

MC 068: Cut and Freeze Dried

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G.I. JOE #68

Cut and Freeze Dried

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Summary: At Frusenhaven International Airport in Frusenland, a G.I. Joe C-130 transport plane is being fired upon by a Cobra armored column led by the Baroness. The Joes come to a landing on the runway while Cobra tries to seal off the runway. Onboard the plane, Hawk orders Wild Bill to keep the engines running and tells Back Stop they need the Cobra tanks cleared off of the runway. With the transport plane still hurtling down the runway, Back Stop drives the Persuader laser tank down the cargo ramp. Cover Girl mans the laser cannon atop the tank. The rest of the Joes' vehicles -- the Snow-Cat and AWE Striker -- clear the ramp as the plane nears the end of the runway. Using the brakes and rudder, Wild Bill heads into a 180 degree spin on the ground, with the engines still running. With Cobra charging straight at them, the Joes' three vehicles keep coming, with the plane close behind. In the Persuader, Back Stop suggests Cover Girl fire on one of the treads of the HISS tank next to the Baroness'. She does so, causing the tank to tumble out of control and collide with the Baroness' tank. With Cobra's armor formation broken, the Joes drive on through the gap. The transport plane takes off and the Joes head across the frozen tundra, looking for cover.

Onboard a Cobra ship docked in Frusenhaven Harbor, Dr. Mindbender reports to Prime Minister Volff that the reindeer hunters' rebellion (see issue #67) is being held in check thanks to the assistance of Cobra's troops and equipment. Volff nervously watches a situation display map and asks what's going on at the airport. Mindbender calls it a minor skirmish, but the Baroness calls and reports their attack on the G.I. Joe team. Volff is aghast: "You fired on Americans?!!" He explains that the Joes were in Frusenland to ensure the safety of the soldiers at a U.S. research station, and Cobra had no right to fire on them. "Look, Volff," Mindbender warns, "Technically, all the Cobra troops are acting under your orders! You're in this up to your neck!"

On the coast of Frusenland, Fred VII (still posing as Cobra Commander) inspects one of Cobra's Terror-Dromes. A Techno-Viper explains how the paranoia-waves generated by the Terror-Drome will keep the Frusenlanders fighting each other, allowing Cobra to sell them arms and rent them "advisors". He also explains the need for sound-muffling headphones. Fred praises the Techno-Viper, then asks if he was on the development team for the project, without really knowing the whole situation. The Techno-Viper is surprised. "You're joking, sir! You were the one who bought the original plans from the Eskimo who stole them from the Russians!" He then asks the suspiciously asks "the Commander" what the Eskimo's name was as the other Vipers gather around. Fred's saved just in the nick of time when a Tele-Viper arrives with a message from the Baroness, who needs air support to find the Joes. He boards one of two Mamba helicopters and takes off. On a ridge overlooking the Terror-Drome, two of the men from the research station -- Blaster and Blocker -- watch the Mambas leave and wonder where the Joes are. Blocker gets angry at Blaster for constantly wears his blaring Walkman headphones, and Blaster wonders why his colleague is so cranky. They climb into Blocker's jeep and head back to the research station where they find Dodger and Avalanche physically fighting over what to cook for dinner. Blocker hops out of the jeep and joins the fight, while Blaster looks on, shocked. The Vector jet lands nearby and the pilot, Maverick, rushes to stop the fight. He's obviously not out of control like the others. He's about to take off his helmet when Blaster stops him. He then turns up his portable radio and the blaring music clears the others' heads. He remembers the Cobras were wearing headphones and realizes they're up to something. Along with their final member, Knockdown, they head off to do some recon to see what's going on.

Out on the tundra, the increasingly cranky Joes start to argue. The two Mambas arrive and the Joes start aggruing about which way to go to avoid them. Fred watches as the disoriented Joes drive towards the ice shelf that covers a frozen bay. The Baroness' tank column approaches just as Frostbite fires a missile from his Snow-Cat and shoots down Fred's Mamba. The tanks arrive to find Fred is all right but the Joes are getting away. The Maggot tanks fire a barrage, but the Joes are out of range and the HISS tanks and Maggots are too heavy for the ice shelf. They press on in the Cobra Wolf ice tanks.

Back at the harbor, an upset Volff storms off the ship and climbs into his chaffuered car. "You planned it all from the start, didn't you?" he asks angrily. "You are stealing my country!" Mindbender tells him he's paranoid, but Volff thinks he's seeing clearly for the first time.

