

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
 ..
 BIEN HOA, Viet Nam(SNEA)—
 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.

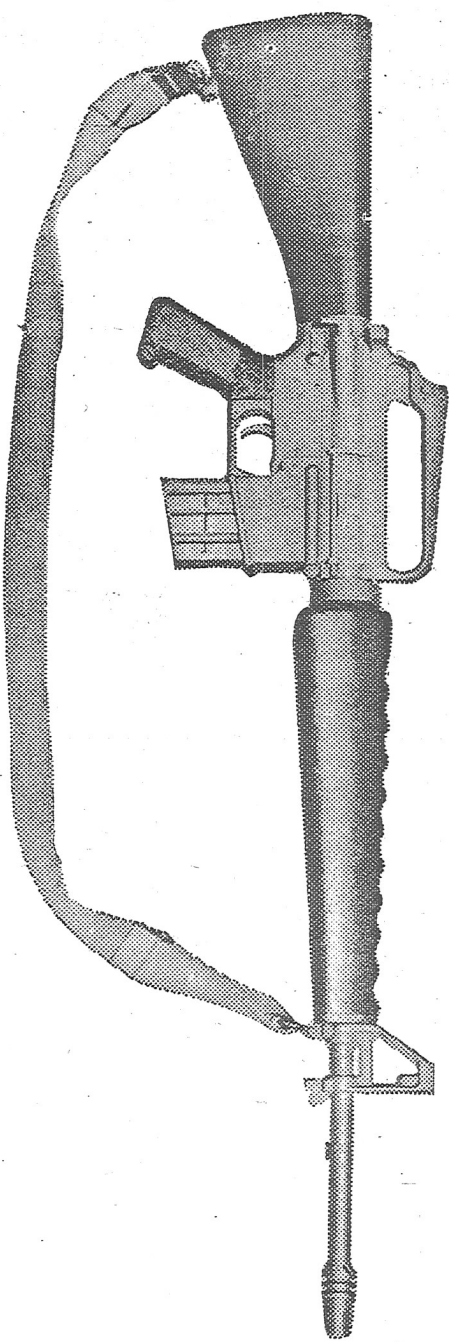
Formidable though a Yank
 soldier may be, it's his weapon
 that spooks the opposition stiff
 as a sucker stick. In Lieutenant
 Harper's bizarre case, it was
 the M-16 rifle, a weapon the
 Viet Cong call "the little gun
 that makes a big hole."

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
 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