

MC 064: Manuevering for Position

Sunday, 23 November 2008

G.I. JOE #64

Maneuvering for Position

Cover Date: October, 1987

Writer: Larry Hama

Penciler: Ron Wagner

Inker: Russ Heath

Coloring: Neil Yomtov

Lettering: Joe Rosen

Editor: Bob Harras

Editor-in-chief: Jim Shooter

Summary (by Gabe Riggles): "In the Gulf of Mexico," near Cobra Island, a small fishing boat is being pursued by two Cobra Mambas. The boat violated Cobra waters and refused radio warnings, also avoiding various Mamba attacks. "Mr. Fred! Choppers coming back! Can you stop them? You say you friend with Cobra Island!" Captain Minh shouts from the helm of the fishing boat. "I lied, Captain Minh...how else could I get you to bring me here?" answers Fred as he pulls on the helmet of his battle armor. Minh then informs Fred that, if the choppers return, he will die also. "My death was never part of the game plan...like yours was!" Shouts Fred as he uncovers his tarp-covered cargo to reveal a Cobra Pogo. Fred escapes from the boat just as the Mamba's send the ship to the bottom of the sea. He quickly dispatches the first Mamba and continues on towards the island, pursued by the second.

On the island, Serpentor orders the ASP emplacements to fire on the Pogo. "He's flying to close to our Mamba!" informs one officer. "Shoot them both down!" orders Serpentor. The Pogo evades the attack as the Mamba is struck by the volley. When it is revealed to Serpentor that the Pogo is wearing the Cobra insignia, Serpentor states that he'll deal with him personally. Fred's craft lands and is immediately surrounded by Cobra forces. Serpentor questions Fred's right to wear the Cobra insignia. "I have more right to wear the Cobra sigil than you do, chum... I'm Cobra Commander!"

In Utah, Crank-Case is escorting six new Joes into Quonset huts above the Pit III; Fast-Draw, Chuckles, Psyche-Out, Lt. Falcon, Back-Stop, and Law. "These troops have a security clearance for 'you-know-what'?" Leatherneck, showing his by the book attitude, refuses to reveal the classified information (i.e. the Pit III, located beneath the huts). A loud rumble, shaking the entire bunk area, adds to the new troops' curiosity, especially that of Psyche-Out and Chuckles. When the rumble halts and Hardtop and Payload enter, Leatherneck again ensures that nothing is leaked to the new recruits.

Back on Cobra Island, night has fallen and we find Fred, still impersonating the late Cobra Commander, coming to the end of his questioning. While Serpentor still ponders what to do, the troops, incited by the Dreadnoks, clamor for a physical struggle to decide the leader. "Alas, Serpentor...you allowed your troops to get bored...and bored troops get bloodthirsty!" comments Zartan as he looks on. While the inquiries continue as to Fred's legitimacy, a Cobra transport chopper approaches, carrying a disenchanted Baroness and Mindbender. The Baroness is still distressed over being relinquished of command of the Cobra Consulate building (resulted in her handling of the situation in Special Missions #7) when Mindbender orders the pilot to land amongst the gathered troops below. As the helicopter door swings open, Zartan devises a solution. "It's the Baroness! She knows what Cobra Commander looks like under his hood! Let her decide!"

Back above the Pit III, Chuckles curiosity got the best of him. "Take a walk with me to check out what's out there..." he suggested to Psyche-Out. While exploring the area surrounding the bunks, they discover the traces of what had caused the rumble earlier. "That's just one side. Where's the other track?"
 "Over there! That's more than fifty feet away! How wide is this thing?"
 "...the tracks just stop! –as if whatever made them just flew away!"

