

ARMY & NAVY

MODELWORLD

JUNE 1987

95p



● THE ROAD TO EL ALAMEIN ● SAMURAI ●

● HMS ARK ROYAL 1986 ● SIX DAY WAR ●

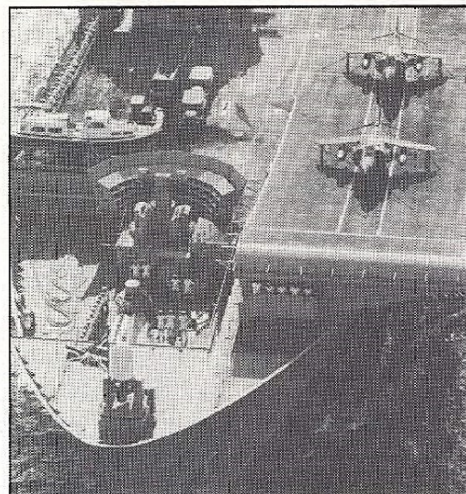
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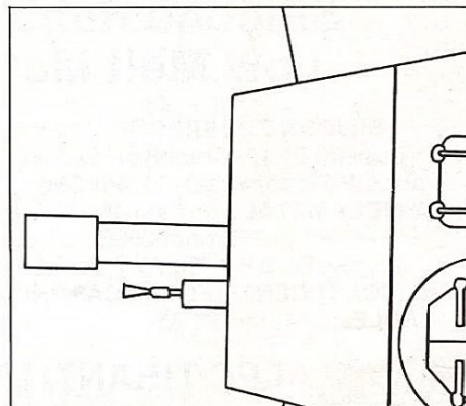
June 1987

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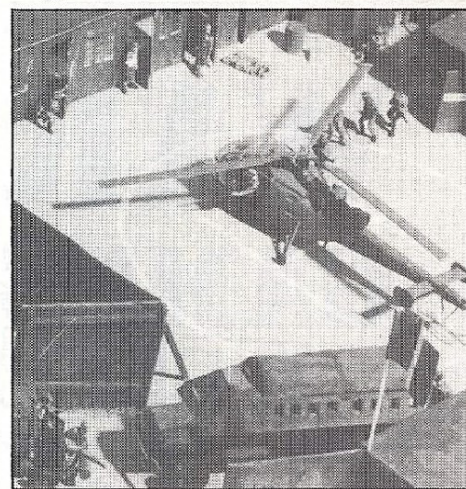
On the front cover: Samurai model photograph courtesy of Poste Militaire, Station Road, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex, TN31 60T.



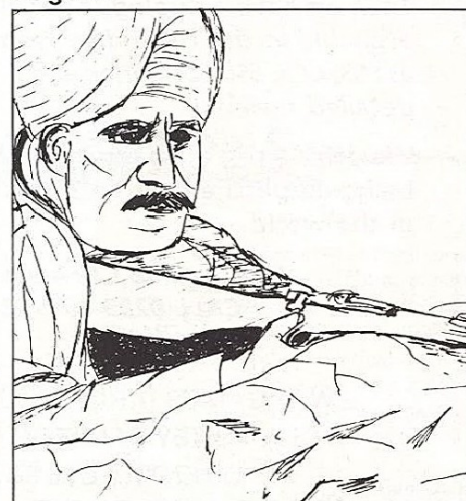
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RHODESIAN ARMOUR

