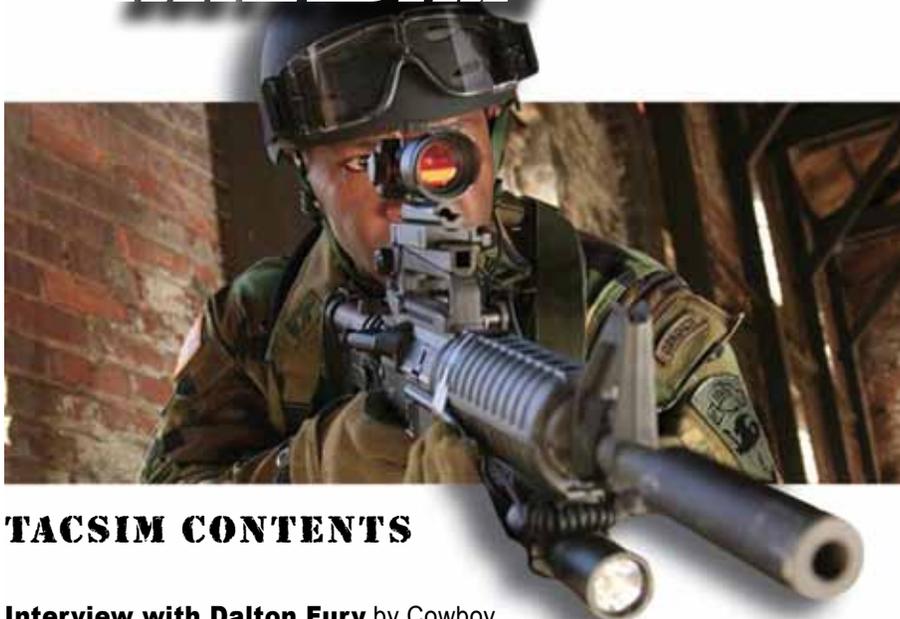
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SIT REP

Mil-Sim Leads the Way!



The uninformed public may regard the term "airsoft" as backyard, capture the flag-style games using cheap plastic springers. That's okay. There's a new word in town that works better. "Mil-sim" is rapidly replacing airsoft in the vocabulary of tier one teams.

If we look back at history, we will find that paintball has taught us that if we focus on the gun or "marker," then we may end up more as a sport than as a military tactics and strategic scenario system. When paintball began, we all used military tactics and gear. But as the focus on the paintball gun shifted to a "marker," we noticed a huge shift to colorful jerseys and tournament-style speedball events. Yes, I know that is a vastly over simplified explanation. The point being that military simulation was never really accepted by the majority as part of the foundation of paintball. However, there are still small niches of paintball teams that attempt to stay true to military-style scenarios and use more realistic-looking paintball guns.

For those of us who have been around airsoft for any length of time, we have seen many changes in the equipment, the events, our teammates, as well as ourselves. But now it is time for airsoft itself to evolve. Enter military simulation: mil-sim for short.

Of course mil-sim is nothing new. Mil-sim has been around ever since we started playing Cowboys and Indians or Cops and Robbers. Military and law enforcement organizations have been using MILES gear and SIMUNITION® for many years. Yet, these systems remained far from any public interest due to cost and training requirements. However, from the opposite end arrived airsoft, which has matured to become a viable tool in the tactical simulation environment. Thus bringing with it a community hungry for more realism.

Yet the holy grail of mil-sim is still just beyond our reach. Our quest to find a cost-effective technology that will allow accurate and safe simulation of military and law enforcement tactics by striking targets up to 150 meters away with both marking and non-marking ammo is still just beyond our grasp. In the meantime, I'm sure we will see a future of mil-sim events and competitions that will involve various situations using both marking and non-marking rounds intertwined with the occasional live fire target competitions.

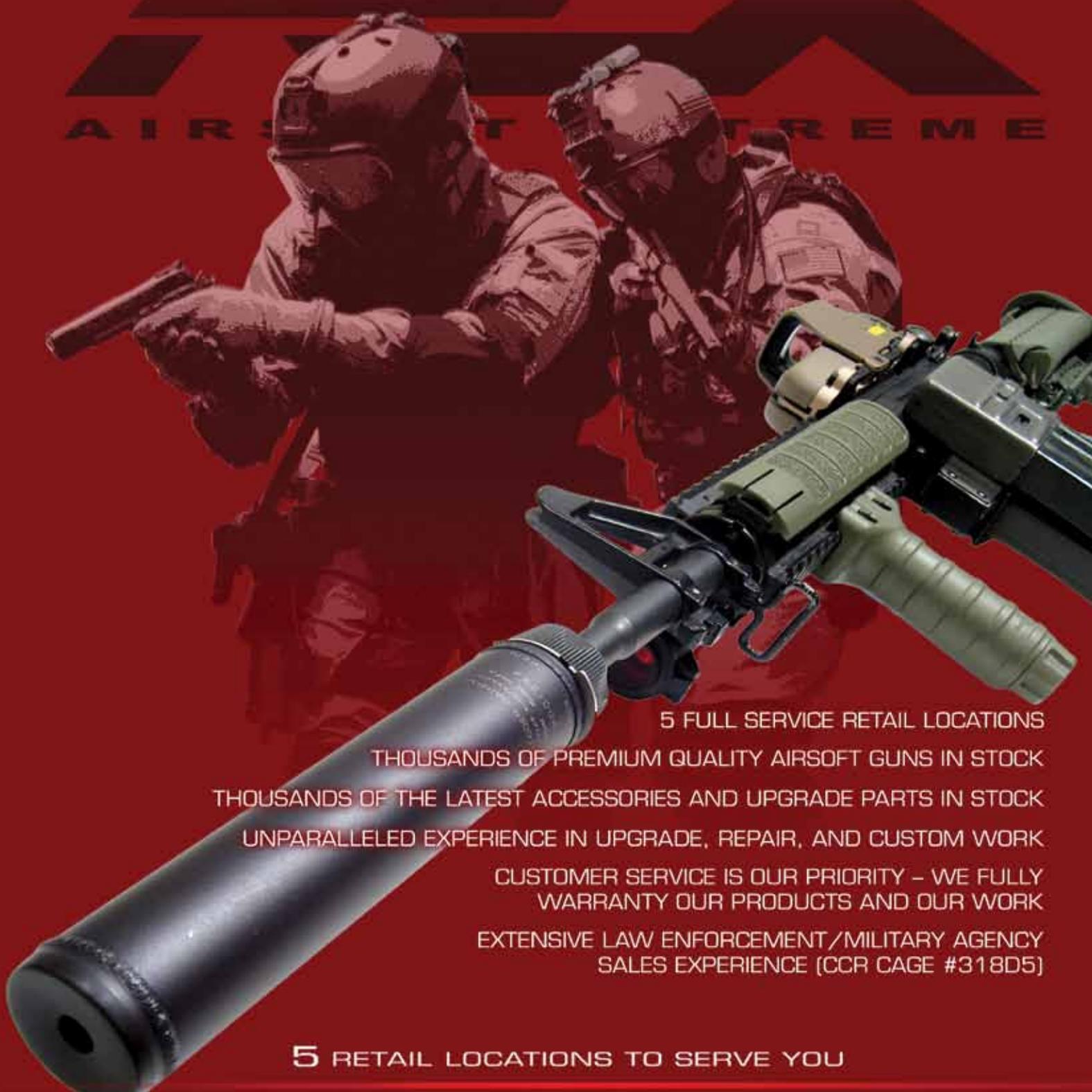
Make no mistake, mil-sim is not just a sport but a community of professional hobbyist from all walks of life. For the hobbyist, it has become a brotherhood of honor and a test of skill and endurance; for the professional it is training with a practical application of knowledge under duress anytime, anywhere. In the end, we are the mil-sim community and we will not make our fortunes in brightly colored jerseys. Our fortunes will be in the bonds of friendship, skills tested, and in the blood, sweat, and tears of those who train to serve our country.

Semper Gumby,
Mark "Stone Wolf" Anderson

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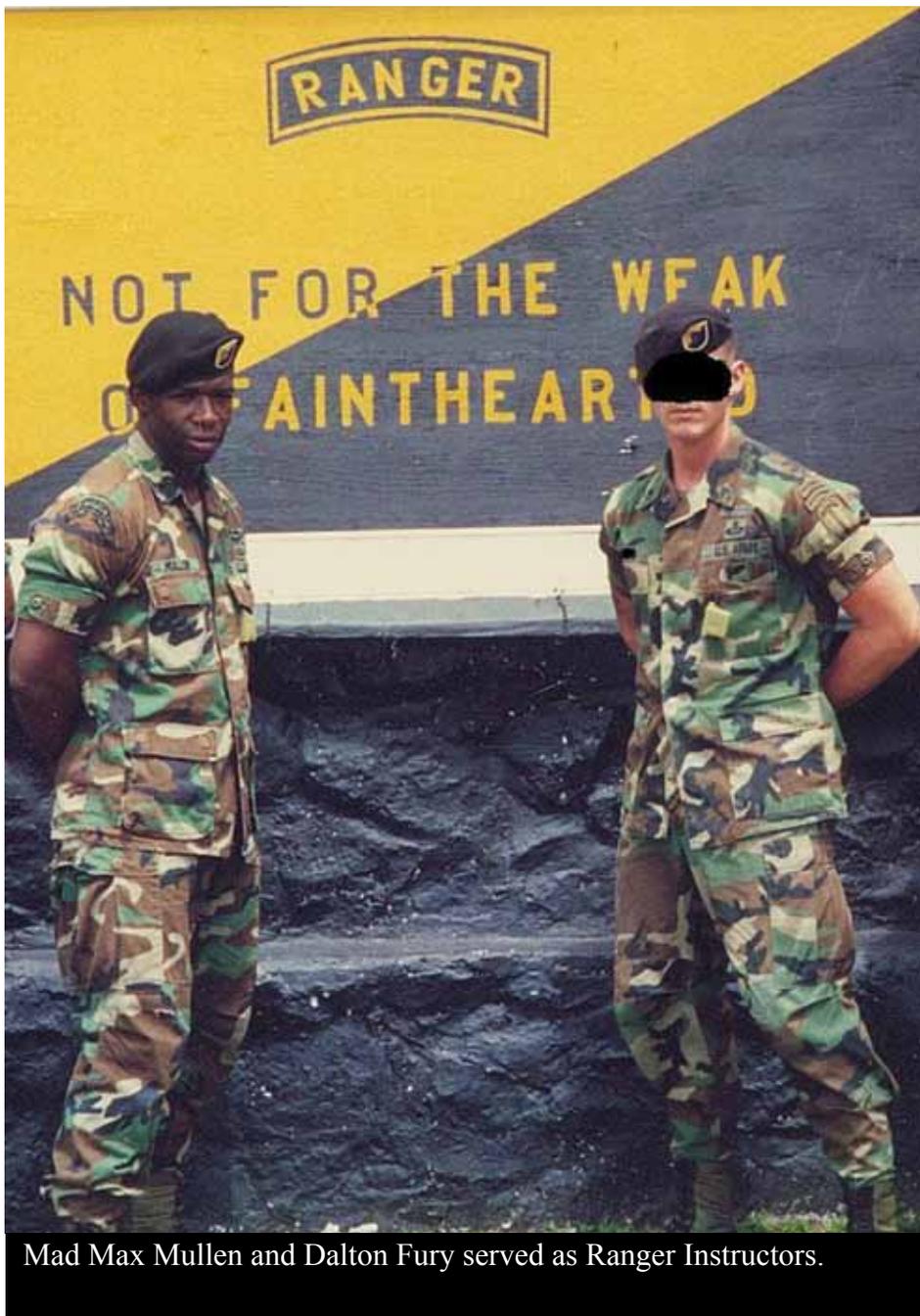
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Exclusive Interview with **Dalton Fury** Interviewed By Cowboy

Recently, Cowboy sat down with former Delta Force operator and *New York Times*-bestselling author Dalton Fury. Writing under the pseudonym, Dalton Fury, the retired Army officer authored the controversial book *Kill Bin Laden: A Delta Force Commander's Account of the Hunt for the World's Most Wanted Man*.



Mad Max Mullen and Dalton Fury served as Ranger Instructors.

COWBOY: I understand you have a long history with our magazine's owner and airsoft VIP Howard "Mad Max" Mullen. Can you tell us a little about that?

DALTON FURY: Sure. Roughly 22 years ago, I arrived at the Ranger Department as a very green E5 sergeant. Although my early years were with 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger), I recognized early on that I had a lot to learn as a Ranger Instructor. In those days, as I'm certain there are today, we had our share of extraordinary personalities and talent. One of the more unique instructors was "Mad Max" Mullen. I learned quickly to follow his lead and sponged off his knowledge.

COWBOY: We think he is unique as well. But what was it that made him that way so many years ago?

DALTON FURY: Well, like I said, we had our share of world-class guys. Old Rangers like Bobby Lane, Mike Hummel, Carlton Deitrich, Smokin' Joe Ulibarri, and Harvey Moore. But Max had a demeanor and presence that made him stand out. When I met him, he was a competitive bodybuilder, and he ate like one too, even when in the bush all day and night with Ranger studs. When the rest of us would take off to the Four Winds restaurant for their famous Ranger Burger, Max would open a Tupperware container with a portion of white rice, noodles, and grilled skinless chicken breast. On the surface, Max's physique was like a work of art. But on the inside, he was just as peculiar. He was a champion wrestler in high school and I recall going to the gym a few times to see him wrestle in Ft. Benning tournaments. He was quick as a cat, smooth as silk, and obviously overpowering to his opponents. Moreover, when he walked off the mat victorious or off the bodybuilding stage with trophy in hand, he was always smiling and humble as can be. He was a great role model for both the Ranger students as

well as his fellow Ranger Instructors.

