

# MC 070: Fair Trade

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G.I. JOE #70

Fair Trade

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**Summary:** Over the jungles of Sierra Gordo, a G.I. Joe C-130 transport plane skims the treetops as it comes in for a crash landing. Wild Bill and Maverick are at the controls as Zarana, Thrasher and Monkeywrench hold them at gunpoint. Zarana and Thrasher both shout at Wild Bill, telling them to do something and Thrasher blames the pilot for flying into anti-aircraft fire. Wild Bill reminds them they hijacked the plane and forced them to take off overloaded with their Thunder Machine and a busload of Sierra Gordan refugees. He tells them to sit down and buckle up. In the carbo bay, Crazylegs gets the refugees strapped in and ready for the crash. The plane rips down a tree, which tears off its left wing. Wild Bill says they're going to crash and burn. "All we can hope for is a slight reduction in the severity of crashing and burning!" The plane hits the ground and Thrasher goes flying forward and his face smashes into the control panel, while Crazylegs saves a refugee boy who tumbled out of his seat. The plane finally stops skidding and Crazylegs helps the refugees off of the plane, then runs forward to the cockpit to see if his friends are all right.

In Sierra Gordo's capitol, Rio Lindo, Destro leaves his hotel and meets the Iron Grenadier Sergeant Major. He explains that the hotel now needs to be paid on a daily basis. The nation's economy is on the verge of collapse. General Villavaca and Chip Goodfellow arrive, and the frantic General tells Destro that his men have shot down one planeload of "yanquis", but they've lost U.S. Ambassador Winthrop, who has escaped into the jungle with a small team of Joes and counter-revolutionaries. Winthrop is carrying documents that may prove embarrassing to Goodfellow's company, the North American Banana Monopoly -- which is backing Villavaca's bid for power. They ask Destro to track down Winthrop's group, and give him a briefcase full of money in advance to do so. Destro agrees and takes off in his attack helicopter. The General and Goodfellow drive away, and Villavaca calls for troops to search the jungle for Winthrop and to check on the downed transport plane.

In the jungle, Hawk, Roadblock, Psyche-Out and Winthrop are led through the jungle with help from the counter-revolutionaries and their leader, El Jefe. Roadblock wishes they had the AWE Striker's firepower to back them up, but Psyche-Out points out the jungle is easier to disappear into on foot. El Jefe and Hawk discuss their escape route, which is the same route the Joes used in the past when supporting the counter-revolutionaries. Winthrop is outraged, having never even known the U.S. was aiding El Jefe. He demands Hawk tells him who authorized that mission, but Hawk tells him this isn't the time for a witch hunt, and doesn't seem very threatened by the ambassador. Winthrop vows to find out the truth when they get home, "And when I do, I'm going to nail you to the wall!"

Further along, the group stops at the edge of a hill overlooking a small group of houses. El Jefe says that old Earnesto, a jungle guide lives in a house there. Hawk is suspicious when he notices all the windows and doors are closed tight, despite the hot weather. The Joes cautiously lead the group down to the house. They crouch down, next to the house, around the corner from the front door. A door opens up and a soldier steps out, yawning. A fearful Winthrop slips and falls, alerting the soldier who opens fire with a machine gun, hitting the ambassador in the legs. Hawk opens fire and kills the guard. The soldiers inside the house open the windows and start firing. One of the Marines guarding Winthrop throws himself on top of the ambassador to shield him and gets hit. The Joes get them both out of the line of fire with some help from Roadblock heavy machine gun. They toss grenades in through the windows, killing the soldiers inside. Hawk and El Jefe lead the way inside the house, where Earnesto's lifeless body is tied to a chair, obviously dead for days. Psyche-Out informs them that Winthrop and the Marine need to get to a hospital and won't make it through the jungle on their own. Hawk notices that one of the dead soldiers sitting at a radio seems to have made a radio call before he was killed. Reinforcements will be coming.

Up on the hill, a group of Villavaca's troops, led by Lieutenant Montoya sit and wait. Montoya calls Villavaca's car, and the General tells him to attack the house. Montoya explains that they have several yards of open ground between them and the house, and that the troops inside are know they are coming. His men will be cut to pieces. General Villavaca angrily tells him to attack or he'll be put in front of a firing squad. "That's telling em, General," says Goodfellow, grinning and opening a bottle of champagne. They radio Destro the coordinates of the house.

The troops charge the house, causing Psyche-Out to note, "They must be very brave, or extremely stupid!" The Joes and counter-revolutionaries open fire and start blowing away Villavaca's men. Suddenly, Destro's 'copter arrives and the troops begin to cheer. The Joes think they're dead, but the helicopter turns and fires on the troops below, blowing them away with missiles. When the helicopter lands, Hawk is surprised to see Destro step out of it. Destro offers El Jefe a deal: he'll provide a shipment of weapons at no cost if El Jefe promises to nationalize the NABM's holdings when the new government is in place, and give Destro's company the franchise rights to run them. El Jefe agrees, and Winthrop -- now walking with the aid of a crutch -- is outraged once again. He can't believe El Jefe will sell pieces of his country to an arms dealer. El Jefe reminds Winthrop that America accepted aid from a tyrannic monarchy during its revolution. "Let's not wave our double standards about in the light of day!" Hawk shuts Winthrop up, telling him that this is the way life works, and Destro will at least be nice enough to transport Winthrop and the Marine to the nearest hospital.

In the mountains, Crazylegs finds the Joes and Dreadnoks in the plane's cockpit are relatively unscathed, except for Thrasher, who sustained a broken nose and arm in the crash. They and the refugees get as far away from the burning plane before it finally explodes. Crazylegs says that they should be able to make it through the jungle on their emergency rations and water. Maverick reminds him, "We've also got a load of refugees and three Dreadnoks!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Review: Continued directly from the previous issue, the Sierra Gordo storyline continues to be a unique one and also a good one. The story continues to feel more like a Special Missions issue thanks to the almost complete absence of Cobra and some political themes. Destro's reappearance does make the story important enough to be in the regular series.

This story arc seems to be set more firmly in the real world than many other Joe stories. A third world country in the midst of a constant revolution while being exploited by wealthy corporations isn't very far-fetched. And the need for El Jefe to make deals with an arms dealer seems very realistic, as well. "Fair Trade" is also a more violent story than usual. The house filled with dead bodies after a grenade blast and Villavaca's troops getting mowed down are more graphic than the series usually displays. Still, it fits in with the realistic feel of the story.

We're seeing here that Destro seems less "honorable" than he was portrayed in recent issues. He has no qualms about taking Villavaca's money, than betraying him for a stake in Sierra Gordo's economy. It's nastier than Destro usually is, but it's definitely a good business practice.

Ambassador Winthrop continues to be the arrogant, posturing and naive politician character that shows up often in Larry Hama's stories. His character is sometimes too over-the-top, though. His idiotic falling down in fear at the sight of a soldier is a bit much. Wouldn't a man sent to work in an embassy in a constantly war-torn country be more prepared to deal with the sight of a soldier with a gun?

The issue focuses mostly on Hawk leading Winthrop to safety, keeping the story of the hijacked plane in the background. The next issue will deal with that story, and though Destro, El Jefe and Villavaca appear next issue, Hawk and Winthrop's part of the story doesn't continue past "Fair Trade".

First Appearances:

- Recurring characters: El Jefe

Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #286-289 (September 8th - 29th, 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.