* See colour pics on back cover



by Don Blevin

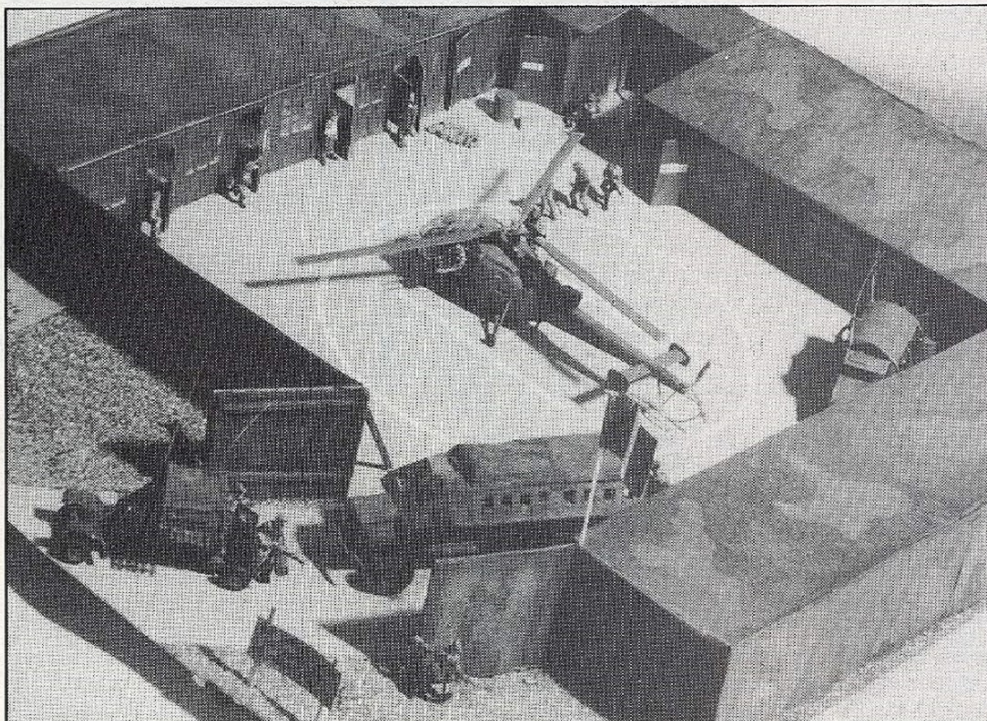
A visit to relatives in Zimbabwe kindled an interest in the armies and vehicles of the Rhodesian war – a war largely ignored by a Britain which had washed her hands of it in a fit of acute embarrassment. This is a pity, as the Rhodesian war has much to teach us about the handling of terrorism and military survival on a shoestring, and its end has much to teach us about reconciliation.

The Background Research

For the reasons given above, there are lamentably few books on the subject, though the following are useful: *The Elite – The Rhodesian S.A.S.* – Barbara Cole, 3 Knights Press; *Selous Scouts* – Peter Stiff – Galago Press; *Modern Africa Wars (1) Rhodesia* – Osprey men-at-arms No. 183. None of these cover Rhodesian armoured vehicles, except with a few pictures. Tim Neale's article in December 1985 "Military Modelling" is by no means exhaustive, and its drawings of the "Rhino" armoured Land-Rover do not tally with the one pictured in the "Selous Scots" book. My own research was based on detailed photos of the real thing.

The Forces Involved

THE GUERRILLAS In the area I visited (near Bindura in N.E. Zimbabwe) these would have belonged to ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) the mainly Chinese trained military wing of Mugabe's ZANU (PF)



Above: general view of Bindura Fort.

party. They wore no recognisable uniform, but rather a mixture of tatty civilian clothing and standard items of Chinese, East European, and Mozambique (FRELIMO) origin.

Their weapons included the AK-47 SKS rifle RPD light machine gun, RPG 7 bazooka and a variety of landmines, plus locally-made booby traps and demolition charges.

ZANLA was based in large training-camps in Mozambique, which proved horribly vulnerable to Rhodesian airstrikes and daring SAS and Selous Scouts raids. In the field ZANLA

infiltrated sketchily-trained units of about ten men, whose aim was to disrupt the Rhodesian economy by attacking white civilian farmers (or more often their African workers) and destabilize the Rhodesian Regime by "Politicizing the masses". This latter objective was achieved by a sliding scale of methods starting with indoctrination, and escalating to any level of violence considered appropriate to secure compliance. Some of these were fairly unspeakable...

The best "terrorist" figures are undoubtedly the "ESCI" North Vietnamese which need little or no modification. "Platoon 20" do a variety of East European, African and Vietnamese metal figures but the castings are disappointingly grainy, crude and brittle.