COWBOY: It looks like he has carried that same easygoing style into the airsoft world as well. Can you recall anything specific that “Mad Max” taught you back in those days?

DALTON FURY: That’s an easy one. Max is probably most renowned for and remembered for his hand-to-hand combat skills. For years, he was the Ranger Department’s primary instructor—and was also the long-time keynote performer during the Ranger demonstrations at Victory Pond. Max and I used to drive a couple of hours each way to study Muay Thai under Sifu Francis Fong in Atlanta. After a while, he recruited me into the department’s hand-to-hand demonstration team. Max enjoyed peppering me with bruises from his patented flying drop kick or his over-the-shoulder throw.

With the Reagan dollars of that era, our team traveled a good deal to help Army recruiters attract quality high school students. I recall one night we counted at least two-dozen, purple-colored bruises on Bobby Lane’s body. I learned to duck.

Interestingly, the first time my wife of 19 years laid eyes on me, I was getting the attitude beat out of me during one of our demos by “Mad Max” on a high school football field.

Max also possessed an advanced ability to navigate through the omnipresent rolling hills and dense vegetation on Ft. Benning. I don’t recall him ever pulling out his lensatic compass or opening a map. Even when the students were way off course, Max knew exactly where he was. He also was a natural motivator and speaker and the students clung to his every word, as did I. Max was consistently rated as the top instructor of the class by the graduating students. As a young Ranger Instructor, I couldn’t have asked for a better mentor.

COWBOY: At some point in your life you left those early Ranger Instructor days and headed toward the black side. Can you tell us a little about that?

DALTON FURY: I actually left the Ranger Department (reflagged the Ranger Training Brigade in 1988) on the Green-to-Gold program and earned a commission of Infantry. Spent some time with the 82nd, two more tours with the Ranger Regiment, commanded a rifle company in Korea, and eventually made my way to Delta tryouts. What I didn’t leave behind though, and something my Dad had told me to watch out for, was the fundamental idea that the Army runs off the energy, toughness, and mental agility of the non-commissioned officer. I think I was a fairly successful leader over the years, but realized without



question that the success was a by-product of the sergeant’s exceptional efforts. My success could have gone to anyone given the same set of professional sergeants I was honored and humbled to serve with.

COWBOY: That’s an interesting statement, Dalton. Did you see the same thing when you were in Delta?

DALTON FURY: Probably tenfold so. Granted, every military organization has their talented folks. But those are precious stones randomly assigned and sporadic. In contrast, Delta is looking for those diamonds and desires to cull the very best under one roof from across the service. This alone accounts for the all-star lineup that has always walked the halls of the Delta compound. An officer in Delta is made or broke in a

very short time. Delta sergeants don’t impress easily, have a general disdain for authority, and loom for loose reins vice rank-induced control. In fact, in my time in Delta, I watched five very talented officers come and go for various reasons ultimately, but common to all was a fledgling and weak foundational relationship with the non-commissioned officers. To this day, I still consider retired Delta sergeants like Kyle Lamb, Larry Vickers, and Brian Searcy rock stars in a very small community of performers.

COWBOY: Fascinating stuff! Let’s switch gears a bit, Dalton. I was wondering if you ever used airsoft weapons while you were in Delta and if you consider them a valuable training tool?

DALTON FURY: We didn’t have airsoft back then. If over penetration, ricochets, or limited range fans were an issue, we used blue tip frangible ammo and traps for live shoot house training on paper silhouettes. For Force-on-Force training with live role players, we used Simunitions or paint rounds. Airsoft is a super training tool though that is limited in its training applicability.

Even though the paint of Simunitions provides definitive bullet strike feedback, the weapon’s system receiver and magazines are typically different from what an operator carries on his wartime rifle and vest. This can create manipulation issues when you really need to be switched on inside a dark alley way or long hallway. With airsoft’s attention to detail in their replica weapons and accessories, an operator can outfit his airsoft rifle to exactly mirror his war rifle. That is invaluable when you are caught flatfooted at a T-intersection and your opponent is posted up on the far dark corner. Moreover, airsoft weapons and equipment requires no special web gear or assault vests. Everything is manufactured to the same specs as the real

stuff and fits perfectly in assault gear made by the top outfitters like Blackhawk and Eagle Industries.

COWBOY: Let's talk a little about your recent book, *Kill Bin Laden*. I understand the book is largely about the Battle of Tora Bora in December 2001, but there is also a good amount of reference as to what it takes to be a Delta operator.

DALTON FURY: The book is the first eyewitness account of that battle. I was fortunate enough to have been dubbed the senior ranking ground commander at the battle and enjoyed rare visibility of all three spectrums of war—strategic, operational, and tactical. I do elaborate a good bit on the essence and character of the Delta operator, all the while not compromising trade secrets.

COWBOY: Can you elaborate on that a bit? The part about divulging secrets. As you know, there are some out there who do not believe you sought permission from the appropriate authority before publishing the material. What do you say the critics.

DALTON FURY: I've always said everyone is entitled to their opinion. The facts are that I sought permission from the only two authorities that I recognize in this matter—my former teammates for one, and the US Special Operations Command for two. My mates were overwhelmingly supportive as long as I told the truth and protected their identities. By the letter of the Non-Disclosure Agreement I signed before leaving Delta, I submitted the manuscript to US-SOCOM over 18 months before publication. I did this for two reasons—first, because that's the law. Second, because I wanted to be absolutely certain that I was not inadvertently writing anything that could potentially harm the current SOF community, compromise national security, or provide aide to any sophisticated adversaries of the United States. Numerous attorneys with Special Ops



Dalton Fury observes as “Mad Max” Mullen wields his hand-to-hand combat skills.

experience, as well as a slew of former senior commissioned and non-commissioned officers from Delta, scrutinized every word to ensure it was sensitive free... controversial, yes, compromising to national security, no.

COWBOY: Well the book has done very well nonetheless and appears to be still selling strong after eight months on the shelves. Congratulations on that. What about you? What books are at the top of your list?

DALTON FURY: Thanks. It is surprising that it is doing well. My personal book shelf is full of anything by John C. Maxwell. His leadership books are simply world class. My favorite is *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Next to those are Malcolm Gladwell's three books—*Outliers*, *Blink*, and *Tipping Point*. I also cherish my personal childhood collection of old *Beetle Bailey* comic books.

COWBOY: That's quite a collection. I

understand you are donating the royalties of your *Kill Bin Laden* book to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. Why is that?

DALTON FURY: Why not? Getting rich off *Kill Bin Laden* was never the goal. Telling a true story about what action our nation took following 9/11 and honoring my teammates was. SOWF is an extremely reputable and well-managed foundation. Their mission is to provide a college education to the surviving children of America's Special Operators. In an advanced society like ours, that's something all of us want for our children. As an operator in harm's way, knowing your kids will be taken care of if you don't make it off the target releases pressure off the soul a bit and allows for focused assaults.

“Mad Max” and I both recall the night back in late 1993 that 1SG Glenn Harris of B Co, 3rd Ranger Battalion, landed in the Chattahoochee River after a parachute assault and drowned. Glenn was a Ranger Instructor with Max and I in

the late 80's and seeing his two daughters graduate from college recently with the help of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation really makes your heart pump with pride. I'm honored COL(Ret.) John Carney agreed to accept the donations and I look forward to doing more.

COWBOY: Two final questions. First, do you think you could beat "Mad Max" and Colonel Danny McKnight of *Black Hawk Down* fame in a head-to-head airsoft competition? Secondly, what's next for Dalton Fury? Can you ever be happy with a normal life away from the thrill and danger of the special operations world?

DALTON FURY: Wow! That's a curve ball. I've known "Mad Max" for over two decades. I know what he is capable of and am sure he could rally his force and motivate them sufficiently to catch old Dalton Fury half stepping and using false cover in any environment. I also served under Danny McKnight during the immediate post-Somalia era and don't give myself much chance against him either. I think I'd have to bring in some old Delta teammates to even the odds a bit.

Your last question is not much easier. I think anyone fortunate enough to have served alongside the top assaulters and snipers in the world would have a little trouble finding something that compares in retirement. It's hard to walk away from the community, particularly in a time of war. It's even harder to empty your head of the experiences, good and bad, if you even want to. I'm lucky though in that my wife and kids keep me feeling young and busy, even as my knees and back go. As the sign at the entrance to Ranger School says—special operations is: "Not for the Weak or Fainthearted."

You can read more about Dalton Fury's book at www.daltonfury.com.

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HATCHET

By Dain Kennison

“Hard pressed on my right. My center is yielding. Impossible to maneuver. Situation excellent. I am attacking.”

—Ferdinand Foch

Some people enjoy relaxing at home and watching television on the weekends, taking a much-needed break from a hard week’s work. Others enjoy going out into the wilderness to face seemingly impossible physical challenges to the point where their bodies are completely broken, and the only thing keeping them upright is their minds. These people use their workweek to recover from their weekends. It’s this type of person you’ll find on Hatchet Force.

A Hatchet Force member’s idea of fun is patrolling several miles up the side of a mountain, carrying over 80 pounds of equipment with another 65-pound sandbag on top. His idea of a good time is being completely surrounded by enemy, the last one left on his team, facing certain ‘simulated’ death by no less than twenty-to-one odds. Just for the hell of it, he’d like to get dropped off 50 miles from nowhere by a private helicopter and spend the next three days finding his way home. Maybe he’d like to sacrifice his desire to sleep and spend an entire Saturday afternoon through early Sunday morning laying in the prone in a “hide site” he built himself, observing a small patrol walk back and forth while reporting their situation every hour. These are only a small fraction of the things Hatchet Force has done.

Hatchet Force is not, and never was, just an airsoft team.



FORCE



High Mobility
Hatchet Force Training with Bad Karma on a modified Rugged Terrain Vehicle

Hatchet Force is not, and never was, just an airsoft team. They are a group of guys from Southern California with varying backgrounds who just love military training. They use airsoft weapons as training aides, and go out to some airsoft events a few times a year for fun, a sort of vacation from the challenging training they do.

Hatchet Force has been training for quite a long time, not always as an official team. It started as a group of friends that, even before they even knew about airsoft, would get together do the same type of rigorous training they do today. Back in 2001, some friends invited a few of the guys to a paintball game. Having not gone to a paintball game in many years, they were disappointed to find that it had become less of a military simulation and more of a mainstream or extreme-style sport. They stood out like sore thumbs in their tactical gear and traditional camouflage against a



Keep Your Powder Dry!

Hatchet Force on a light patrol. Left to Right: Tim, Ed, Tony Photo by Mark



Hatchet Force in the Movies

On the set of the film *Chasing Ghosts*. **Foreground:** Ed and Chris **Background:** Patrick Kilpatrick

backdrop of young folks with brightly colored jerseys and shiny paintball guns.

Their eyes brightened like kids in a candy store.

They were reloading after a game when a stranger approached them. “You guys ever play airsoft?” He asked. “What the hell is airsoft?” They replied.

Out of curiosity they followed the stranger to his car. When he opened his trunk the team saw a small arsenal of very realistic-looking sub-machine guns and rifles. Their eyes brightened like kids in a candy store.

Some time passed and they got to thinking about what they could do with these plastic replicas (metal guns weren’t the norm in airsoft yet). They thought it would be fun to do some

more training, using these replicas and real-world experience, and in time put their skills to the test at some of these “scenario games” they had been hearing about. They decided to start an official team.

Their idea of a team was based on the experience of some of the members, with backgrounds ranging from US Army Special Forces, to law enforcement, martial arts, movie stunts, and civilian tactical training. This team would take some work. Not unlike a typical special operations unit, every member, including the founders, would have to go through a regiment of training and time with the team before they would get “tabbed.” A tab is something that, in the US Army Rangers and Special Forces, can take a very long time and hard work to earn. This of course, is not everyone’s idea of fun, and some of the original guys who were approached with this idea decided that it wasn’t for them. The ones that remained would form this new tactical team.

They had a team and they needed a name. Out of respect and honor for the

men who put their lives on the line in real life, in service to this great country, they needed a name that was not an official military unit. They also wanted something that would be true to the type of team they were. One of the stories that really stood out was that of special operations in Vietnam, or SOG. Some of these special operators would put together strike teams consisting of SOG members and South Vietnamese indigenous soldiers to perform covert operations and raids along the Ho Chi Minh trail, as well as search-and-destroy or rescue missions behind enemy lines in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. These teams had ability to strike one swift and powerful blow to an enemy force that would cripple it or take it out of commission completely. They called them “Hatchet Forces.”

This name had immediate appeal to the group of guys who would become members of it, because each individual had different backgrounds, but would bring their experiences together and someday use them to complete missions. It was a good fit.



Hatchet Force - The Early Years

Team Training. **Left to Right:** Tim, Ed, Mark, Joe, Marco, Tony. Photo by Dustin



The arrowhead shape signifies the stealth and wilderness field craft of the Native American Indian scout.

They also needed a tab and unit patch design. Keeping with the ideal that they would not duplicate a real military unit or its insignia, they designed their own. Most of the Hatchet Force training and tactics are based on the US Army Special Forces, so they modeled their unit patch after the famous SF “arrowhead” insignia. The

arrowhead shape signifies the stealth and wilderness field craft of the Native American Indian scout. The difference is that the HF patch has a hatchet in the center instead of a sword like the original. It still contains the three lightning bolts for land, sea, and air (there are airborne- and scuba-qualified HF members). The Hatchet Force Tab is like the SF tab, but contains the words “HATCHET FORCE.” It is described affectionately by those that wear it as “One of the hardest things a civilian, or non-civilian, can ever earn.” The HF tab has been known to take one to four years of hard training to acquire, which is one of the reasons Hatchet Force is such a small team. They seem to like it that way.

