

# M-16 Rifle: The War's Great

Be not afraid of any man  
 No matter what his size,  
 When larger than you is he,  
 Call on me,  
 And I will equalize.  
 —Poem inscribed on

M-16 rifle stock  
 BLEN HOA, Viet Nam(NVA)—  
 Lt. Philip Harper should be dead  
 today.

His life has been spared by  
 the great equalizer in this war—  
 United States technology. And,  
 of course, the money which  
 pays for it.

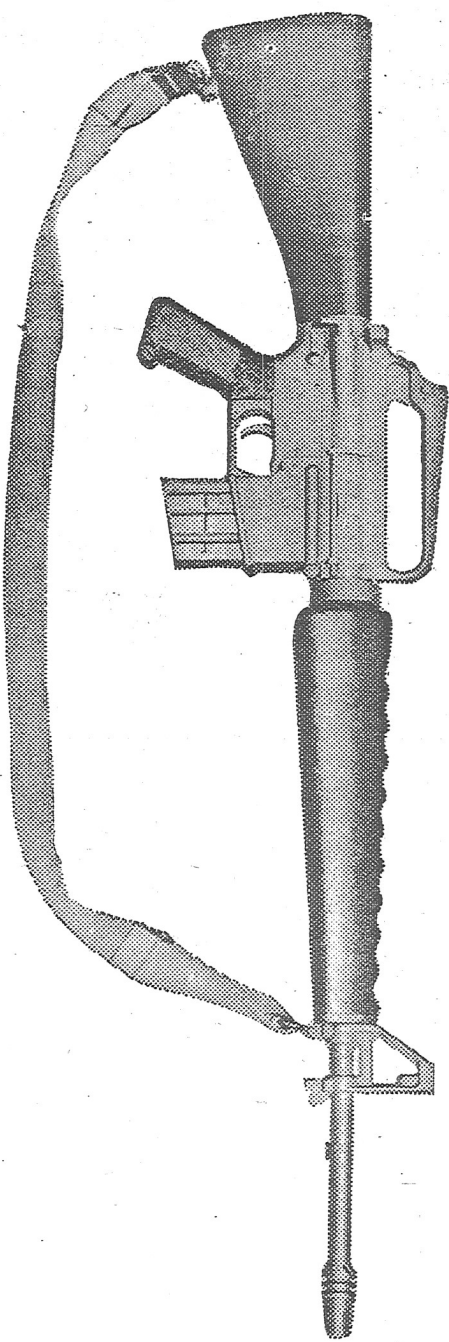
Formidable though a Yank  
 soldier may be, it's his weapon  
 that spooks the opposition stiff  
 as a sucker stick. In Lieutenant  
 Harper's bizarre case, it was  
 the M-16 rifle, a weapon the  
 Viet Cong call "the little gun  
 that makes a big hole."

Harper and five of his men  
 were on patrol-sized activity re-  
 cently, when they spotted a trail  
 in the jungle and decided to in-  
 vestigate.

"It was a heavily mined  
 path," says the lieutenant, "and  
 we knew it had to lead to  
 something or someone. Sure  
 enough, about 500 yards up, we  
 heard the click of a rifle bolt.

"There was really very lit-  
 tle we could do. Our flanks were  
 mined so we couldn't jump to  
 either side. And turning around  
 would have presented Charley  
 (the V.C.) with the target he  
 likes best. We could only move  
 forward.

"We figured there were two  
 squads of them...about 20 men,  
 or almost four to one in their



A lethal symbol of supremacy: the M-16 rifle.

favor. Actually they should  
 have taken us easily. But we  
 rushed them anyway...each guy  
 trying to get there first and  
 firing away like mad with his  
 M-16.

"As it turned out none of  
 us was scratched but we killed  
 11 of them. The rest just turr-  
 ed around and hightailed it out  
 of there. They may be still run-  
 ning for all I know."

So what makes Charley run?  
 Fear. Not of six whooping  
 men exactly but of the six burp-  
 ing M-16s they carry. Operating  
 full choke these wonderfully  
 wicked weapons fire 750 rounds  
 a minute which at 300 yards  
 can disintegrate a solid  
 concrete block.

And the V. C. are aware of  
 it. Painfully aware. The  
 XM-16 E-1 is this con-

dition's version of the old M-1  
 of Korean and World War II  
 vintage. But any similarity ends  
 with the trigger and the fact  
 you still have to aim.

It's light—seven pounds load-  
 ed. The old M-1 weighed nine  
 pounds.  
 It fires 20-round clips faster  
 than you can say "Don't  
 shoot."

Its small (just over .22-cali-  
 ber) projectile travels more  
 than a half-mile a second and  
 will split a combat helmet five  
 football fields away.

But best—or worse depend-  
 ing on which side of the murr-  
 zle you sit—is what it does to  
 a human being. Upon impact  
 with flesh—which the Army  
 classifies as a semi-liquid gela-  
 tin—the rifle's bullet begins to  
 tumble end over end. If it con-

tinues on through a body it will  
 take half a man's gelatin out  
 the other side.

Exit holes—as big as hand-  
 prints are not uncommon.  
 Entire leg bones have been  
 shattered from single shots.

"It's the greatest individual  
 rifle I've ever seen" grins one  
 crusty old-timer here. "It's so  
 good, in fact, nobody can under-  
 stand how the Army ever de-  
 veloped it. They ain't famous  
 for some of their brilliant tech-  
 nological decisions you u  
 know."

But the beleaguered Army  
 brass were right this time at  
 least, and a lot of GIs here are  
 grateful.  
 Lt. Phil Harper knows at least  
 six.

## Equalizer