THE SELOUS SCOUTS This elite unit of the Rhodesian army established an unparalleled reputation during its short life (1973-80) based on its ability to get inside the skin of the terrorist, to think, act, fight, dress and even smell like him. The unit was a mixture of whites, Shonas and Matobele, its philosophy demonstrated by its Shona motto "Pawme Chete" (Together as one). Loyalty to it was total, though many of its members were ex-terrorists, who seldom if ever "reverted to type".

Selous Scouts boarding chopper. All armed with AK47 except 2nd from rear who has RPD. Note scratchbuilt twin MAG mounting for door-gunner on chopper. (Troopers "ESCI" North Vietnamese – uniforms a mix of green, brown and denim blue... they didn't really



The Armoured Truck preparing to leave. Troopers are RLI (Rhodesian Light Infantry). middle one is armed with a MAG.

Modelling the "Scouts" is easy. They look identical to the terrorists.

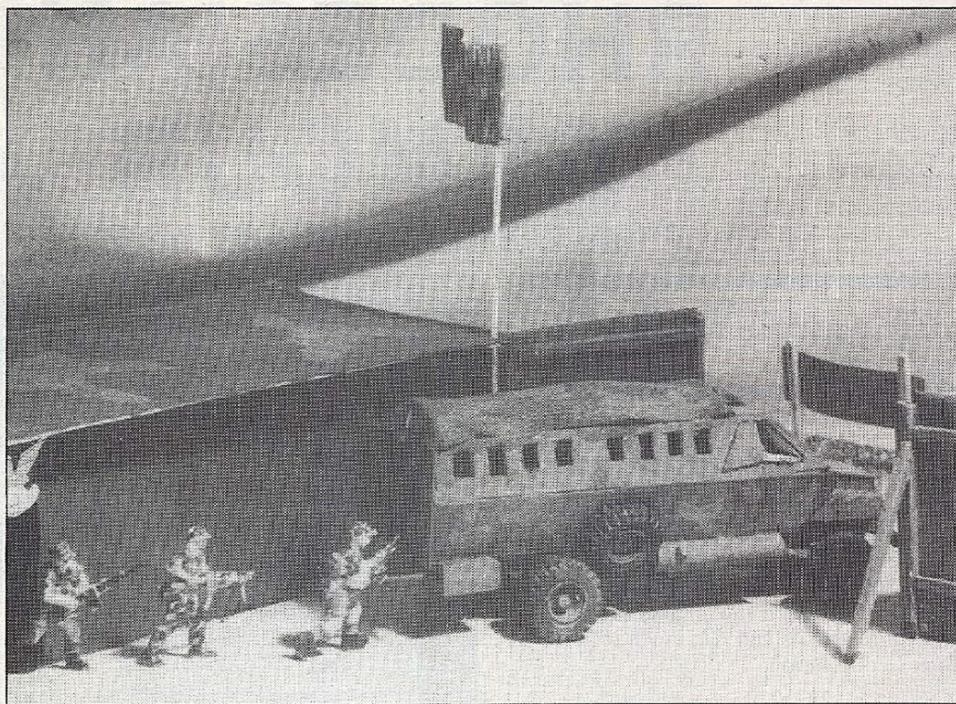
THE RHODESIAN SAS Were an all-white elite unit which attacked terrorist bases outside Rhodesia, and supplied members to the "Scouts". Ex SAS found their training extremely tough! In view of its role, the SAS does not figure in the model which is the main subject of this article, but for those interested in modelling the SAS, there are some good "platoon 20" metal figures of Australians appropriately equipped with FN rifles and heavy packs.

RLI (RHODESIAN LIGHT INFANTRY) These were white conscript infantry. RLI "Troopies" and their RAR counterparts, made up the majority of "Rapid-reaction forces" used (as in the model) against terrorists. They normally wore peaked forage caps, "camo" shirts (made from a cloth very similar to British camouflage), shorts of a variety of unspeakable shades of grey, or sometimes "camo" trousers, plus any old footwear. "Vellies" (veld-schoen) or trainers were often preferred to army boots. Standard armament was the FN rifle, but 1 in 4 (a far higher proportion than in NATO infantry) had the MAG (GMPG) machine-gun.