Flashback to 2001: The team has a name, a patch, a tab, and some mem-

bers. They trained hard for about a year and everyone was motivated about it. They all earned their tabs in 2002. It was then time to go have some fun and celebrate.

Now that we know what HF’s idea of fun is, you can see where this is going.

They had been hearing about some “scenario games” in Northern California, when they came upon a new event to be held locally in Southern California called “Operation: Iron Angel.” The event also featured a guest team of elite Special Operators from a recent TV series titled, *Combat Missions*. They went to the event and had a lot of fun and learned that their training paid off. They were able to fight the enemy and complete their objectives. In an article after the event, one of the *Combat Missions* team members who attended mentioned Hatchet Force a couple times, referring to them as “the paintball champs.”

From 2002 to present, the team has continued to train together using their skills not only in airsoft events, but also in stunt shows, film, and television. Some of the original members have moved on, returned, and then moved on again. There have been new ones as well. HF members have gone on to other things such as law enforcement and the US Military. Their training with the team has made certain aspects of their new careers easier to handle, and that makes Hatchet Force very proud.

One member started with the team at age 16. This was something that the HF guys weren’t fully comfortable with, but since the kid was planning a career in the military, they had a sit-down with his parents to make sure they knew what HF was all about. After training with HF until the age of 19, this member eventually joined the US Navy. He started with HF as a young and naive kid who had unrealistic ideas about what people in the special operations community were really like, but despite toughness and hardships he had to endure in his training with HF, he persevered. It’s this type of individual



Hatchet Force at Operation Iron Angel - 2002
 Planning their next movement. **Foreground:** Ed, Dustin, Marco **Background:** Tony and Joe on objective security.

that can excel in a real-world unit, because as they say in the SEAL teams, “The only easy day was yesterday.”

The rest of the team got up and left. When he awoke, he was shocked...

This future frogman hopeful learned a lot in HF. One thing he learned, that others have also learned, is that you’re held accountable for your actions. Sometimes it can be pretty funny for the rest of the team, too. On a particular 25-mile LRP (Long Range Patrol) training named “Devil’s Gate,” the young hopeful had fallen asleep sitting on his ruck during a five-minute break. The rest of the team got up and left. When he awoke, he was shocked to find himself alone in the woods with no idea where he was. After a good laugh while watching him make this discovery from afar, the rest of the team came back to

his relief. Another member of HF started with the team with the intent of joining the military. He was working as an EMT, driving ambulances around Los Angeles. He wanted to become a special operations combat medic so that he could help our armed servicemen

in need. After training with HF for a couple years, he joined the US Army. He is now serving his country as a special operations combat medic with the 75th Ranger Regiment. He still wears his Hatchet Force patch under his gear as a reminder of the training he went through, and one day he’ll return to earn his Hatchet Force tab to go along with his Airborne, Ranger, and maybe even SF tabs. It’s individuals like these that make up the Hatchet Force team, and the constant reminder of the “exertions of better men ” that have kept them going over the years.

HF loves a challenge like a fat kid loves cake.

Hatchet Force has been to many events, and had the honor to meet many active and retired members of the military. They have many friends in the military, law enforcement, and airsoft communities. From the very beginning, individuals have approached Hatchet Force who want to learn more about the training HF does as a team,



Passed out at Devil’s Gate
 25 Mile Long Range Patrol. **Foreground:** Chris **Background:** Marco, Tim, Ed, Joe Photo by Mark

and some who want to participate. HF decided to start having “open” training days, in which they would invite outside teams or individuals to attend and participate in so they could see what HF is all about first hand, and maybe even learn something.

These open training days were a good way to spread Hatchet Force’s training out to other teams and learn from them as well. They felt that having more motivated teams and individuals would also help the airsoft community at future events, and HF loves a challenge like a fat kid loves cake.

Hatchet Force’s open training was just the beginning. HF still did a lot of training that they could never really put to use in a typical pubic airsoft event. They decided to begin designing their own highly challenging, invite-only, skills-based ops. They did not want to profit from these ops, that way they didn’t have to worry about keeping attendees happy. These ops were designed to be so difficult that anyone attending would have the desire to quit fairly early on. Just completing the operation and still being able to stand would be an accomplishment. The attendees invited would be handpicked from people that HF had trained with and they would have to put this training to the test. Things like using a compass and a map to locate a grid coordinate on a map and completing complex objectives that challenge your mind and your resolve were on the list.

The first time they had an official operation of this type was in 2003, on Alamo Mountain in the Los Padres National Forest. The operation had two teams fighting several miles up a steep grade while completing objectives along the way. HF members and hand-picked OPFOR fought the teams and got progressively more challenging the closer they came to the top. The teams that attended were “The Regiment” and “Section 8.” It ended up being one of the most difficult and memorable events that many of the attendees had been to, and sparked ideas in the minds of Hatchet Force members that would



Unconventional Training

Hatchet Force instructors demonstrate a POW search and seizure technique used by the Green Berets.

come together years later as the Hatchet Force Challenge.

In 2008, Hatchet Force finally held their first HF Challenge. It was designed as an event for the most serious of tactical practitioners and airsoft milsim enthusiasts. It would be held annually, and each year, the winners would take home a trophy that would be returned the following year. The winning team would not compete the following year to allow for a different winner, but would be invited to attend as OPFOR for free. The event would require the use of skills that Hatchet Force trains with on a regular basis that you don’t typically find in other events, including land navigation, repelling, and a live-fire exercise with real-world weapons. The challenge would have two to three teams that would compete for a single trophy. These teams would have to face extremely challenging obstacles, both physically and mentally, and fight through extremely skilled and motivated OPFOR to complete their objectives. Hatchet Force had the support of Rob Rutter and his team “Bad Karma” who brought some very tricked-out, off-road vehicles, props, and booby traps, as well as Airsoft Extreme who sponsored the event with airsoft pellets

to be used at re-supply drops.

The first HF Challenge had two teams in competition and several teams and individuals as OPFOR. They fought through rugged and rocky desert terrain, as well as caves that resembled those in Afghanistan. The two competing teams were “The Regiment” and members of teams from Ventura County and



Hatchet Force Challenge I

Coyote Tactical Member retrieving mock ‘satellite core’ from the bottom of a 70+ ft. mine shaft.

Arizona who made up a team dubbed “D12,” a name used just for the event. The winner of the First Challenge was nearly a tie, but ended up to be D12 due to The Regiment taking a wrong turn and nearly getting lost to the incredibly unforgiving terrain.

After a long and grueling day, with occasional tempers flaring...

In 2009, the second HF Challenge was just as challenging if not more so than the previous. It included rappelling, a rope bridge, sophisticated, simulated booby traps and props, and roving fast-attack vehicles from teams Bad Karma and Shadow Sword, an integrated timed three-gun challenge (real-world) with active-duty law enforcement range masters and over 10 miles of patrolling in the same rugged terrain, much of which was under fire



Hatchet Force Challenge II

Coyote Tactical Member traverses the rope bridge over land mines. Next up! The Repel.

by extremely well-fortified and well-equipped OPFOR. The OPFOR included some highly motivated members of teams Verari, and Aces & Eights from Las Vegas. Each competing team had a dedicated Hatchet Force observer who stayed with them the entire time, evaluating their performance. After a long and grueling day, with occasional tempers flaring due to the high-stress event, each team managed to make it safely across the finish line. They enjoyed a hot meal prepared by the friends and

family of HF, and then the trophy was awarded to the victor, The Regiment. It was another extremely close year. The Regiment pulled off the win due to their strong leadership and unit cohesion that just comes from years of training together. They earned it.

So what does the future hold for Hatchet Force? They’ll continue to be just a group of guys who love to train. They’ll keep training right out of the Special Forces and Ranger Handbooks (every member carries a Ranger Handbook—just ask one), and always carry more gear than what’s required. They’ll never make a profit from their hobby, and they’ll always push the envelope. They’ll always be on the lookout for new recruits who want a challenge or who wish to prepare for a career in military. You can see them at events like Operation: Lion Claws, or maybe in the background of a movie as a SWAT team, or perhaps jumping from a helicopter at a stunt show. If you want to step up your team training—or you think you have the right stuff—you can come to their next annual Hatchet Force Challenge and put your skills to the test.

For more info about Hatchet Force, news, photos and videos, please visit their web site at <http://www.hatchetforce.com>

- De Oppresso Liber



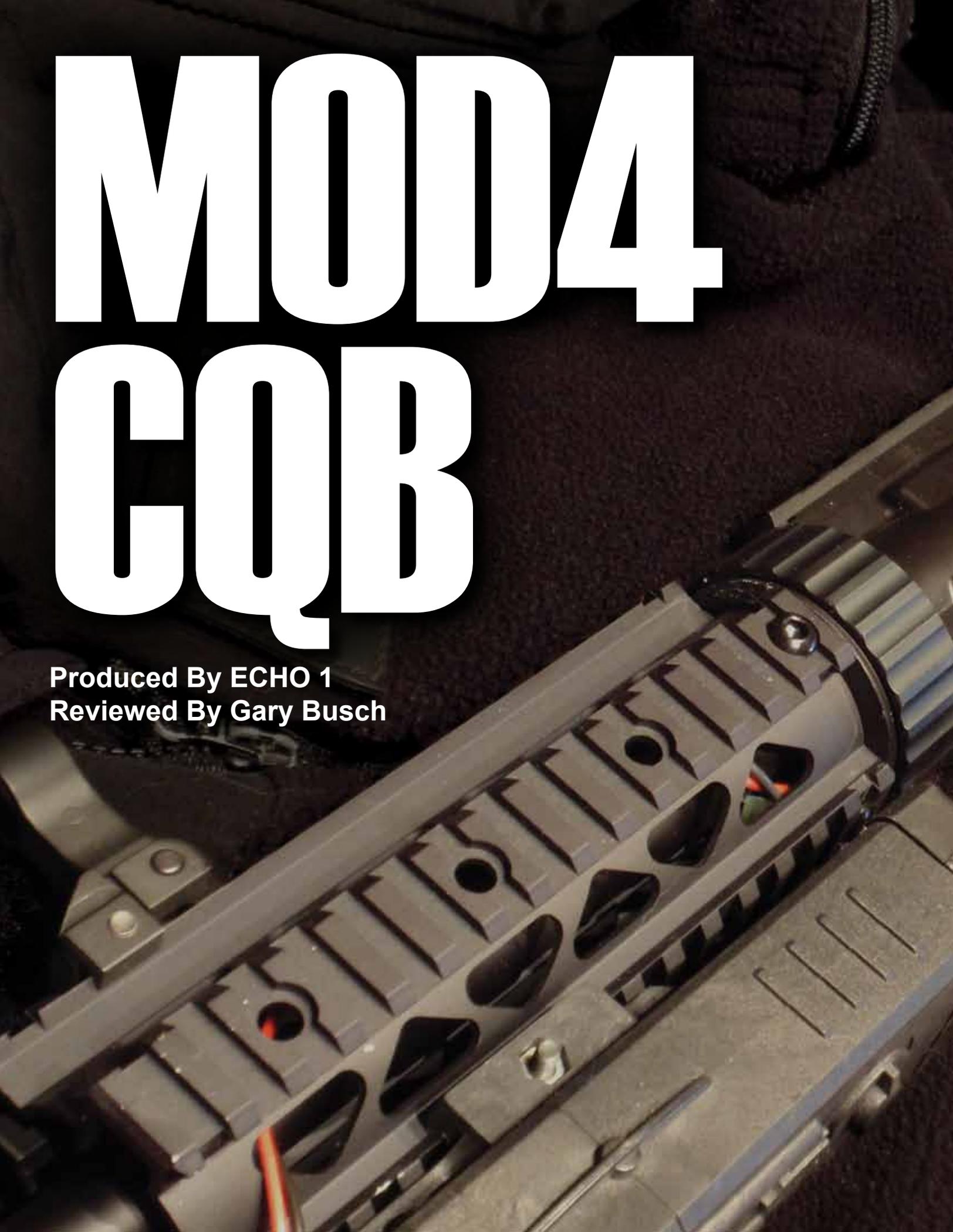
Hatchet Force Challenge II

First Place: The Arrowhead Trophy **Second Place:** Bricks

The Winner: The Regiment Photo by Yuri

MOD4 CQB

Produced By ECHO 1
Reviewed By Gary Busch





CAL. 9.50 X 19MM
ESPIONIA.COM



M00A CSD
M.F.L. CAL. USA
S/N: E1029



PACKAGING

The packaging is sufficient to receive the AEG intact. It uses the common method of a Styrofoam bottom with a cardboard top, with added Styrofoam inserts on the top of the gun to secure it during shipping. Each of the included accessories has their own molded space within the box, and everything arrived in working order. A manual and warranty card are also included.



ACCESSORIES

The accessories included with the MOD4 vary in quality from adequate to poor. The vertical fore grip and flip-up sights (front and rear) attach firmly to the rails and seem sufficient to hold up to standard gaming usage, but the included battery box is deficient in a few different categories.

From a durability standpoint, it uses a plastic connection to secure it to the metal free-float rail system that could possibly fail over time from the weight of the battery inside. The cap on the back of the unit that holds in the battery can come off if jarred, dropping the battery and possibly ripping out the wire leads. The wiring from the battery and harness is longer than it needs to be, leaving inches of exposed wiring outside of the weapon, subtracting from the authenticity of the replica. Its biggest drawback, however, comes from the complete lack of realism to the design of the battery box itself, easily making it the worst replica of a PEQ-style design-

nator that I've personally seen. If you wish to strive for accurate military simulation, this would be the first item to replace. As harsh as this may sound, please remember that overall, the weapon itself is of high enough quality, and these issues can easily be overcome by minor customizations or by purchasing additional products that may better suit your individual purpose. Manufacturers should take notice of these issues and try to correct them if they wish to market their products to "higher-end," experienced players that demand more "realism" from the hobby of airsoft. The magazine is a metal hi-cap, which holds 300 rounds that can be wound by the integrated wheel on the bottom plate or by inserting and turning the included "key" into the side of the housing. It locks into place firmly, as do quite a few other brands from popular manufacturers. No feeding issues were experienced during our testing.



