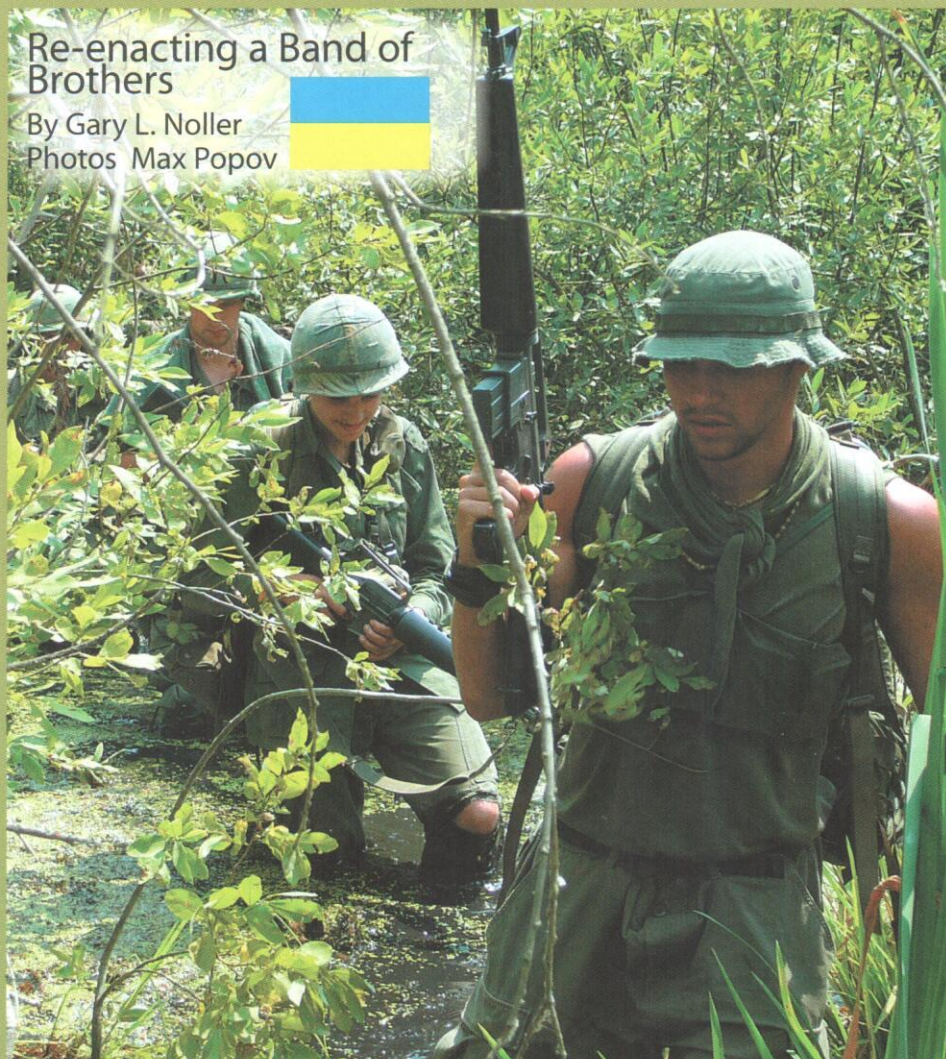


## Re-enacting a Band of Brothers

By Gary L. Noller  
Photos Max Popov



Many Americans are familiar with war re-enactors who portray significant events in American history. These events usually feature the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods. Indian War and World War II events are also held around the country. But re-enactments of the Korean War and the Vietnam War are rare.

A group of about twenty participants is reenacting the "Gunfighters" of 1<sup>st</sup> platoon, Co. A, 1/6<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 198<sup>th</sup> Lt. Inf. Bde., Americal Division. They have been organized for several years and portray the life of Vietnam War soldiers several times a year.

Although the group relives the actions of a U.S. Army unit they are not Americans. They are like Americans in that they are rich and poor and from a variety of occupations to include bank employees, students, engineers,

managers, business directors, and unemployed. They live in and around Kiev, Ukraine.

The reenactment group was founded in 1996 by Max L. Popov, the Director of Representation for the German wallpaper firm Rasch in Ukraine. Popov was born in 1974 and holds a degree in international economics from Kiev National University of Economics.

The platoon consists of a command element of platoon sergeant, medic, and RTO. It is filled by two rifle squads, a weapons squad, and a mortar squad.



Personnel obtain genuine era uniforms and equipment at their own expense from a variety of resources.

According to Popov, the purpose of the group is to "educate the society about the gone days. We try to show people the life of the average soldier in the war including his dreams, activities, and daily routine. And, of course, we try to feel everything ourselves. We try to tell people that the past can't be forgotten. As Winston Churchill said, 'The nation which doesn't remember her past won't have a future.'"

The group is as authentic as possible. "We use M-56 equipment, wear jungle uniforms, steel pots, rucksacks, and fire and clean rifles, though they are AIRSOFT and not real blank firing rifles," Popov states. "We stay on guard in foxholes and guard towers, go on patrol for search-and-destroy missions, clear the area, and build blocking posts.

"We listen to rock-n-roll, The Doors, and Johnny Cash. We eat C-rats, drink from canteens, and sometimes enjoy bottle of warm Miller beer, read old books, look at Playboy, burn shit, and chat about the life of 1960s. We live in 1960s. There is no sign of the current time in words, things, soul, or atmosphere."

To be authentic a re-enactor may expect to spend \$1,000 to \$1,500 for personal equipment. Popov states, "If you want to be a really hardcore living historian you will need equipment set M56 for 1967-1969 and M67 for the late dates. The A-class uniform is needed for the official celebrations." Platoon gear such as tents, mermite cans, and radios is also obtained for the portrayals.

Annual activities include two or three weekend events that feature a unit on patrol.

"During these events we 'work' in the field," says Popov. We have some nice places near Kiev which are a little bit close to Vietnam terrain. For an urban setting such as DaNang we use an abandoned youth summer camp not far from Kiev."