The best way I found to model RLI figures was to use 8th Army figures in shorts, with an "Afrika Korps" head transplant for the cap.

For RLI or RAR figures in "camo" trousers, Afrika Korps figures can be used with little alteration. Rifle modifications are as illustrated. To paint "camo" start with a sandy or greyish shade, then mottle first with brown, then green, then very finely with black to imitate the overprint of green on brown. Pity they don't sell the stuff ready-mixed in tins!

RAR RHODESIAN AFRICAN RIFLES These were black conscript infantry, used in the same way as the RLI. Ex RAR NCOs formed the backbone of the Selous Scouts. "Camo" trousers were usually worn, rather than shorts.



PATU (POLICE ANTI-TERRORIST UNIT) These were the Rhodesian equivalent of "Dad's Army" but since their members were farmers with a high level of knowledge of firearms, bushcraft, local languages and geography, they were a far tougher proposition than the original. Their appearance and equipment resembled that of the RLI.

THE MODEL A plan of the Selous Scouts for: and Bindura appears in Peter Stiff's book. The fort was built largely of corrugated iron, around a helipad so that Selous Scout units could be airlifted out by *Alouette* to make contact with genuine terrorists while posing as terrorists themselves. I've compressed the time-scale a bit by showing the "chopper" taking off at the same time as a "reaction force" leaves. Normally these events might be separated by days, or even weeks, while the scouts lured their victims into a suitable position for an attack. I shall now describe the various elements of the model.

THE FORT ITSELF was easily built from card, according to the plan, and covered with a ribbed-texture clear adhesive vinyl intended for covering books, or shelves, and purchased from a DIY shop. There were only two problems – how to paint the fort, and how to bring it to life.

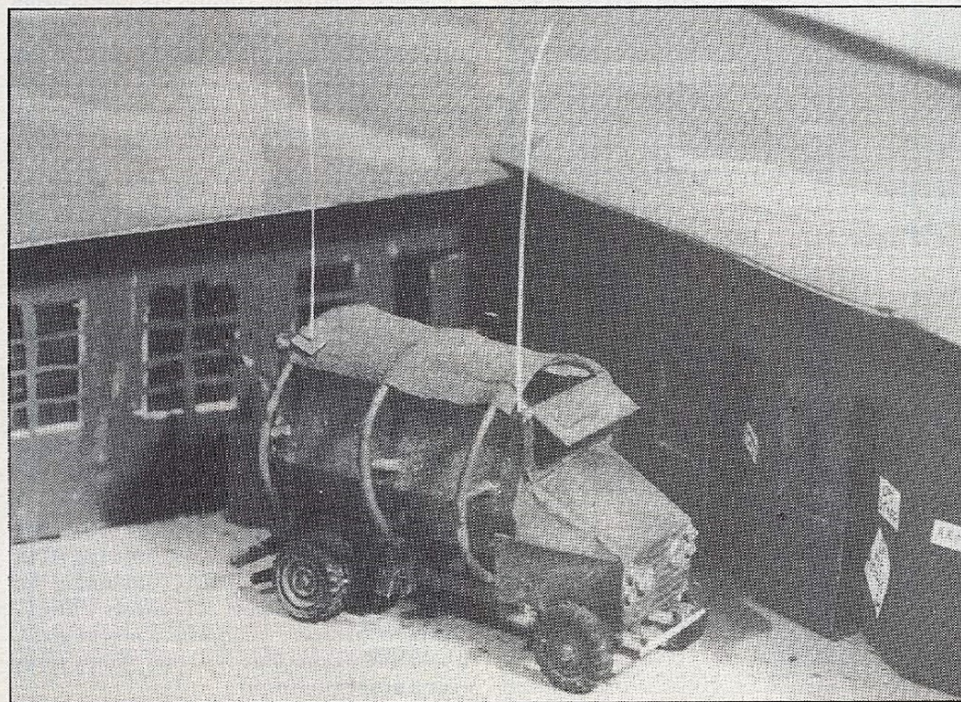
For the painting, I guessed almost everything owned by the Rhodesian Army was camouflaged as jungle green and Bunda (bush) brown, so this seemed a safe bet.