The vertical fore grip initially refused to mount onto the rail due to the factory glue used on the internal threading breaking loose, making it incapable of locking in place. While it was an easy fix with a couple dots of super adhesive, this step should be unnecessary on a fresh, out-of-the-box weapon.



BATTERY & CHARGER

Another word of advice for the battery box; it comes with and uses a 4/5th Sub-C cell 1500mAh battery pack, which isn't as common in airsoft, as say, a 2/3A cell pack. This can become problematic if you're interested in picking up an aftermarket battery to fit the existing box. The battery included uses a mini Tamiya-style plug, and with the included wall charger, it takes approximately six hours to charge to full capacity. In a pinch, the battery box will fit a Sub C battery pack as long as you don't put on the rear cap and use an alternate method to secure it, such as tape.

FEATURES

As with most economically priced AEGs, the receiver is made of ABS plastic and functions the way it was designed. The included metal rail system is a free-float design, secured only at the rear by the barrel nut. With little effort, the rail can become loose and need to be periodically tightened. It should be noted that a gas tube is not included or installed with this design, but it (or a similar device) would work to keep the rail from rotating side to side.

The MOD4 also includes a six-position collapsible stock. It locks solidly into each position, and features a milspec-style buffer tube, able to accept most aftermarket stocks. A receiver-mounted rear sling point is also included, but you have to remove the buffer tube and reverse the mount plate for right-handed shooters.



The outer barrel is modular, able to convert quickly from the normal 10-inch configuration (to the tip of the flash hider) to a much shorter 4.5-inch total length by unscrewing it counter-clockwise. It's easy to hide the now exposed inner barrel with a mock silencer if you choose to do so for an interesting, new, customized look.

Fully loaded with all of the included accessories, the MOD4 CQB weighs in at a respectable 6.9 pounds. It feels a little front-heavy, due to the rail system and battery box attached, and nothing to balance out the back end.



FPS READINGS

SHOT	AMMO	FPS
1	.20	366.7
2	.20	368.2
3	.20	369.0
4	.20	328.7
5	.20	369.0
6	.20	362.1
7	.20	366.7
8	.20	362.9
9	.20	361.4
10	.20	362.1

AVERAGE FPS = 361.7

1	.25	329.9
2	.25	333.7
3	.25	328.7
4	.25	334.4
5	.25	328.1
6	.25	338.9
7	.25	331.2
8	.25	330.6
9	.25	328.7
10	.25	331.2

AVERAGE FPS = 331.5

RATE OF FIRE

(Rounds Per Second) = 12.8

GEARBOX INTERNALS

ECHO 1 internals have come a long way since their inception, and this model is definitely built with durability in mind. With its reinforced gearbox shell, polycarbonate piston (with all metal teeth), 6mm metal bushings, and metal spring guide, it gives you a great foundation for a custom project or just to use as-is on the field. No problems were encountered during our testing phase. As always, it could probably be shimmed a little better than it was at the factory, but that can be said with most every AEG on the market, and doesn't reflect negatively on the gun whatsoever.

The inner barrel is made of brass and measures 300mm. The inner diameter of the barrel is 6.08mm, which is common with most brands on the market. It is compatible with all brands of aftermarket barrels, should you wish to change it.



OVERALL IMPRESSION

The ECHO 1 MOD4 CQB is a fun weapon to shoot, no doubt about it. It's a good value for the price, averaging \$180.00 online at the time of this publication. Considering the build quality of the weapon itself and the inclusion of so many desired accessories, it really is a good deal, if you're willing to spend some time taking care of a few minor issues.

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Shoot, Move, Communicate!

By Mathew “Sully” Sullivan

Throughout history, there have been many different, and evolving, concepts concerning tactics. Ever since man first started throwing rocks at each other and beating each other with clubs, there has been another man trying to figure out how to avoid said rocks and clubs. Some of these concepts are as old as warfare itself. No concept or plan set into motion has been completely successful, however, without a unit's ability to effectively shoot, move, and communicate. So what makes these elements so vital? Here are some points to remember, food for thought, if you will.

The rewards for effective shooting are obvious—rounds on the target. Yet so many of the basic fundamentals of marksmanship are either forgotten or ignored. A wise instructor once told me, “You can never miss fast enough to win.” These fundamentals are relatively simple and can be found in nearly every military or law enforcement manual on shooting.

Stance, a stable shooting platform is an essential start to shooting properly. If you're sit-

ting, standing, kneeling, or lying prone two things remain true—you have to be stable and the position has to be relatively comfortable. If the position is not stable, you'll miss more often than not. If the position isn't relatively comfortable, you won't be able to hold it for very long.

You should hold a high, firm grip on the pistol grip. This grip should be maintained while using your non-firing hand to manipulate other things: equipment, doors, etc. Your firing finger should be indexed along the weapon until you're ready to use it.

All the knowledge in the world is useless if you can't apply it effectively.

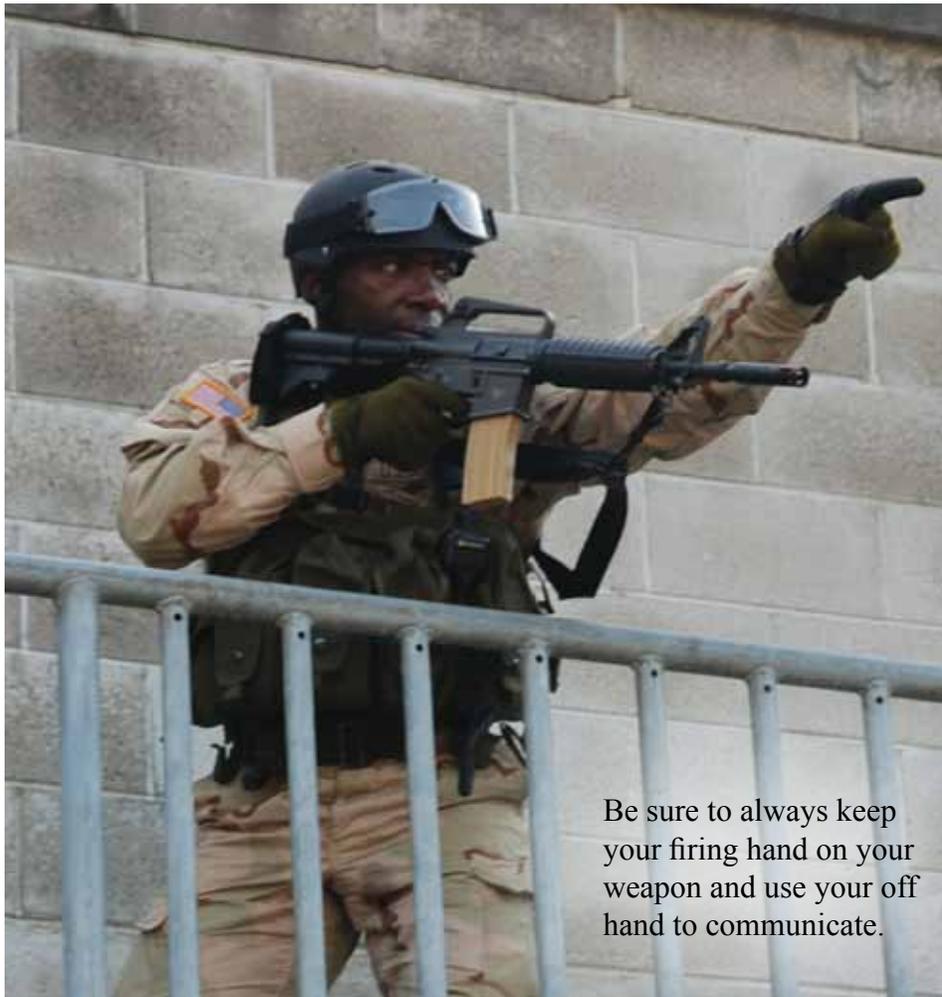
Sight alignment and sight picture: your front and rear sights should be aligned with your focus on the front site. The front sight should be crisp and placed squarely in the rear sight. The target should be slightly blurry.

Obviously, if you're using optics, your focus should be on whatever image you have—a dot, circle, or triangle. Your optic or sight preference should be based on what works best for the shooter and not what just simply looks cool.

Breathing or breath control: to keep it simple you breathe as your body moves. Just keep in mind your relative fitness and the amount of work your body goes through maneuvering before or during your shooting. Your shot should come at a natural respiratory pause, preferably before discomfort sets in.

Trigger squeeze, follow through, and recovery. Ensure you press the trigger to the rear without disturbing the rest of the weapon. Reacquire the target with a new sight picture and return the weapon to safe if it no longer poses a threat.

Now to the second topic: movement. Effective movement should have a sense of purpose. Not only is it important to know the difference between cover and concealment, it's important to know how to apply that knowledge correctly. All the knowledge



Be sure to always keep your firing hand on your weapon and use your off hand to communicate.

in the world is useless if you can't apply it effectively. Know what your cover offers you in terms of its relation to the threat. Be sure to realize that not every piece of cover is perfect in every situation. Use it wisely and it is your friend, use it poorly and suffer the consequences. When it comes time to move from cover, make sure you know where it is you plan on going. No sense dying tired after aimlessly running around searching for that next spot.

Another aspect of your movement to consider is your equipment. Ensure that you're not carrying more than necessary. All that extra gear you'll never use looks neat but will only slow you down. While serving on the nation's only Composite Adversary Force, I learned to love the light

missions. I knew every piece of equipment on my person had a purpose and would not go to waste. Once you've got the necessary gear make sure it's used properly. All those straps, buttons and buckles serve a purpose—use them. There's an old saying that, "Gear adrift is gear a gift." Nothing is worse than having something you dropped moving from cover to cover, used against you later. Make sure your gear and what's inside it is secure and easy to locate for later use.

Last, but certainly not least, is communication. Any team that uses communication properly will be a more effective fighting force. This includes before, during, and after the exercise. Make sure that prior to any exercise or training scenario that everyone is briefed properly. Each person

involved should understand the plan and be able to brief it back to a peer or their team lead. Just because a detail seems relatively simple doesn't mean it's unimportant. Remember prior planning prevents poor performance.

Communication during the event should be direct and to the point. There's no sense in having 42 hand and arm signals or a book full of radio code words and acronyms if not everyone understands them. Keep things simple enough that they don't bog your shooting and movement down to a standstill. It's about coordination and control from start to finish. If it's necessary, come up with 8–10 signals or a few radio code words to make your tactical communication easy to use *before* the day of the exercise. Practice these as a group during training exercises to get every use to them.

As I said before, none of these concepts are new or fancy. They've been used generation after generation and have been proven to be effective. The key is using them properly, the right tool for the job. They are perishable skills, however, and should be practiced regularly to keep them honed. The team that practices these concepts and puts them to good use will find them successful more often than not.

Until next time, good luck and God speed!



Remember to keep your finger off the trigger when not firing. Also, lowering your weapon slightly will help you scan for any threats.



Nuclear Industry's



Team members of the National Composite Adversary Force

Mock Terrorists

Turn to Airsoft Technology

By MSG (Ret.) "Mad Max" Mullen

Deep in an unforgiving and undisclosed desert location north of Las Vegas, a dozen armed Nuclear Security Officer volunteers were physically, mentally, and psychologically assessed for potential service with the National Composite Adversary Force (CAF). Under the watchful eye of former Army special operations members, these men were the latest to undergo the rigors of the annual selection course. In a nutshell, it was a tense, aggressive, full-speed, and extraordinarily professional event.

This specialized group is the ultimate Red Cell team...

Established in August 2004, the CAF is a nationwide team of approximately 20 members, managed under a contract with The Wackenhut Corporation's Special Operations Group. This specialized group is the ultimate Red Cell team, highly trained and managed by former members of our nation's most elite special operations units. With administrative oversight provided by the Nuclear Energy Institute, the CAF provides a superbly trained group of adversaries—mock terrorists—in support of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Force on Force (FoF) inspection program for all 64 commercial nuclear energy sites in

the United States. This group tests the security strategies of every nuclear energy site in the nation once every three years—that's about 24 tests a year—and even though the results of their efforts are classified, it's obvious that they know what they are doing.

I had the opportunity to observe portions of the selection course and meet some of the nation's current CAF members. All are very motivated, highly dedicated, and extremely well trained, and I for one am glad they are only mock terrorists. The CAF Selection Course uses Close Quarters Battle (CQB) and live-fire marksmanship as primary assessment tools. Instruction in tactical communications, explosive and mechanical breaching, small unit tactics, and daily, strenuous, cadre-led physical training round out the weeks of training.

The CAF Selection Cadre was quick to point out that this was not a training course where fees are exchanged for specific training. While everyone will learn vitally important techniques, the course is actually an on the job interview used to select individuals for service with the CAF. Each potential candidate is closely scrutinized for certain performance indicators within a given set of ethical, moral, and legal standards before being invited to attend. With monthly nationwide industry exposure and the unique demands of the NRC FoF exercise program, the CAF requires the most professional, mentally and physically fit,



Team members run scenarios with airsoft equipment.

and ethical leaders available from within the nuclear industry. Throughout the selection course, candidates are assessed for their leadership potential, ability to follow instructions, ability to be a productive and positive member of the team, and the capacity to learn and grow.

