

Conclusion

One can conclude that weapons caching, as practiced by the French Resistance and the Vietcong, will certainly be a major component of any successful late-twentieth-century military strategy. Due, no doubt, to the widespread ownership of nuclear weapons along with delivery systems that put every world leader in jeopardy, we have moved to a system of small, irregular wars. For fifty years, no country has been willing to risk a confrontation with a major nuclear power.

Warfare is not obsolete, it is just different. We now see smaller guerrilla wars where weapons caching makes more and more sense. Depending on future events, Americans may again see guerrilla warfare deployed against them. In Panama, those who happily bid General Noriega good-bye may dig up their weapons. No doubt many of those who were initially pleased with the U.S. action hedged their bets by caching a weapon or two. The vagaries of Central American politics suggest this would have been a most reasonable course of action.

Here at home in the good old US of A, state-of-the-art weapons owners in California and New Jersey are faced with the prospect of either giving up some very nice weapons or engaging in a caching program. Perhaps they do not contemplate guerrilla warfare in the short run. But these gun owners may be a careful lot who also want to hedge their bets.

Even the Communists, the fathers and mothers of the caching strategy, are faced with the prospect of weapons and munitions going underground to be used against them. Recent events indicate that capitalists who worried about the domino effect were worrying about the wrong system. It is the Communists and Socialists who are watching their systems collapse like dominos.

It might be reasonable to assume that wherever politicians control by force of arms there is also an abundance of weapons in the hands of private citizens. Gorbachev has called in all privately held rifles and shotguns in Lithuania, but one wonders how many military weapons that no one knows about are held by the Lithuanians. The second, more pressing question is how many are going underground in defiance of the government ban on weapons.

We tend to look with dismay at the situation in Lithuania, California, and New Jersey, forgetting that pistol owners in Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. have faced similar situations for many years now. Reputable, concerned handgun owners in these places must at least hide their weapons, even if they don't cache.

Ideally, we would all like to have our weapons on the wall, out in the open, where they can be fondled and cared for. However, this is far from an ideal world. A very few nuts often can screw it up for the rest of us.

I can easily remember the time when it was perfectly legal to own and operate military-type mortars, can-

nons, rifle grenades, and even howitzers. As a much younger man, I and my cohorts spent many an enjoyable Sunday afternoon firing our "monster" weapons, generally blowing things like old car bodies and bogs to hell.

Then one Saturday afternoon, three absolute nuts put on Nazi uniforms and took a Lahti 20mm antitank cannon up on a hillside outside a small New Jersey town and started punching holes through the local Democratic Party headquarters. The building was totaled before the men in white jackets got there with the required strait jackets. No one was hurt, the three clowns went to a padded cell, and the media created an atmosphere of hysteria, using the incident to the best of their ability as a rallying cry to ban all weapons of this type.

Many gun owners went along, saying, "Why not? This sort of weapon holds no attraction to me and probably has no recreational value."

As a result, some of these weapons are probably residing in caches someplace today. (Rumors to that effect surface at frequent intervals, anyway.)

Gun owners who want to go from here have the necessary tools now to cache for whatever time frame they deem appropriate. The inevitable conclusion is that we wish it wouldn't be necessary in the United States, but realistically, we know it will.