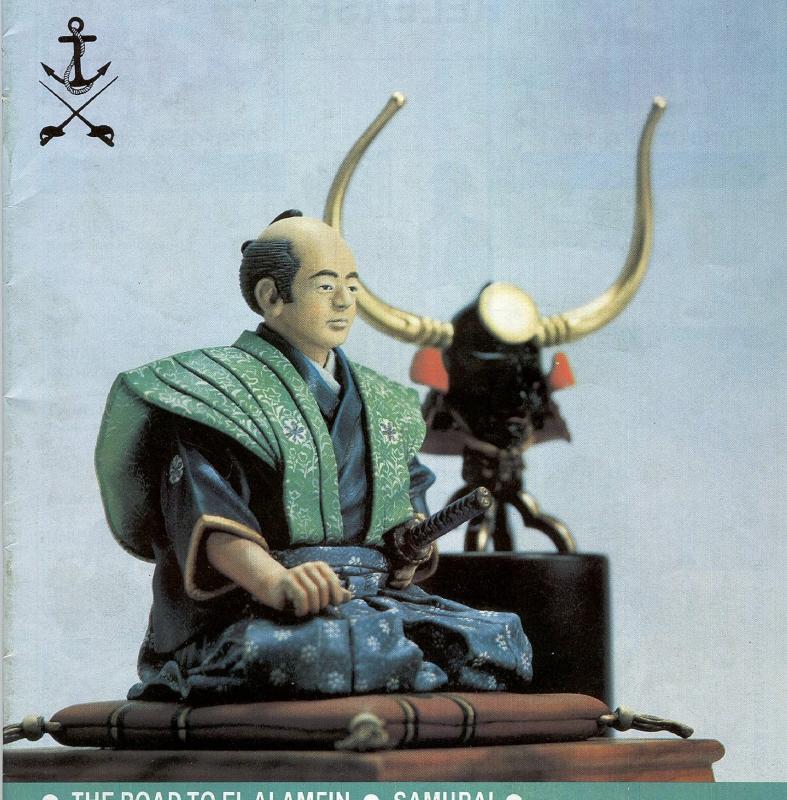
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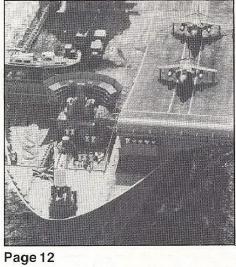


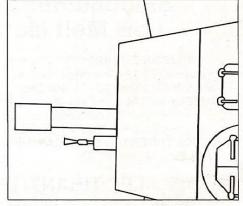
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June 1987

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

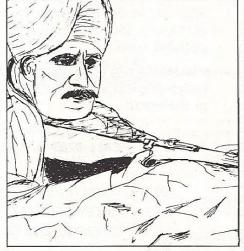




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RHODESIAN ARMOUR

CENTOR!

* See colour pics on back cover

by Don Blevin

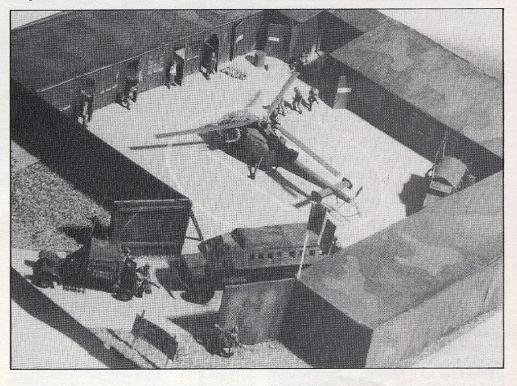
A visit to relatives in Zimbabwe kindled an interest in the armies and vehicles of the Rhodesian war — a war largely ignored by a Britain which had washed her hands of it in a fit of acute embarrassment. This is a pity, as the Rhodesian war has much to teach us about the handling of terrorism and military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



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 Above: general view of Bindura Fort.

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 exterrorists, 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.

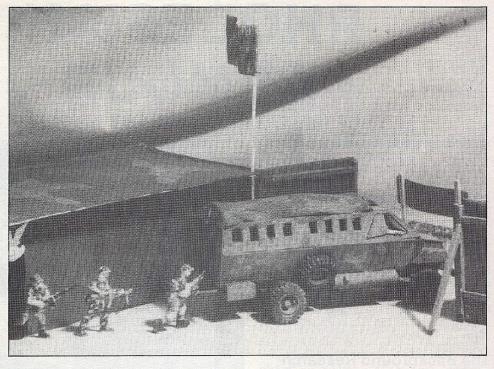
THE RHODESIAN SAS Were an all-white elite unit which attacked terrorist bases outside Rhodesia, and supplied members to the "Scouts". Ex SAS found their training extremely tough! In view of its role, the SAS does not figure in the model which is the main subject of this article, but for those interested 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 timescale 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.