Aside from the on-going selection course, the current team members were in town for their annual government required requalification. Part of this “requal” is meeting certain weapons qualification standards and performing critical CQB tasks, which is what brought me to sunny tinsel town. For the first time in the team’s existence, they incorporated airsoft weapons into their training. Well-known airsoft icon Spartan Imports generously stepped up—and without hesitation—provided numerous Classic Army M4 rifles, M4 M203 rifles, AK-47s, pistol weapons systems, and appropriate accessories for the team to use during tactical scenarios and FoF CQB training. Based in California, Spartan Imports is the exclusive US distributor of high-end airsoft automatic electric guns (AEG) and products by Classic Army, Inokatsu, KWA, Tokyo Marui, Maruzen, and Marushin. The superb quality of the gear could be read on the faces of the CAF members as they opened the boxes and handled the weapons for the first time.

“Airsoft provides excellent immediate feedback, ensures our CQB and marksmanship skills are dialed in, and is absolutely safe in every environment imaginable.”

While in town I provided a detailed brief on the mil-sim training benefits and the advantages to using airsoft weapons, provided hands on instruction in the proper use and care of airsoft rifles and pistols, and personally sent hundreds of .45 caliber hard-ball rounds down range with the team.

Assisting me with the airsoft weapons familiarization training were Brad (a.k.a. Stryker) and Omar (a.k.a. Slo-Mar) of Las Vegas’ Tier I team Aces and Eights, and Grant Marks of team Wild Card. From providing instruction on the M249 SAW, two different bolt gun sniper systems, the USSOCOM SCAR, various AK variants, the claymore mine, hand grenades, a custom-built, mock WMD, to explaining the detailed

“Mad Max” Mullen fires down range.



functioning of the airsoft gearbox mechanics, they were consummate professionals who demonstrated superior technical knowledge of the airsoft systems. These three airsofters left an exceptional impression on the men of the CAF and made the Tactical MilSim family proud.

The airsoft weapons allowed the CAF to conduct FoF CQB against a shooting, moving, and communicating opposing force. “The benefits are obvious, and Spartan Imports really came through,” remarked CAF Director and former Army Ranger Kip Rowh. “Airsoft provides excellent immediate feedback, ensures our CQB and marksmanship skills are dialed in, and is absolutely safe in every environment imaginable.” Senior CAF member Jayson Holman of Arkansas Nuclear One station added, “I’m amazed at the realism of the systems. Classic Army weapons truly are 1:1 replicas of the real thing in weight, appearance, and functionality.”

Coming from the men charged with keeping the public safe from nuclear sabotage, that is quite an endorsement of the benefits of airsoft and mil-sim equipment. As a retired, long-time Army Ranger and seasoned airsoft competitor myself, I was impressed with the absolute professionalism the CAF team displayed throughout my visit. It was an honor to meet these men and observe their unique selection process geared toward identifying the guy with the right heart, right head, and right character to become the newest member of the National Composite Adversary Force. Moreover, I was proud that airsoft proved its value in mil-sim once again.



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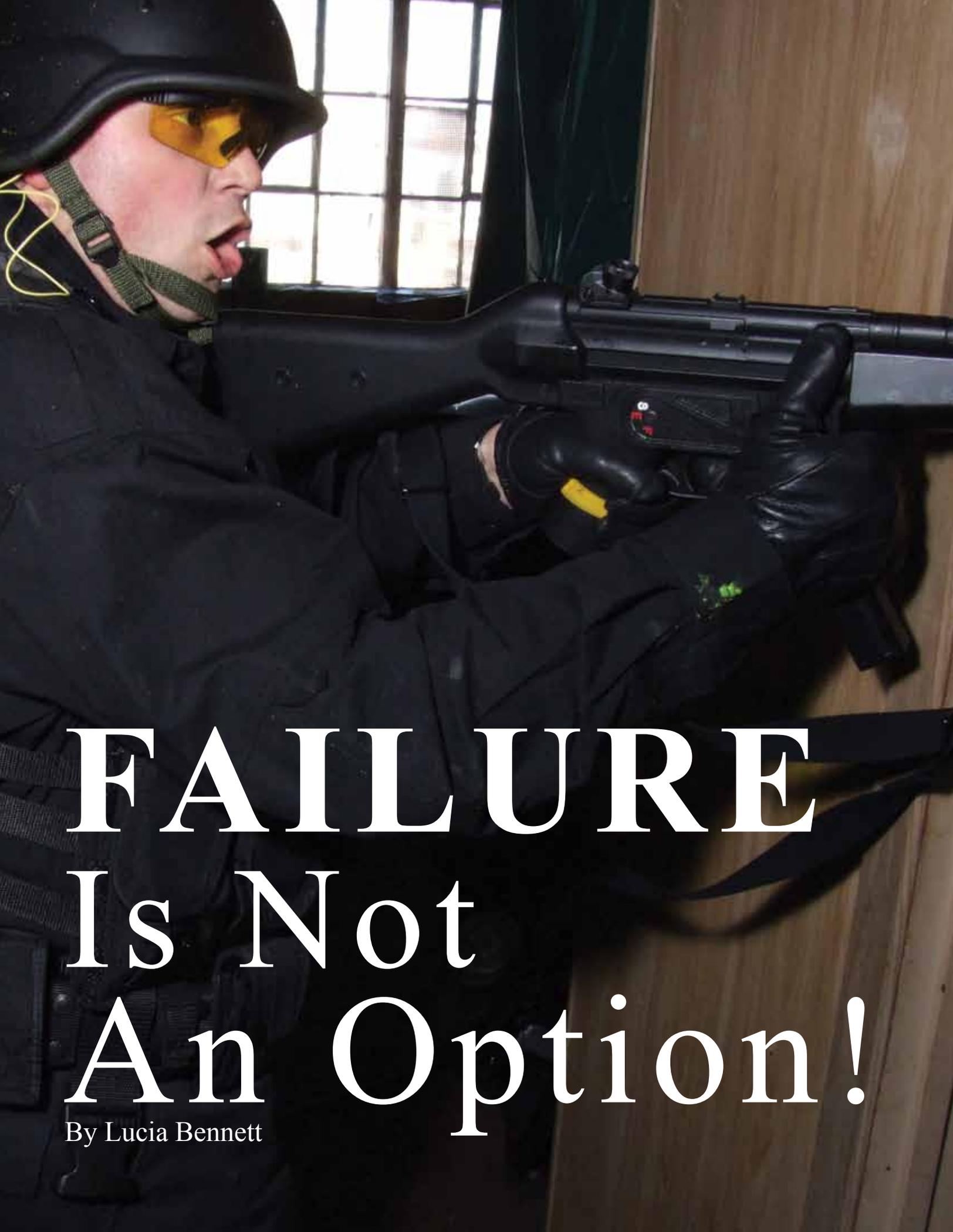


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FAILURE Is Not An Option!

By Lucia Bennett

“Failure Is Not An Option” is heard throughout the classrooms, hallways, and ranges from highly motivated students. This is also the creed of a company out of New York City called Sykes Group LLC. This is the motto that every instructor, student, and operator who enters the training facility or proving ground learns and lives by.

Sykes Group LLC has been around for approximately six years and brandishes concise instructors from the law enforcement and military communities. These men and women have combined wisdom and experience of 200 years in protective services, high-risk entry, and counterterrorism.

When someone attends one of Sykes Group LLC training, they enter a world of Protective Services and Special Operation is the company’s goal. The hands-on training bridges the gap between classroom learning and reality. Students train to response to various fields operations that range from practical to extreme.

DOOM Training

I attended this company’s yearly In-Service training for past and present students, tactical teams, and contractors. As I was introduced to many of these hard charges, I was quite surprised by how experienced that these men and women were in the physical security field, fugitive recovery, SWAT, or just the average civilian firearm user.

“We rely heavily on airsoft products.”

Barry Sykes, the owner and Chief Instructor stressed to me that safety, and realism in training is the



Sykes Group trainees drill in realistic scenarios to prepare for future, real-world situations.

cornerstone of his company when training with firearms, as well as various weapons systems. “We rely heavily on airsoft products,” Barry said.

Sykes Group has used airsoft equipment for approximately five years, prior to that the company used paintball guns. “Paintball was a great training aid,” Barry said, “but it had drawn backs. Some of these draw backs included the limited location that it could be used at as well as the cleanup of the students and vehicles.”

When a fellow company director (Mission Ready out of NJ) suggested airsoft, everything changed. Since then, Sykes Group has moved forward to use airsoft exclusively. Be it weapon systems of the Classic Army (which all the students and in-

structors swear by) or that Mad Bull provides (Grenade Launcher, Stun Noise Shot, and Land Mines), every student feels that they are using the genuine article.

Training

The training that I attended was focused on the areas of Hostage Rescue, High Risk Warrant Execution, EDP (Emotionally Disturbed Person), and an Active Shooter Situation. Each scenario incorporated the role players and stage mannequins.

The actors who were tasked with being Criminal/Terrorist/Stressed-Out Employee were from local airsoft teams, as well as Sykes instructors. The building training location was on the waterfront, this served as a scary, real-world environment.

Sykes utilized aerial video from a model helicopter that was outfitted with mini CCTV. The birds' eye video footage helped instructors point out errors that students made during the training.

Once my equipment and paperwork was squared away, I was teamed up with a squad of former and active Correction Emergency Responders. These men and women treated me with respect and professionalism that reminded me of my days as an operator at the NYC Dept. of Correction ESU.

We pushed hard and fast onto the hostages...

These new-found friends brought me up to speed in how they work and what is expected from each person and me. After that, we were given our operation order and then a safe check of our team by our assigned safety officer, a former Army Ranger.

As we boarded our transport vehicle, I could hear the Team Leader receiving updates from the TOC (Tactical Operation Center) and

then he passed it down to the assistant team leader. As we drove to the target site, we went over our battle plan and what position each person had. Our team leader turns around to us and said, "What is the motto?" Everyone reply without hesitation in a loud, formidable voice, "FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION."

The Breach/ Skirmish

Once on target, we stacked up outside the door with weapons at the ready. That's when we heard screaming and loud music blasting. Higher command gave the order for us to breach the front door and side doors. Inside the smoke-filled room, we faced live bad guys and three diametrical targets with strobe lights flashing, music wailing, and Mad Bull Stun Noise Shot booby traps activated.

We pushed hard and fast onto the hostages and then ran into a Barricade Suspect situation—that's when one of the bad guys was cornered into an office space. I could hear over my radio ear bud that the marksman had a shot. The team leader radioed commands to higher

that he would negotiate with this role player, who I must say, got deeply into his part. The player was so good at his role, I thought I was actually dealing with an EDP.

Once we exited the training site, I could see new role players preparing to enter the building for the next group of operators. Watching them, I wonder what baptism by fire this new group of warriors will go through. They have an active shooter in a school scenario with approximately 20 to 30 role players—they will have an even tougher time than we did.

Writer Background

Lucia Bennett is a retired captain of 28 years with NYC Department of Correction and 10 years with the department Emergency Service Unit (ESU). She holds two Master Degrees in Journalism and a BA in Politic Science.

The Airsoft technical advisers are Leo Altman and Barry Sykes.



Training participants include men and women in the physical security field, fugitive recovery, SWAT or the civilian firearm user.

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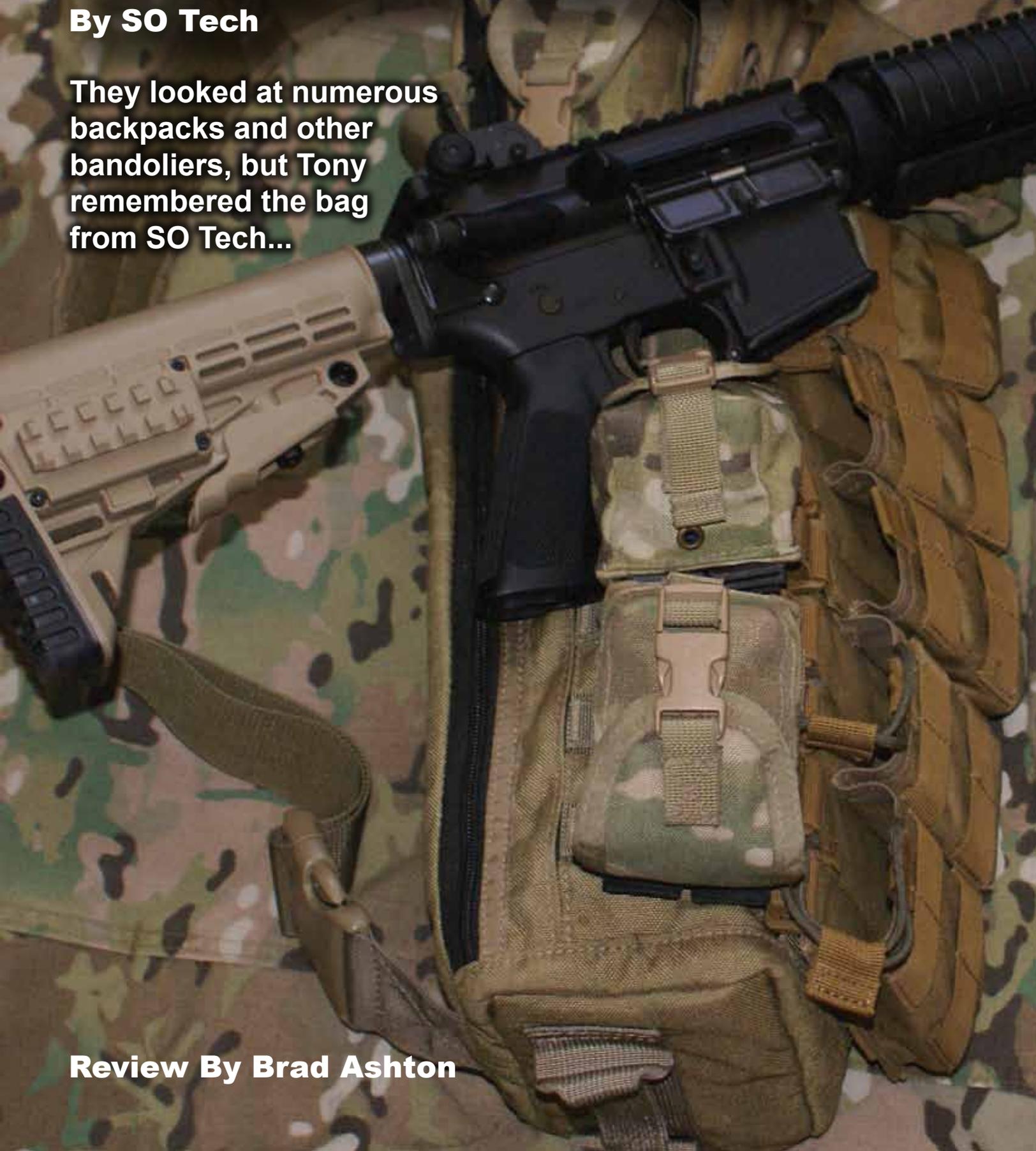


E&E BAG

By SO Tech

They looked at numerous backpacks and other bandoliers, but Tony remembered the bag from SO Tech...

