

WAR BIKES

South Africa's Version Of The Quiet Trail Ride Takes On A Deadly Significance

THERE ARE dangerously purposeful men in this world. They make most members of the Hell's Angels look like pansies. The Nazis had Waffen SS stormtroopers, the British its commandos, Australia has its Special Air Service troops, but South Africa, it seems, has a breed of dangerous men unto its own — motorcycle mounted and trained to seek and destroy terrorists (or, if you prefer, freedom fighters).

If you can name one country on the face of this earth that doesn't have an anti-terrorist force, or the terrorists to fight against, you're going well. South Africa is a large country, much of its geography similar to Australia, so what better, faster and more efficient piece of transport for a group of fast and efficient killers than a motorcycle?

What wing of the South African army these troops belong to is not known, but their purpose is to patrol the Namibia-Angolan border in search of SWAPO (South-West African People's Organisation) guerrillas. Namibia (South West Africa) is a South African "protectorate" soon to be given its independence, and in the interests of keeping the Marxist-inspired SWAPO guerrillas out, these troops are sent in to keep things decidedly in South Africa's favour.


Namibia contains much in the way of mineral wealth and is important in South Africa maintaining a healthy economy. By keeping SWAPO forces out, South Africa hopes to obtain a pliant Namibian Government.

All the tricks of the trade are used to make the bikes strong and able to with-



stand rugged treatment, while at the same time everything that's not necessary is thrown away in the interests of keeping weight down.

The bikes appear to be based on XL Hondas, but just what has gone in and come out of them in preparation for war work would be a matter of sheer guesswork.

The bikes look tough, fast and solid, as you can see from the pictures.  The troops look just as deadly.

Top: Going rabbit shooting? Not on your life! This South African soldier with his automatic rifle mounted on the handlebars is flying through the Ovamboland bush on the Namibia-Angolan border in search of SWAPO guerrillas. And it's not just to say hello to them, either.

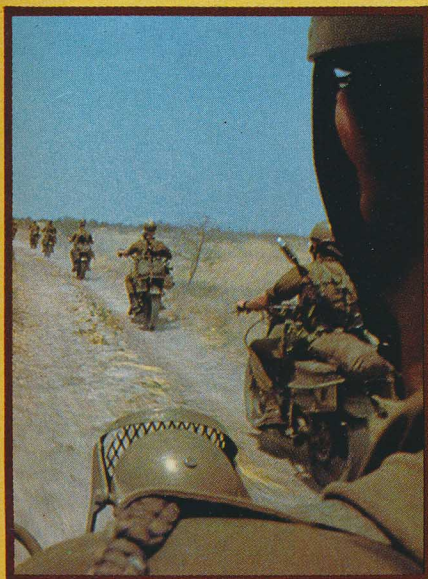
Above: The patrol gets together. Just like any motorcycle club planning a day in the bush, really, except that these bush bashers aren't packing a picnic lunch. Something a little more indigestible, in fact.

Below: This is not a mock-up. The troops have just come into contact with SWAPO insurgents, and there's real bullets flying.



Above: Pudding-basin helmet, Scotts goggles and a rather deadly grenade launcher. Note the split front guard and broken bracket where the headlight once resided. And just have a look at this guy's face!

Right: The Namibian equivalent of a pub, and a local resident is questioned about the presence of insurgents (or guerrillas, freedom fighters, communists, terrorists; you pick a title).



Nice day for a ride. Compact, fast and deadly — these blokes don't muck around.

Right: Well, even the most hard-bitten soldiers have to rest sometime. But note that all of them are still carrying their weapons and that guards are posted to cover each point of the compass.