The plan helped with bringing the place to life, since it labelled the function of every room. It was easy to make appropriate door-labels and shrink them down using a photocopier on "reduce". The labels suggested what people would be doing.

A BSAP (British South African Police) Officer is standing outside his office, photos show these guys wearing "camo" uniforms and peaked caps. The "Airfix" Luftwaffe officer was perfect. The African BSAP staffroom door flies open as a startled policeman leaps out to watch the chopper take off. An injured trooper (Airfix German paratrooper) emerges from the medical room. Another trooper heads for the armoury, past the lines of ammo-boxes left out for any "troopie" to grab as he passes. In the corner of the courtyard a couple of African troopers are coming into the open. The fire and figures came unaltered from the "Atlantic" US Cavalry set of figures. From the main barracks a "stick" of Scouts in their terrorists garb (unaltered Esci North Vietnamese figures) are boarding the *Alouette*.

THE CHOPPER This is a standard Heller kit, painted (from Peter Stiff's photos) in green/brown camouflage and devoid of any Rhodesian markings. Like the original it has had the engine intakes covered with mesh (lace curtain) to prevent the "ingestion" of twigs etc, in bush landings. The side windows have been removed and a twin MAG mounting (scratch built) fitted on the left side.

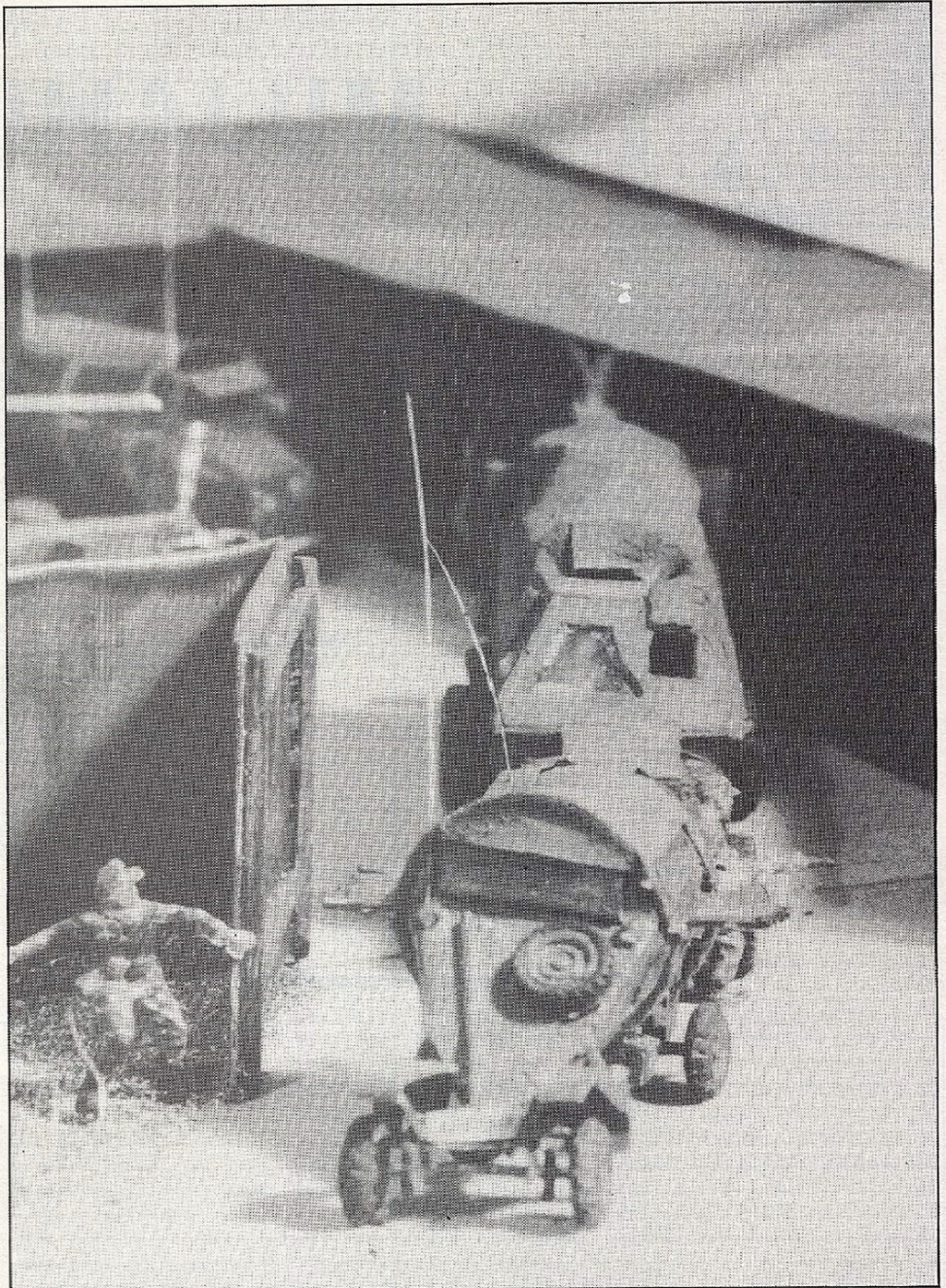
The "Rhino", based on a Land-Rover chassis. Scratchbuilt from card, roll-bars plastic rod, radiator net curtain, aerials thoughtfully provided by my cats!