Review By Brad Ashton





The quick disconnect allows for rapid removal.

In recent months, some friends of Tony Patton, who are in a Special Forces Operational Detachment (ODA) with 3rd Group, approached him. They needed a bag that could be used for escape and evasion, a grab-and-go system. The bag also had to be functional and designed in such a way that they could fight with it. A bag with the capability to hold six ammo magazines, a radio/GPS unit, some grenades or smoke, water, an MRE and some medical supplies. SF didn't want the bag to be super fat or super long, and they wanted it to be flexible enough be worn on their backs, or if needed, to pull it around front and fight from it.

Tony worked at 21st Tactical, which is located at Ft. Bragg, NC. One day the SO Tech reps came into the store. He mentioned ODA's need for a different type of bag. Tony asked that instead of designing a new bag, could he rework one of the current SO Tech bags? (For anyone interested, the go-bag was made famous in the movie *Transformers*, as well as being prominently mentioned in the TV show, *The Unit*.) The SO Tech team agreed that the design had merit and that it would take a short time to prepare a sample for testing.



E&E Bag worn across the back.



The rugged construction of the bag allows the user to steady the shot.

A couple weeks later, Tony received one modified bag to make sure it was what the SF group wanted. After one small change was made, four completed bags were ready for us to evaluate. I field tested the bag for several hours with a complete load. I expected a lot from the design and I wasn't disappointed. The bag was practical, compact, and was able to carry the essentials. The construction of the bag was very well done. From the stitching to the MOLLE (Modular Lightweight Load-carrying Equipment), you could see the time and effort put into the bag. It was comfortable and easy to maneuver around with. I placed an IFAK and two MRE's in the center pouch as well as a 3-liter bladder. In the small side pouches, I placed power bars, an emergency blanket, spare batteries, a multi tool, and an AR cleaning kit. On the backside of the bag I placed five open-top M4 pouches and a radio pouch. On the side of the bag, I positioned two hand grenade pouches and a smoke canister pouch. All of the pouches and

storage areas seemed to be easily accessible while moving around.

This bag has many uses. It can be used as an escape and evasion (E&E) bag or even an emergency resupply kit. This bag will serve the soldier on the go. If you have to run out the door and into a combat situation with no chance to put on a vest and or plate carrier, you will be able to effectively fight from this bag for a short amount of time. You can carry the essentials in the bag.

In my opinion, the military community, as well as civilian search and rescue and wilderness medical personnel could easily use this bag. If you need to rapidly get up and go, this bag would be my choice. I have a few different bags that I own from a \$10 bag to a \$100-plus bag.

But I would use this SO Tech bag over all of them. At the time of this writing, the bags are in the Griffin Group, and then are headed to Afghanistan.

AIRSOFT:

The answer to effective training?

By MSG Teeuwen, USMC

“The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in combat.” We’ve all heard this quote, or something similar, and it’s this ideology that spurs the military to conduct the most realistic training it can.

To that end, the military, namely the Marine Corps and Army, use a variety of infantry-based training tools to make our Marines and Soldiers the best trained combatants on the planet.

During training, nothing beats firing live ammunition at a target, but when the training mission calls for force-on-force action, or if the training facility does not allow for live ammunition to be fired, then other methods are used. For the most part, the military relies upon the tried and true Blank Firing Apparatus (BFA) and blank-firing ammo, or the venerable Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) gear, to the newer SESAMS (Special Effects Small Arms Marking System). All of these systems are widely used and have great training benefit, but they also have drawbacks; specifically, lack of realistic effects and high cost.

Because of these drawbacks, alternative training tools are continuously sought out. Newer lasers, newer “Simunitions” and newer gear in general. Some commanders have even taken their troops to paintball fields to get a bit of training, because the one thing that most of the training tools currently in use

lack is the fact that no one knows for sure if they truly hit their target, or if they themselves have been hit.

While paintball markers are good indicators of whether or not someone’s been hit, they too have some serious drawbacks.

Enter airsoft.

While every training tool has its pros and cons, airsoft weapons clearly outshine all other reasonable training options. The one area where airsoft weapons cannot compete is for rifle marksmanship training. Again, nothing beats actually putting live ammo on target, and where Marine Corps marksmanship is concerned, we shoot at, and accurately hit, targets 500 meters away. So, for the sake of this article, I’ll concentrate comparing airsoft weapons to blanks, MILES, SESAMS, and paintball in an environment where live ammo is not fired.

I would purposely not fire my SAW during some evolutions because of the cleanup afterwards.

When it comes to cost, live and blank ammunition can get quite expensive, even for the shortest of

training missions. The logistics involved in not only purchasing the ammunition, but then storing it and transporting it, become excruciatingly problematic. And depending on what range is being used, and what the range regulations are, range safety requirements may be quite demanding as well.

The variety of blank ammunition required also incurs additional costs. In an integrated training event, a typical infantry company would field M4s, M249s, and M240s; loose rounds, belted rounds, and the larger 7.62 blanks. Even with the newer SESAMS rounds, they too have a pretty high cost. Not only is the SESAMS round specialized, but each rifle used requires a conversion kit to work. When comparing ammunition costs, airsoft pellets are not only easier to acquire, but far cheaper to purchase, easier to store, easier to transport, and if using biodegradable-types, then it is far more eco-friendly.

Of course, there is a “start up” cost for the weapons themselves. Other training tools use rifles and weapons that most military units already have, so in order to use airsoft munitions, a unit or organization would have to purchase enough airsoft weapons to properly conduct the training. However, with the plethora of manufacturers and the many designs of airsoft guns, a reasonable amount of guns can be purchased at a cost far lower than what a crateful of new rifles, or even the conversion kits for SESAMS, would cost.

Additionally, there would be no extra costs for different types of ammunitions. All airsoft weapons use the standard 6mm pellet. The only difference in pellet cost would be a preference for a particular brand or type (such as bio-pellets).

Maintenance and durability are definite concerns with airsoft. Most airsoft weapons can handle a bit of inclement weather, as with any real weapon, but will most likely suffer technical issues in severe climates

or circumstances. Jarring impacts and damage are not too much of a concern, because any real weapon would be affected by the same conditions and require professional maintenance.

Additional space would be required in an armory to store the weapons and a basic amount of training can be given to the armorers to perform basic repairs. For difficult repairs, a service contract should be negotiated when making the purchase agreement.

Realism is what the military strives for. For obvious reasons, the military likes to use real weapons, so training tools were developed to fit on, or be fired from, real weapons. However, they all lacked that true bit of realism; were you hit or not?

Blanks and BFAs are quite common and a Marine can easily expend a magazine full of blanks fending off an assaulting squad. However, no one would ever know for sure if they were hit or not.

MILES was an attempt to alleviate this problem, but with the inaccurate lasers and inherent problems with the systems, it still did not

come close enough.

Paintball is a great sport in which a person could fire at another person and know for sure if his aim was true or not, and he himself would know if he was hit. The problems with paintball are obvious; outlandish and unrealistic guns, short range, filthy and hard to clean paint, and the horrible mess left over.

SESAMS were developed for the military, but they came with high costs. Not only that, but any weapons that fire blanks will come with two more problems- policing up the brass and cleaning the guns.

Airsoft is the most realistic, cost-effective, and optimal training solution...

I recall as a young Marine, I would purposely not fire my SAW during some evolutions because of the cleanup afterwards. Rifle and gun maintenance are always required, but the less I had to do, the better. After each evolution, the en-

tire platoon would have to get “on line” and pick up all of the expended brass.

Airsoft weapons clearly dominate in the category of realism. Most airsoft guns function very closely to their real counterparts; size, weight, accessories (sights, stocks, slings, etc...), functionality and general characteristics. Most standard and economical airsoft guns do not have blowback features, but everything else about airsoft is as real as possible, without the need of extensive cleanup afterwards.

Range and accuracy far exceed those of MILES and SESAMS, is good to about 100-150 feet, and the impact of the pellet is enough to tell someone if they’ve been hit or not.

Unlike paintball or SESAMS though, there is no paint mark to indicate a hit, so integrity is key for this to be truly effective. However, there is no messy paint to clean up, uniforms are not stained, training areas are not littered with thousands of popped paintballs, nor are building walls and floors stained a rainbow of colors.

Magazines insert and extract as normal, but magazine load-out is a bit exaggerated compared to real weapons, even using low-cap magazines. And while there may be thousands of pellets littering the ground, most are earth colored and blend right in, and if using biodegradable pellets, they will eventually break down and no longer be an issue.

Another bit of realism that airsoft brings is the fact that weapons that are used by adversaries can be utilized. AK-variants and other weapons can be used by OPFOR, role players, or even used by American trainees to get a feel for the enemy’s weapon of choice. No other training tool allows for such variation.

Ultimately, except for live fire target shooting, airsoft is the most realistic, cost-effective, and optimal training solution for today’s military.



The accurate look and feel of airsoft weapons enhances training realism.



LASHA

By Mark "Stone Wolf" Anderson



I always enjoy reading the latest weapon reviews and gazing at photos of these pristine weapons fresh out of the box and methodically laid out in a sea of tactical gear. But have you ever wondered how that weapon would hold up after five years or so? Well, I did and that inspired me to write this article. I hope this will inspire you to send us your own story.

I have always been fascinated by the real AK-47. The AK-47 is the most recognized silhouette of any weapon ever produced and I wanted one. So in 2002, I purchased this Tokyo Marui AK-47S from a classified ad online. It had not been upgraded and it

came without the folding stock. That's OK, I had my own plans for this rifle.

After several months, I had enough money to start working on my project. My first purchase was a metal body for a full-stock version from Den Trinity. Why? Well I would love to be able to say that after a long and exhaustive search... Nope, sorry—it was the cheapest. But as time will often tell, a cheap price doesn't always mean cheap quality. However, it did take a little work to make it fit together. Luckily, I'm fairly good with a Dremel® tool.

My next purchase was a Guarder® all-metal front end. The Guarder front end fit in so perfectly tight that I again had to rely on my Dremel skill set. I didn't mind though, it was fun playing the role of an armorer.

The addition of the Guarder front end also allowed me to go from a small, 8-inch (20cm) long 8.4V 600mAh battery to an outrageous 13.5-inch (34cm) long 8.4V 2100mAh battery.

Now that I was getting more ambitious with my project, I decided to replace the stock spring with a Systema M120. I also switched to a metal hop-up unit. This completed all of my internal upgrades. I did not want the weapon to be highly tuned and accurate. I wanted it to exemplify the same qualities of its real counterpart: strong and reliable. When I test fired the new, upgraded full-metal body AK-47, nicknamed Sasha, I realized something interesting—the sound was awesome. The metal body had changed the acoustics and the volume of the clacking metal doubled.

Now that I was done building my project, or so I thought, I no-



This close-up emphasizes the Den Trinity metal body.



Gardner metal fore end allowed for replacement of the stock battery (top) with the custom battery.

ticed that the plastic furniture did not do the AK-47 any justice. So I decided to carve my own furniture out of some oak I had lying around. The dark red oak came out beautifully and I received many complements. But Sasha looked more like a showpiece rather than a replica of a hardened implement of battle.

Around the same time, I had purchased a parts kit for an AK-47, and was thinking about building a real semi-auto AK-47, but I just couldn't get the time or money to dump into it. However, I did noticed how beat-up the real furniture was; so I ended up stealing it for my airsoft project. This was exactly what I needed to finish the project for good. Heck, the furniture even smelled

like a real AK-47 and still does to this day. After more use with the Dremel tool, I was able to fit all of the wood onto the AK-47. I finished it off with a light application of sand paper to the metal body just to give it that worn-in look. This process took about two years of sporadic working. At one point, I did play around with a modern-looking version by adding an M4 collapsible stock and black custom R.I.S. fore end but it was short lived and quickly returned to its nostalgic form.

Besides its many trips to various airsoft events, I also had the opportunity to use her while I was working as a physical security consultant teaching entry control point procedures at the California State Capitol. Every

law enforcement individual who held her thought she was real. Several years later while working as a military advisor for the film industry, Sasha was used in several movies, one of which was an independent film called Farewell Darkness (www.farewelldarkness.com).

After all Sasha has been through, she still shoots just as well as it did in 2003, and is a favorite in my collection.

E-mail your story and pictures to mark@tacticalmilsim.com



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Dalton Fury's

Kill Bin Laden

Reviewed By Don Roff



“Fellas, Kill bin Laden... and bring back proof!”

— Major General Dell L. Dailey

That order came from Major General Dell L. Dailey, who was head of the Joint Special Operations Command, running counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan. Major Dalton Fury had his orders. The pseudonymous Fury was heading up the mission of 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment (Delta Force). It was December 2001. The elite commandos' target was Usama bin Laden, head of al-Qaeda and joined by a well-armed force of jihadist fighters.

