



Colonel Jan Breytenbach writes in the foreword: "On Ascension Day, 1978, a composite South African parachute battalion jumped onto the tactical HQ of SWAPO's PLAN army, based at Cassinga, 250 kilometres north of the Angolan border to destroy the facility, their logistics, and to wipe out a strong concentration of SWAPO guerrillas. The airborne assault, part of Operation Reindeer, was an unqualified success; the whole base was destroyed. 608 PLAN fighters were killed, with many more wounded which pushed the final SWAPO death toll to well over a thousand. We lost only four paratroopers killed in action plus a dozen or so wounded. According to airborne experts in Britain and Australia, this was the most audacious parachute assault since the Second World War; the mounting airfield was well over 1,000 nautical miles away. I was the commander of that airborne assault, which although successful above all expectations, also highlighted many shortcomings, some of which nearly led to a disastrous outcome."

44 Parachute Brigade was formed later that year, with the need for a specialist Pathfinder Company patently clear. Into the ranks came professional veterans from the UK, USA, Australasia, Rhodesia and elsewhere, from such Special Forces units as the SAS, Selous Scouts and the RLI. "This is their book, a collection of stories about the founding and deployment of a unit of 'Foreign Legionnaires', from different parts of the world who became welded together into a remarkable combat unit, unsurpassed by any other South African Defence Force unit in their positive and aggressive approach to battle. For me it was an honour to have faced incoming lead together with them."

ISBN 978-1-920143-48-0



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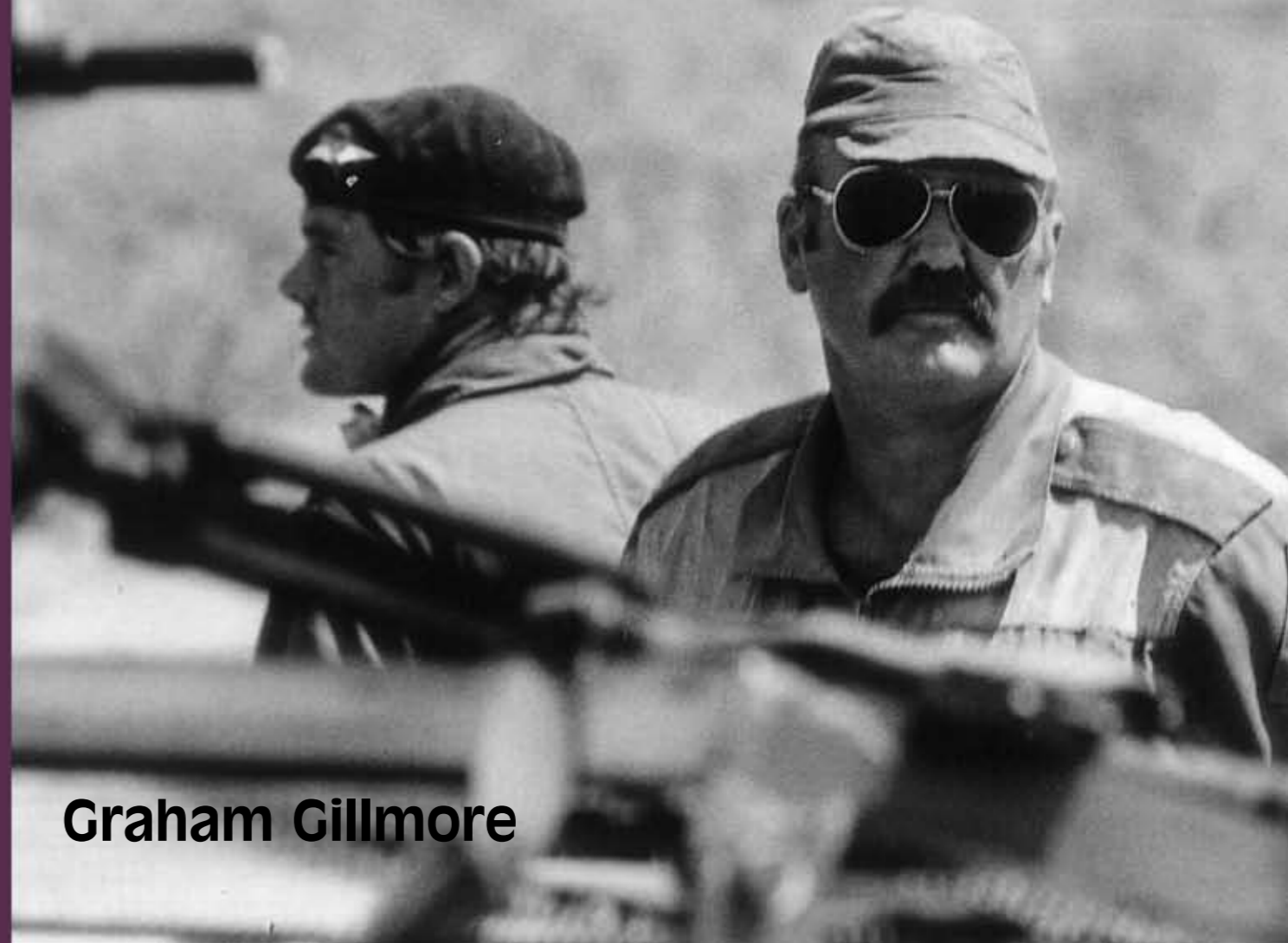
Graham Gillmore



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The Philistines

"It was an honour to have faced incoming lead together with them"
 — Colonel JAN BREYTENBACH in the Foreword



Graham Gillmore