THE VEHICLES Nearly all Rhodesian vehicles were locally built onto any available chassis. They all had angled armoured hulls designed to deflect landmine blasts from beneath and roller bars designed to allow them to overturn without injuring the crew who would hit their quick-release "X" pattern safety-belts and come out fighting. The lead vehicle is a "Leopard" (as in photos) callsign 254 delta, one of 3 used by the Bindura PATU. It was built using the engine and suspension of a VW Beetle, and according to its former driver was rather top heavy and underpowered. Its angular body was girdled by roll-bars and was well aft of the front axle to minimise the effect of mine blast. The windows were thick armoured glass and there was anti-grenade mesh under the canvas tilt. The rear door had no external catches to aid repelling boarders. The vehicle carried 2 radio aerials. The forward one was tuned to the base frequency, the rear one to the Farmers' "Agri-Alert" net, used to report hostile activity or call for help. Offensive armament consisted either of 6 shotgun-barrels or 6 grenade launchers on each side of the vehicle, operated from within and designed to give a broadside at the site of any roadside ambush.

The model is scratchbuilt from the photos. Wheels are from the spares-box chassis from matchsticks, body from card, roll-bars from plastic rod, canvas tilt from toilet-paper soaked in paint. I cut and fitted the bits and made it up as I went along (scaling it from a 1:76 figure)!

There is an example of this type of vehicle in the UK at Dartford. The second vehicle is a long-wheelbase armoured lorry, which may have been called a "crocodile" or "puma" (according to 2 local informants). It was photographed in Zimbabwe police blue-grey colours on the helipad at Bindura hospital, but judging from its condition I doubt if it is still a "runner". The interior was interesting. It had back-to-back bench seats lengthwise along the vehicle centreline, separated by a steel plate (presumably to confine incoming ricochets to one side of the vehicle) the loopholes on the sides were rather like miniature Nelson-era gunposts, except that they were hinged at the bottom and fell downwards and inwards for ease of rifle-firing.



The convoy headed by a "Leopard" leaving the fort. Trooper holding gate originally a Wehrmacht Grenadier.



The vehicle was modelled onto a long wheelbase Matador Chassis from the "Airfix" refuelling set on the same principles as the "Leopard". The only tricky bit was cutting out all the various windows.

The rearmost vehicle is a Land-Rover "Rhino" modelled in similar positions to the other two, taking the dimensions from the long-wheelbase Land-Rover chassis in the excellent JB models kit which has recently become available. One of these vehicles was used by the Bindura PATU who valued its 4-wheel drive which gave it a good cross-country performance. There is a good photo of the vehicle in Peter Stiff's book.

Photo Credits

All photos of original vehicles by author.
All photos of model by JOHN CHESSINGS.

Two Selous Scouts cooking lunch (figures: Atlantic 7th Cavalry).



Rhodesian Armour – see feature inside