The Cobra Wolves, with Baroness and Fred leading the pack, head out after the Joes. On the way, they ignore a single track of a vehicle heading towards Frusenhausen and pursue the three vehicles across the ice. The remaining Mamba starts firing on the Joes, hitting the AWE Striker. Hawk and Iceberg are forced to abandon it and leap onto the rear of the Snow Cat, with a LAW rocket to defend themselves. After a brief fight, the Wolves fire all their missiles at once, a salvo the Joes won't be able to stop. Suddenly, before the missiles hit their targets, the entire salvo is "strafed into oblivion" by the timely arrival of the vehicles and men of the research unit, whom Hawk identifies as Battle Force 2000. They overtake the Cobra vehicles and force them to pull back. The Battle Force reconfigure their vehicles into a defensive fortress and explain that they've just knocked out all the Terror-Dromes and explain Cobra's plans. Frostbite radios the information to Duke in the LCV (Low Crawl Vehicle), and then Cobra's reinforcement tanks and copters arrive.

In Frusenhausen, Prime Minister Volff's car is forced to stop at the scene of rioting citizens, although they're not rioting anymore. "I just don't feel angry anymore," says one man. With the Terror-Dromes gone, the civil unrest is over. Duke arrives in the small, motorcycle-like LCV Recon Sled. He tells Volff that the protection of Battle Force 2000 was only their cover mission. They were really sent to deliver a secret message from the U.S. government. He also has an interesting bit of news about some equipment Volff has been buying...

Back on the ice shelf, Cobra's forces are about to destroy the Joes when Mindbender radios the Baroness to call off the attack. The United States made a deal with Volff and Cobra has 24 hours to pull out of Frusenhausen. The Baroness is angry, but has no choice. As the Cobra vehicles retreat, a very relieved Hawk has nothing to say but, "**Phew!**"

Review: Aside from the paranoia-wave plot, "Cut and Freeze Dried" is a fun action/chase story. Ron Wagner's art conveys the speed and violence of the scenes, and his accurate and detailed vehicle drawings are some of the series' best.

In the last issue, we learned the true plans behind Cobra's Terror-Dromes. Cobra's plans are an ingenious way of reaching their goals of taking over the world. The plan makes more sense than most other "super villain" plans seen in other comics. Offer the Terror-Dromes and other weapons to a weak nation at a very low cost, then use the Terror-Dromes' paranoia waves to create instability, then offer more assistance, weapons and advisors. Eventually, the nation becomes unwittingly conquered by Cobra. And while the Joes learn the truth and save Frusenhausen, the Terror-Drome plot will continue to be part of Cobra's larger plan. Subverting governments is what Cobra usually does, with or without paranoia waves. It's also a fun surprise to see that the technology Cobra used is the same technology stolen by the Eskimo mercenary Kwinn, six years and sixty-six issues earlier. [I have to add that all those sixes are a strange coincidence!] I great bit of continuity on Larry Hama's part.

The other continuing storyline in the issue is Fred VII continuing to pose as Cobra Commander. Fred is clearly not in charge here. The Baroness is getting just what she wants, and seems to be in command as Fred follows along. We also see that the other Cobras remain suspicious of Fred's true identity. Mindbender reports directly to the Baroness and the Techno-Viper questioning Fred is more than a little suspicious. In fact, it seems in other issues as well that deep down, many still don't believe Fred is Cobra Commander.

Battle Force 2000's first appearance isn't really that significant, since they're used sparingly afterwards. They serve as an excuse to get the Joes into Frusenhausen. And that's even the case in the story itself. This issue is obviously one of the character and vehicle introduction issues, but the introductions aren't really that important to the plot. Only the Persuader gets a significant amount of attention. The idea of a laser tank may be a bit far-fetched, but the story mentions that the laser cannon needs to be "recycled" between shots. Granted, it makes less sense than most Star Trek technobabble, but it at least acknowledges a laser cannon would work differently than an artillery cannon. It's also nice to see the rarely-used Cover Girl.

The only criticisms come from the occasional bending of the laws of physics. I don't know for a fact that Wild Bill's plane U-turn stunt is impossible, but I tend to doubt anyone could spin a transport plane around 180 degrees on the runway without any loss of power, or without the plane tumbling out of control. Battle Force 2000's destroying an entire salvo of missiles with machine gun fire is sort of questionable, to but it seems more likely than the plane-spinning trick.

Issue #68 is more or less a fun standalone action story, with nods to the greater storyline here and there. The story in G.I. Joe Yearbook #4 seems to be set just after this story, since Cobra's recent defeat in Frusenland is mentioned as a recent event.

First Appearances:

- G.I. Joe team: Iceberg; Battle Force 2000: Avalanche, Blaster, Blocker, Dodger, Knockdown, Maverick
- Cobra: W.O.R.M.S. (Maggot drivers); Ice-Vipers (Wolf drivers)
- G.I. Joe vehicles: Snow Cat arctic assault half-track; L.C.V. Recon Sled (Low Crawl Vehicle);

- Battle Force 2000 vehicles: Eliminator 4WD, Vector fighter jet, Marauder motorcycle-tank, Sky-Sweeper anti-aircraft tank, Vindicator hovercraft (all these vehicles were barely seen, covered by tarps, in issue #67)

Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #278-281 (July 14th - August 4th, 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".
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 7 (February 2010). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #61-70.