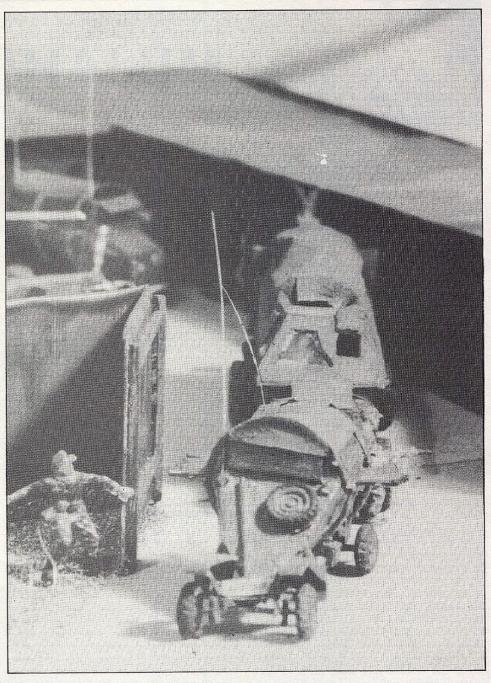
THE CHOPPER This is a standard Heller kit, painted (from Peter Stiff's photos) in green/brown camouflage and devoid of any Rhodesian markings. Like the original it has had the engine intakes covered with mesh (lace curtain) to prevent the "ingestion" of twigs etc, in bush landings. The side windows have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

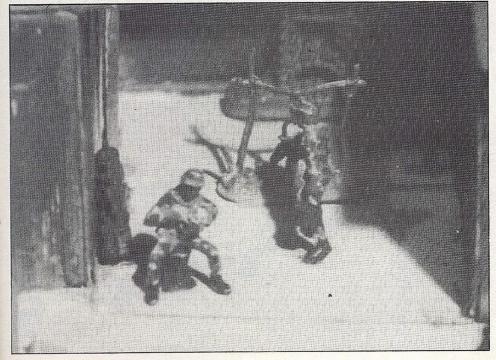
The "Rhino", based on a Land-Rover chassis. Scratchbuilt from card, roll-bars plastic rod, radiator net curtain, aerials thoughtfully provided by my cats!

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



Dear Sir.

As a skirmish wargamer in 1/35 scale, I would like any information you may have on the markings of vehicles of 139 Bde, 46 Division in Italy.

Congratulations on an excellent magazine, which, as a complete klutz, is an inspiration to

> I. Pollard, 92 Westminster Way, North Hinksey, Oxford OX2 0LP.

Dear Sir,

In your recent issue, June 1987, you published an article written by Don Belvin, who 'kindled an interest in the armies and vehicles of the Rhodesian War...' and I find it very disheartening reading articles written by outsiders who have not carried out their research in enough detail in order to compile an interesting and informative article from where wargamers and modellers are able to construct true to detail models, or those who have a deep interest and wish to learn a little more.

I agree with Don Belvin with regards to an article in Military Modelling, December, 1986, titled 'Counter Insurgency Vehicles', i.e. Rhodesian War vehicles, in that the research into that article was very limited.

The Sclous Scouts, an élite unit, received volunteers from all the Forces not only from the SAS, as was intimated. In fact the Sclous Scouts were predominantly made up of 'tame Terrs'. An interesting point which has not been mentioned is the fact that members of the Sclous Scouts operated as a single unit and not with other units except when large operations took place. One k new when the Sclous Scouts were operating in certain areas, because these areas were 'Frozen', i.e. there was no other Security Force presence whatsoever in that 'Frozen' area.

As what is indicated by the photograph of the model, it would appear that the Scouts were operating as a Fire Force stick boarding an Alouette III, when in fact it was members of the RLI Support Croup (Rhodesian Light Infantry Support Group), both black and white, who operated as Fire Force. Fire Force operated from both Alouette IIIs and they paradropped from Dakotas.

The camouflage uniforms; both material and colour was by no means anywhere near to the British camouflage uniforms. The style of the Rhodesian camouflage uniforms may have been similar.

Shorts were worn by members of the Security Forces but there were no grey coloured shorts worn. The shorts were either green, black or camouflage coloured. Predominantly black and camouflage shorts were worn. The camouflage shorts were trousers with the legs cut off.

Not 'any old footwear' was worn. This makes it appear as though the Rhodesian troops were slap-happy, when in fact they were the world's finest in this type of warfare. Footwear worn was basketball style canvas boots with no tread or Army style vibram boots or veld-skoens (veld shoes).

The RAR (Rhodesian African Rifles) were not conscripts but were made up of full time black volunteers. The RAR, prior to the break up of the Federation of Rhodesian and Nyasaland were known as the KAR (King's African Rifles) and a unit that has a proud record in fighting for the Crown particularly during the Malaya campaign. With regards to the passage pertaining to PATU as being equivalent to 'Dad's Army' I feel that this is an insult to those members who served in PATU. PATU was not made up of farmers only, which is what is indicated. PATU was a fighting unit within the BSA Police that relied on volunteers from both the regular Police Force and Police Reserve. The Police Reserve consisted of members who held a job in civilian life and when required were 'called -up' for duty for a set period. The age group ranged from 20 years through to 50 years.

The vehicle which is portrayed as being either a 'Crocodile or Puma' is a Crocodile. The difference between the two being that the cab on a Puma is divorced from the rear whereas on the Crocodile it is part of the rear, i.e. one complete unit.

Other than the books mentioned by the author there are numerous other books from which reference could have been taken and they are: Contact, by John Lovett, Contact II, by Paul Morecroft, Taming the Landmine, by Peter Stiff and The Pictorial Account of the Selous Scouts, by Peter Stiff. There are of course other items of literature which are available.

Why I write this letter is because I was a member of the BSA Police as a regular having spent my younger years in Rhodesia and do feel offended when people write articles like this with no thorough knowledge of the subject.

> Richard Pike, Birmingham

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