In yet another part of the world, Snake-Eyes, Scarlett, and the Blind Master disembark from a fishing trawler in Marseilles, France. They don't go unnoticed, however, as three men discuss the attributes of the two Joes and the blind ninja. Assuming they are smuggling currency or diamonds into their territory, they decide to take action. The three follow our heroes as they enter a taxi. The assailants meet with three other men and give them orders to 'deal' with the travelers. "Your target is in the cab. He's blind and black and he's got a valise full of diamonds!" As the criminal's vehicle pulls along side the Joes' cab, the Blind Master reveals what was really in the valise. He springs from the cab, puts a hammer through the windshield of the vehicle pursuing them, and drops a grenade in the lap of the driver. The vehicle careens out of control as the Blind Master, still grasping onto the hood, counts aloud the timer of the grenade. The car slams into a fruit stand and the men slowly file out of the car to mow down the Blind Master. As he counts 'five', the car explodes, eliminating the local criminals and catching the stocky ninja in the blast. Snake-Eyes shows worry but Scarlett reassures him that the portly martial artist planned this all along. While sitting on the train to Borovia, Scarlett

comments, "The Blind-Master had every intention of joining us later...otherwise, why would he bother to take his ticket with him?"

In the Gulf of Mexico, on a island which is comprised of land that once rested on the bottom of the Atlantic, Serpentor agrees to let the Baroness decide the credibility of Fred's claim. Once hidden inside the helicopter, Fred removes his helmet and looks into the eyes of the Baroness. "...And the game is up." She calmly questions Fred's true identity and learns of the real Cobra Commander's decision to "give everything up and devote his life to Billy". He neglects to mention that he shot CC in the back and buried him in the Colorado hills. The Baroness seizes the opportunity to have more influence in the Cobra organization and, much to Fred's surprise, puts his helmet back on, opens the chopper door and declares, "Rejoice! The true Cobra Commander is back!" Noting Serpentor's shocked reaction, Zartan grins. "What's the matter, Serpy? Never been flim-flammed before?"

Once again returning to Utah, we find Chuckles and Psyche-Out returning to their Quonset hut only to find the lights all on. Worried about the Joes discovering that they had left, they find that the hut is filled with dirty, sweaty, tired Joes enjoying the completion of some unknown work of labor. Gung Ho welcomes the new Joes back to join the party. Chuckles and Psyche-Out are still puzzled.

"Where did they all come from? We didn't see any vehicles pull up..."

"And how come they're all grimy and sweaty like they've been digging a mine shaft?"

To be continued...

Review: An interesting issue, showing how devious Fred is when leaving Minh to his apparent death. The Baroness's ambition and determination is shown well when she decides she can benefit herself from the Fred situation.

The new recruits give us some insight on to what goes on when newbies arrive, although some may not like the characters introduced (Fast-Draw and Psyche-Out, anyone?) This is the second appearance of Chuckles and he will become an important reoccurring character as the series draws on. Psyche-Out and the other recruits, though, won't see as much exposure...

There were several other issues brought up in this...umm...issue. While Serpentor questions Fred to decide if he is the real CC, Zartan simply stands aside and makes snide comments. But, we all know Zartan knows what CC looks like. Why didn't he just identify Fred as an imposter instead of having the Baroness doing it? Also, Payload is shown as an African American in this issue and several others, but is also shown as being Caucasian (Much like Hollingsworth). Maybe the figure was originally going to be African American but was changed later? Who knows? The final error I noticed was that Crank-Case introduces Back-Stop as one of the six new recruits but Back-Stop himself is not fully shown! His head was briefly exposed when the vehicles rolled up but he is never seen with the rest of the recruits.

First Appearances:

- G.I. Joe Team: Psyche-Out; Back Stop; Payload; Hard Top; Frostbite (barely seen in background); Sci-Fi (barely seen in background)
- Cobra: Gyro-Vipers (Mamba pilots)
- G.I. Joe vehicles: Persuader tank
- Cobra vehicles: Mamba helicopter

Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #262-265 (March 24th - April 14th, 1990). A Marvel UK series that began reprinting Action Force stories after the end of that series. These issues reprint this story in four parts, alongside original stories. All references to "G.I. Joe" were changed to "Action Force".
- A version of the issue was released by Hasbro in 2008, packaged with comic-based action figures of Cobra Commander/Fred VII and Gung-Ho as seen in the issue. All references to Marvel Comics were removed. It features a new painted cover, based on the original.
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 7 (February 2010). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #61-70.