Based on CIA intelligence, it was believed that bin Laden was responsible for planning the attacks two months earlier on September 11 on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Almost 3,000 people, daily workers in the buildings along with rescuing fire fighters and police officers, lost their lives as the two towers, struck by two hijacked airliners, crumbled to the ground in a heap of twisted, blacked metal and acrid dust.

While Americans were still in shock, and volunteers sifted through rubble at the World Trade Center to recover the bodies, Major Fury, along with a detachment of Delta Force operators—D-boys—British Special Boat Service commandos, and CIA operatives with large cash hordes to bribe the locals, searched the area of Tora Bora, a complex cave system in the White Mountains of eastern Afghanistan near the Khyber Pass.

Soon after 9/11, Usama bin Laden had climbed the international list of terrorists to *the most wanted man in the world*. As Maj. Gen. Dailey stated, the mission was clear—kill the al-Qaeda leader and bring back physical proof.

Major Dalton Fury did not begin with Delta Force. No Army soldier does. It's a long, arduous process where only three men out of 100 typically make it through a one-month selection process that would challenge the most Olympian of athletes and boggle the mind of the most cunning of military strategists. Fury grew up as an “army brat,” moving around the world with his family, following his Army-officer father. Despite being uprooted every few years, Fury had a typical red-blooded America childhood of trading baseball cards, creating adventures with GI Joes, and playing school football. It was only after reading an article in *Gung-Ho* magazine about US Army Colonel James “Bo” Gritz, who conducted a botched attempt to rescue American prisoners of war that were left behind in Laos did Fury ever consider a career in the military.

The stoic, civilian-dressed group moved about with quiet professionalism.

In 1983, at the age of nineteen, Fury was a private in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry

(Ranger). During a training operation, Fury was packed aboard a MC-130 Talon aircraft among other Rangers and equipment. Then, two late-1970s pickup trucks rolled up to the ramp of the aircraft. A group of men, many with long hair, thick mustaches or goatees, and dressed in blue jeans and western-style plaid shirts grabbed black bags out of the trucks and boarded the plane. They spoke to no one nor did they check in with anybody. The stoic, civilian-dressed group moved about with quiet professionalism. This was Fury's introduction to Delta.

Five years later, as an Army captain, Fury was one of the few men (out of 121) who began the selection process to be accepted in Delta. (For a blow-by-blow picture of the formidable Delta selection and assessment course, check out Eric Haney's *Inside Delta Force* or Colonel Beckwith's *Delta Force*.) Fury trained with his Delta squadron for three years, rising in ranks from captain to major. It was on one such training mission that he and his squadron learned about the attack on the World Trade Center. When the word “terrorist” was thrown around by the media, Fury knew that it wouldn't be long for his counterterrorist team to grab their specialized gear and blast into action—not to mention to get some much-deserved payback on those that planned the earth-shaking 9/11 attacks. The commandos immediately stopped shaving—they would need long, shaggy beards to blend in with the locals. They waited for the “go” word from the top.

After a month and a half of red tape and bureaucracy that had kept Delta on the sidelines for a number of years, the varsity team was finally allowed to play in the game—a game of hardball. They were on

their way to Afghanistan.

Intel from the Central Intelligence Agency leaned toward Tora Bora, a hard-to-reach area of Afghanistan with jagged, rock, snow-capped peaks and deep ravines sprinkled with mines. The area was massive with a complex system of caves—in fact, it was here that the Afghan mujahideen—*muhj* for short—defeated the well-armed Soviet forces more than a decade earlier. It was estimated, based on the intelligence, that there was anywhere from 1,500–3,000 enemy fighters defending the Tora Bora mountains. Al-Qaeda fighters were now better equipped and trained than they were in the Soviet-era 1980s. An obvious way to rapidly infiltrate the Delta squadron onto the mountain range would be by helicopter. However, this was impossible, as the al-Qaeda fighters possessed at least two camouflaged ZPU-1 14.5mm AAA guns and several dozen SA-7 SAM rockets. Helicopters would be easy targets. During the 1980s, the *muhj* had been successful in bringing down scores of Soviet helicopters with less sophisticated shoulder-fired rockets. The US military could not afford another *Black Hawk Down* kind of rescue mission to recover downed pilots and crew.

One option that Delta liked enough to plan out was to helicopter the squadrons to Pakistan on the far peaks of Tora Bora. The teams would have bottled oxygen and acclimate themselves to the high elevation and freezing temperatures. Once they were on the peaks, they could target caves and bunkers with lasers for U.S. warplanes to strike. Somewhere from higher command, however, the plan was shot down. In Delta's history, it was thought that this was the first tactical plan proposed to be disapproved by a higher headquarters. Strike one!

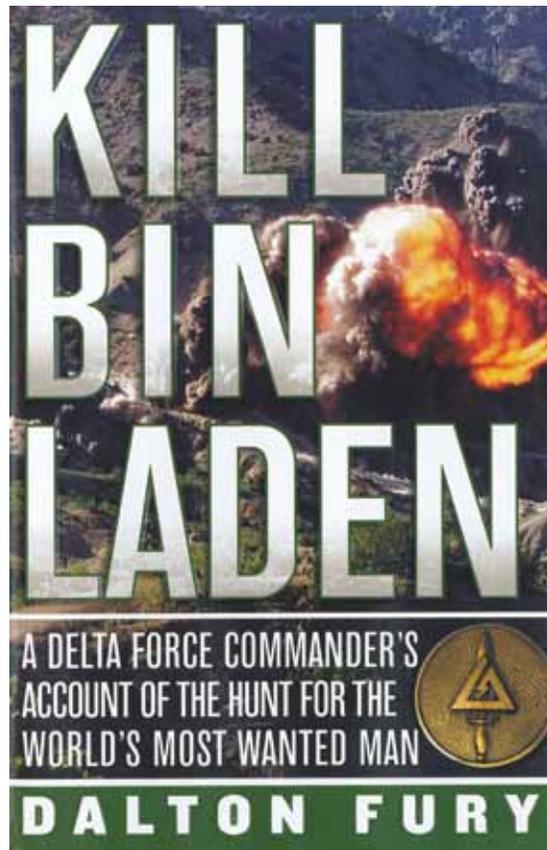
Another suggestion by Delta was to drop CBU-89 GATOR mines, which are used for anti-tank and anti-personnel, into the mountain passes. The mines were successfully used during the 1991 Gulf War when the Air Force dropped 1,105 CBU-89s to

thwart the movements of Iraqi Scud missile launchers. In the mountain passes of Afghanistan, the GATORs would spread a minefield that would deter enemy foot soldiers and vehicles from leaving, trapping them inside the wintery valley and even up the playing field for the military to maneuver into swift and deadly action. It had been found out later that NATO allies would opt out of the fighting if the GATORs were employed. So the plan of action was denied. Strike two!

The next approach was to move straight up into the mountains after bin Laden. However, most American support had been evacuated from Afghanistan, in a bizarre move by the US government, to put on the bluff that American forces were *not* looking for the man who machinated the Sept. 11 attacks. Usually, D-boys rely on the quick-reaction force of US Army Rangers. However, there were no Rangers. The QRF would have to be provided by the local Afghan allies. But there was only one problem—this was the time of Ramadan, the holy month where a Muslim fighter must fast from sunrise to sunset for 30 consecutive days. Typically the local QRF would quit fighting when the sun went down to grab much needed food and sleep. Since Delta operators primarily work under the cover of dark with night vision equipment—this was the beginning of

problems.

A typical Delta mission is to infiltrate an area, capture the intended person (the Precious Cargo), and then exfiltrate the area before being discovered. This mission was different. There was no capture of bin Laden. The orders were to kill with extreme prejudice, and either show proof of death via a photograph or other physical means. The remains of the al-Qaeda leader were to be given to the Afghans. If Americans had captured bin Laden and brought him back to the United States, a whirlwind media frenzy would have developed. Also, a major trial of bin Laden in a Western court of law would have embarrassed the Saudi royal family and then cre-

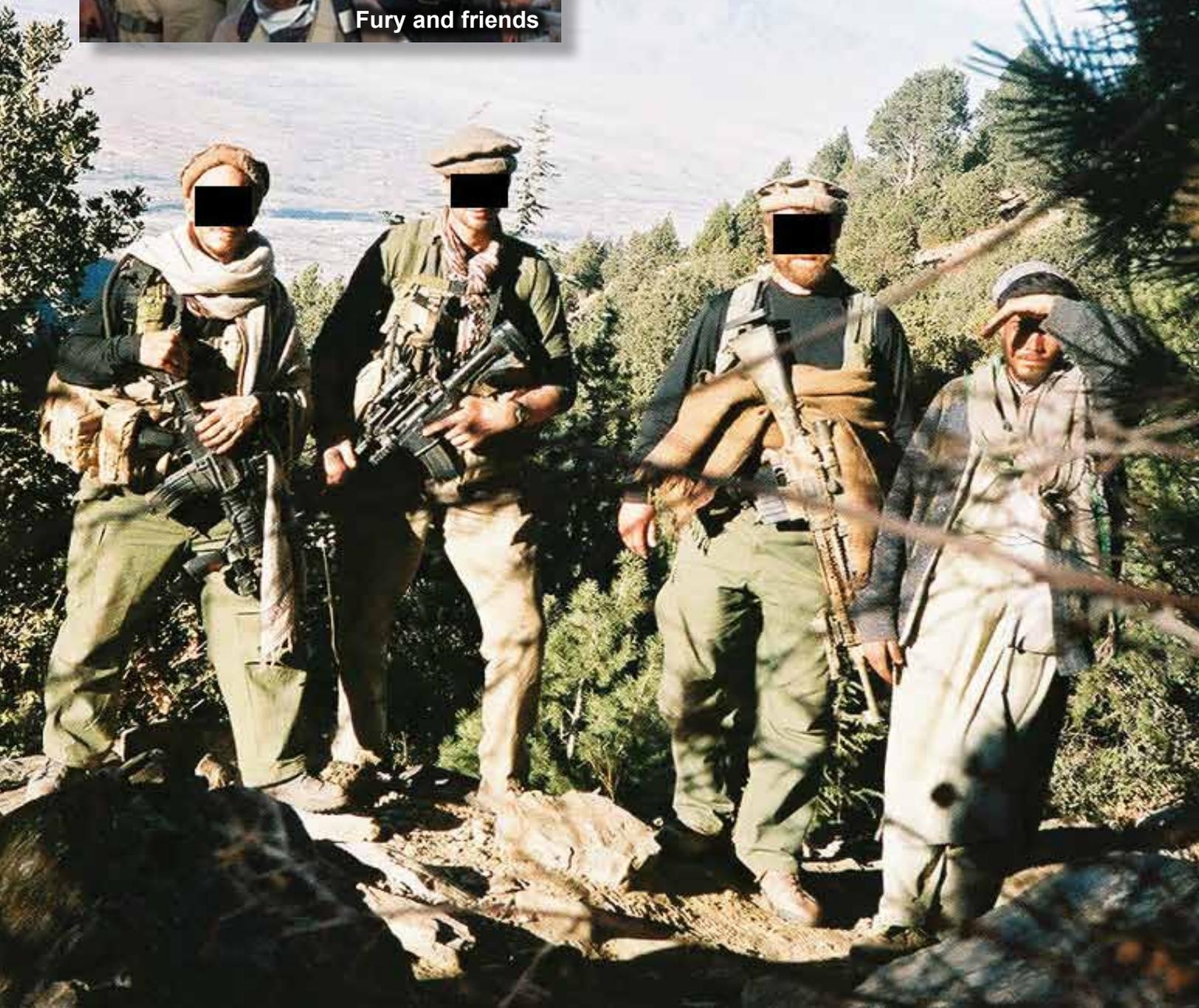




Fury and friends



Hopper and Shrek



ated more international problems. Shoot to kill was the mission of the day.

Soon, the squadron loaded up on a dozen pick-up trucks and moved deep into Afghanistan. There, they linked up with General Hazret Ali, a former Soviet-era Mujahideen now turned CIA-funded Afghan warlord. Ali had helped carve the hundreds of caves in the Tora Bora Mountains. Ali resided in the border city of Jalalabad. Upon seeing the small group of D-boys, General Ali remarked that the small band of commandos would not be able to handle themselves against the ruthless al-Qaeda in the mountains. As with many things during those December days, Ali was proven wrong.

Soon after Delta's link up with the Afghan fighters, Bin Laden's position had been determined. The CIA arranged for a BLU-82 "Daisy Cutter" bomb to be dropped. The refrigerator-sized bomb was formerly used in the Vietnam War to clear instant landing zones in the dense jungle. On the morning of December 9, a MC-130 Combat Talon dropped the 15,000-pound bomb. Unfortunately, the Daisy Cutter did not deliver the goods, exploding approximately 1,000 meters from the intended target. Three B-52 strikes dropping JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munitions) or "smart bombs" after the Cutter still didn't hit the Bin Laden mark. Though the Daisy Cutter had been off target of the al-Qaeda leader, scores of his fighters suffered as the radio reports came in with suffering resistance forces needing medical aid for the wounded or dying. For the first time, the enemy had the feeling of being vulnerable. It was now time to strike.

Though Fury's orders were to kill Bin Laden, his unit's orders were to also let the Afghan fighters, who ranged in age from 14–80 years of age, take credit for the killing. With US journalists now swarming near the battle site to snap up a story for media-hungry Americans back home, it was imperative for Fury and the elite operators to stay out of sight and under-cover behind their thick beards and Afghani pakols (thick wool hats).

It didn't help that the mujh leaders, General Ali and the slippery Haji Zaman Ghamshareek, subordinate warlord to Ali, sucked up as much press coverage as they could from the eager in-

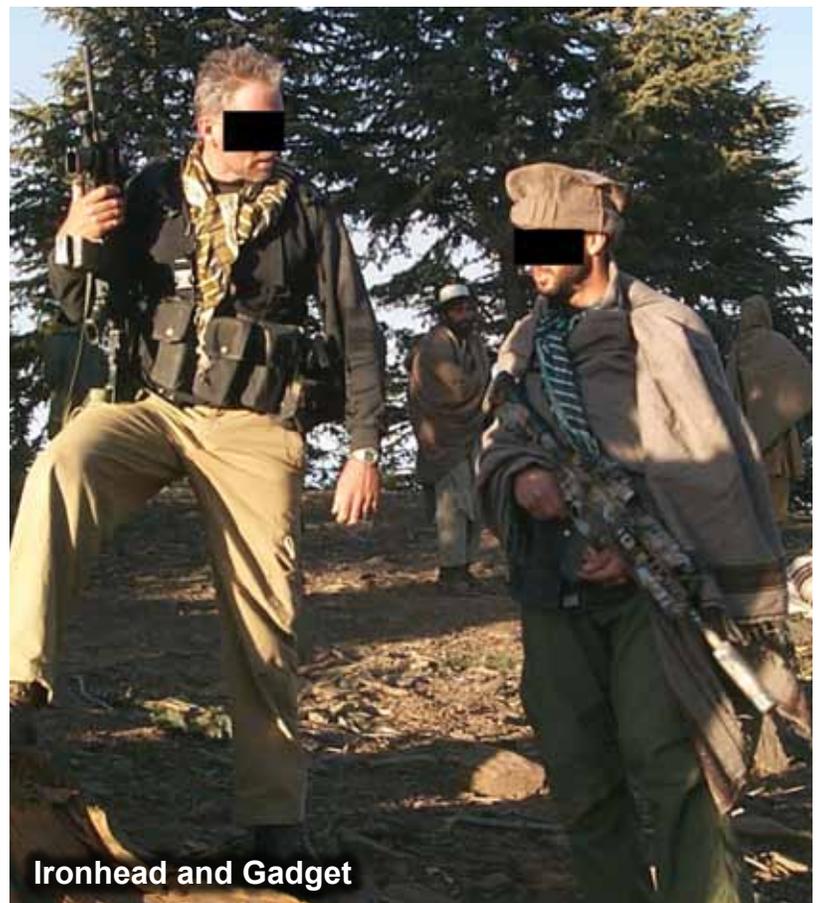
ternational press corps.

In the mountains, the Delta teams found that their Afghan guides and supporters either ditched the Americans if the fighting became too intense with al-Qaeda or surrendered preciously gained land fought and won over by day, only to be left to the enemy to regain by night.

More than once he witnessed a mujh fighter holding a transistor radio high over his head with the voice of Usama bin Laden spilling out...

Fury noted that his Afghan QRF seemed to hold too much reverence and fear for bin Laden to fully have their hearts in the fight. More than once he witnessed a mujh fighter holding a transistor radio high over his head with the voice of Usama bin Laden spilling out as if the Afghan wielding the electronic voice were some lightning rod receiving a voice of a god thundering from above. The other mujh fighters would huddle around the radioman like he was at a campfire cutting the high-elevation cold, warming themselves to the al-Qaeda leader's distinct diction.

Without the whole-hearted support of the Afghan fighters—and with the denied request of Army Rangers to help fill in the



Ironhead and Gadget

tactical gaps—the 40 or so Delta Force operators were overwhelmed against the 1,500-plus al-Qaeda and Taliban that protected bin Laden.

On December 12, Zaman abruptly told the D-boys and the CIA that al-Qaeda had negotiated a “cease-fire” with him. This was a “no go” for Delta as they had Bin Laden on the run, inflicting heavy casualties from both ground and air forces in the form of F-15 fighters, B-52 bombers, and the AC-130H Spectre.

Most of the American black ops members believed that Zaman’s 12-hour delay was both trying to get journalistic coverage (Zaman did) and to stall the commandos while Bin Laden moved into a more strategic hiding spot toward the Pakistan border (Zaman was). When 5:01 PM rolled around, one minute after the alleged al-Qaeda surrender, and none of the black-garbed resistance fighters showed, the bombing of the mountains continued.

On December 14, Delta and muj fighters confirmed the last known location of Usama Bin Laden. The al-Qaeda leader himself could be heard on the radio saying in a desperate voice, “Our prayers were not answered. Times are dire and bad. We did not get support from the apostates who are our brothers. I’m sorry for bringing you here... it is OK to surrender.”

The area was bombed for three hours. After that, there was radio silence. Three days after bin Laden’s last radio transmission, all al-Qaeda and Taliban forces that remained in the Tora Bora Mountains were either dead or captured. The muj spread out into local villages to pursue the fleeing enemy fighters. Despite not finding bin Laden’s body, a small band of American, British, and muj forces had destroyed or shaken al-Qaeda forces down to their very Tora Bora foundation. It was the terrorists’ turn to feel terror—to be served a helping of what they dished out so well.

Because no body was recovered from the rubble of the hiding site, it had been believed that bin Laden fled. 11 months later, Delta picked up “Gul Ahmed,” a man who lived near the al-Qaeda martyr cemetery adjacent to the Tora Bora battlefield who was believed to have treated a wounded bin Laden for three days. Questioning “Gul Ahmed” was fruitless.

Usama bin Laden’s fate was unclear after December 14, 2001 until he showed up on a video-



tape in October 2004, just days before the American Presidential election. Today, the CIA says the al-Qaeda leader is still in Pakistan. The hunt continues.

Fury retired from the Army in 2005 after 20+ years of hard-earned service. When his book was published in October 2008, he appeared on CBS’ *60 Minutes* (in disguise) and explained why he brought to light details of the secret mission that he had embarked on seven years earlier.

Despite controversy within the black ops ranks, it’s this reader’s opinion that Fury did the right thing. It’s a story that *needed* to be told—a chapter in the pages of American History that *should* be published. Some claim Fury wrote the book for financial gain and fame. However, Fury has already donated 25,000 US dollars of the profits to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, and he wrote the book under a pseudonym, so that puts the kibosh on that inane argument. Furthermore, Fury uses call signs and aliases for those still involved in the black ops and he reveals no tactical information that someone couldn’t Google or witness in a Saturday afternoon Hollywood blockbuster. Besides, Fury cleared the book with his comrades and command before *and* after he wrote it.

Kill Bin Laden is a relatively quick, informative read and one that’s not short on riveting action and rousing adventure. **Recommended.**

CHRONICLES OF MAD MAX

What's in a name?

By MSG (Ret.) "Mad Max" Mullen

I remember the first time I heard the name airsoft. I said to myself, "Air ... what?" Back in 2003, I was asked to participate in "Operation Lions Claws II," a yearly event created and put on by John Lu, CEO and President of Best of the USA Marketing. I was invited to go up against my old Battalion Commander COL. Danny McKnight, former Commander of the 3rd Battalion Ranger 75th Ranger Regiment and commander of Task Force Ranger in Somalia during the battle of Mogadishu. His exploits were chronicled in the book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* by Mark Bowden, and made famous by the Jerry Bruckheimer film *Black Hawk Down*.

With a slight hesitation, I said, "Okaaaaaay, now what in the heck is airsoft?" As Mr. Lu explained airsoft, my mind started drifting back to the days of me running around in my backyard as a kid with my Crossman pump action BB gun, shooting birds (sorry PETA, I was just a kid),

and getting my butt spanked by my Mama (Mother for you city folks) for shooting out Mr. Buckle's window and for popping Joey Bowels' sister, Susan, in the back with those good ol' brass Crossman BB's. And while I'm at it, let's not forget the serious beat down I received from George Harper and Sammy Booker for shooting at them while they were drinking Mad Dog 20/20 and rolling some bones (dice) on a hot summer night from my sniper hide, perched up in a crab apple tree in Zion, Illinois back in the 70's. As I snapped out of my nostalgia and my mind returned to the present, I still couldn't grasp the concept as I accepted his invitation.

After hanging up the phone, I kept picturing guys running around the woods shooting at each other with plastic pellets from BB guns saying, "Hit, hit, hit." I imagined seeing uniforms consisting of either coveralls or blue jeans and wielding a plastic toy AK-47 from your local Wal-Mart with a spare AK maga-

zine in their back pants pocket. And for headgear, wearing a hockey mask with the old-fashioned, plastic goggles that you wear while weed whacking and sporting a baseball hat worn backwards. And let's not forget wearing their favorite NFL/NHL team jersey.

I began to search the Internet to find as much information on the sport they called "arrowsoft", "arrowborne", oops, I mean airsoft. And the more I read about airsoft, the more fascinated I grew. Here I am, a retired Army Ranger, Ranger Instructor, and Special Operations Operator about to embark into the unknown. So I packed up my old set of BDUs and web gear, as though I was walking with Ranger students, and then headed out west to Cali.

Little did I know, I was in for a shock that totally threw me for a loop. When I arrived in Bakersfield, California and linked up with my company, I was absolutely astonished at what I saw—and would witness and experience—over the course of the next couple of days. I stood there with my jaw hanging down when issued my first weapon. The weapon's detail and rate of fire was astonishing. The players, men and women from all walks of life, were kitted like real operators wearing the latest tactical gear. I felt like I was at a remote Forward Operating Base (FOB) site on the borders of Afghanistan.

During the night scenario, I asked my company, "Who has Night Vision Goggles (NVGs)?" I snickered to myself, knowing dang well that they didn't have anything so sophisticated. Boy, I was in for a shock! One of my squads showed up in formation with PVS-7Bs and MICH helmets brandishing helmet mounts. These guys were better equipped than the Ranger stu-

dents I used to train. I stood there like a bonehead, embarrassed, and then wiped the egg off my face. I said, “Do we have an extra pair of NODs?”

After that weekend, I was made a believer in the sport. Being the trainer that I am, I started seeing the valuable training applications this could have in both law enforcement and the military. Also, the people who participated in this event—lawyers, military personnel, bankers, television producers, and even a former CIA agent—amazed me. These were not backwoods rednecks at some good ol’ boy round up. (Now, I have been accused of being a “black redneck” because of my ultra conservative views, but I wear that title with pride. That is a different story for another time.)

Now, let’s fast forward six years to 2009.

Airsoft has grown in leaps and bounds with an unlimited future. But what’s more exciting is to see Airsoft weapons being used by law enforcement, the military, and other federal law enforcement agencies on local, state, and national levels. Those organizations are beginning to see airsoft as a valuable training tool. Now don’t get me wrong, airsoft weapons do have their limitations when being used. But the value cannot be denied when properly used within the parameters of your training and lesson plans.

Recently, a friend who served in one of the Special Operations’ premier Spec Operation units sent me an article. The article covered the use of airsoft weapons in training scenarios, but I was irked that the author kept referring to them as “toys.” I knew that the author had never participated in a well-

organized airsoft event. However, this is probably due to the article writer’s lack of education or that he based his observation off his limited knowledge of the weapons system. But speaking from experience, whenever the average person hears the name airsoft, the first thing that most likely comes to mind is the junk that is sold in your local retail store or Wal-Mart.

The image that local news portrays of airsoft weapons is not much help either. I remember one national news story where some kid brought an airsoft weapon to school. The police went to his home and found an arsenal of similar weapons. They had them laid out on a table and the TV camera panned over them—airsoft M4/M203s, SAWs, grenades, and claymore mines. You can imagine what was going through the mind of the average viewer; it looked like this kid was going on a Columbine-style killing spree. (I know you must take all threats seriously and my hat is off to all law enforcement for preempting what could have turned into a bad situation.) The newscaster kept saying that the boy had automatic weapons and that his parents gave him money to buy the weapons. Not once did the newscaster mention that 99% of the weapons were airsoft. The story was deceptive, giving the viewer the wrong impression that the weapons were real. After viewing the story, I had a lump in my throat. For the responsible, dedicated mil-sim participant—this all boils down to education and responsibility on the proper use of these weapon systems.

Airsoft is going through a transition. You now have airsoft and military simulation (mil-sim). What is the difference? Airsoft is where you get friends together and play a pickup game similar to some paint-

ball scenarios. Then you have mil-sim, which is based off military-driven scenarios or some real-world events. Which one suits you?

The Tactical MilSim Magazine staff and I are dedicated to the future and growth of this sport. It all starts with a name change. Since we are more geared to the mil-sim side of airsoft, we will slowly start integrating new terminology and training to support and enhance the mil-sim (airsoft). We are open to any new ideas or suggestions to help our sport flourish. If you take a look at my staff, you will see that they are all experts in their field. They were handpicked because of their love of the sport and their background. Over time, you will slowly see the word “airsoft” disappear from our vocabulary as we embrace “mil-sim.”

Please feel free to share your thoughts. If you have a negative comment, please feel free to come up with a better, alternate solution. This is going to take a community effort in order for our sport to be nurtured and to grow. There is the possibility of having your airsoft rights slowly taken away. I ask for your support for the magazine and also to get actively involved and join the NRA. In the past, the NRA has looked down upon the airsoft community. But we are in this fight together in order to save our gun rights.

So I ask you what is in a name? We need an image makeover and must reinvent ourselves. In future issues, we are going to be dealing with the future of our sport and where it is headed. Until next time this is the Mad Max—roger, out.

The image features a close-up, slightly draped view of the American flag. The top portion shows the dark blue field with white stars, while the bottom shows the red and white stripes. The text 'THANK YOU' is superimposed in a large, bold, 3D-style font. The word 'THANK' is on the top line and 'YOU' is on the bottom line, both centered horizontally. The letters are a light grey color with a subtle gradient and a slight shadow, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are floating above or attached to the fabric. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the flag's material.

THANK
YOU

TO ALL WHO SERVE