

HIGH IN THE MOUNTAINS IN A REMOTE PART OF SOUTHEAST AFGHANISTAN, AN AIR FORCE CV-22 APPROACHES ITS DESTINATION...

STEVE CANYON

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Special for the Military Times
Steve Canyon and the Air Force
celebrate 60 years of serving America
Storyline: Russ Mahers, MSG, USAF (Ret.)

E.T.A. TO THE LANDING ZONE WEST OF THE VILLAGE IS THREE MINUTES, SIR! U.A.V. RECONNAISSANCE SWEEPS SHOW NO SIGN OF ENEMY ACTIVITY! WE'VE GOT THE GREEN LIGHT TO GO IN!

ROGER, D.J.!



WITH ALL THE TALIBAN TRAFFIC THAT'S BEEN THROUGH HERE LATELY, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S THIS QUIET, GEN. CANYON!

WELL, JUST IN CASE THINGS GET CRAZY, OUR BACKUP — A GUNSHIP AND TWO A-10S — ARE IN POSITION!



THE L.Z. IS SECURE, SIR! WE'VE GOT A TEAM AND AN INTERPRETER TRYING TO LOCATE THE VILLAGE ELDERS TO SET UP YOUR MEETING!

NICE WORK, SERGEANT ELLIS!



THIS VILLAGE IS IN REAL BAD SHAPE, SIR! LOOKS LIKE A CHOLERA EPIDEMIC! AMJAD AMIR HERE IS THE ONLY ELDER IN ANY SHAPE TO MEET WITH YOU! HE ALSO SPEAKS A LITTLE ENGLISH!

THANK YOU FOR MEETING WITH US! WE WERE CONCERNED BY ALL THE TALIBAN ACTIVITY IN THIS VALLEY, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE HAVE MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS!



YES, THE TALIBAN KNOW WE ARE SICK AND DYING, AND THEY HAVE BECOME MUCH BOLDER! THEY STEAL FROM US AND THREATEN US, AND THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM!

I THINK WE CAN HELP YOU!



SOON, A C-130 WITH VERY SPECIAL CARGO APPEARS ABOVE!

THE G.P.S. COORDINATES ON THE SCREAMER 2K PALLETS ARE ALL SET TO GO!

WE'LL THREAD THE NEEDLE WITH THIS FIELD HOSPITAL AIRDROP — RIGHT WHERE THE GENERAL WANTS IT!



WITHIN HOURS, A JOINT SERVICE MEDICAL TEAM ALSO ARRIVES!

YOU NOW HAVE SOME OF THE BEST MEDICAL STAFF IN THE ARMY, MARINE CORPS, NAVY AND AIR FORCE TAKING CARE OF YOUR PEOPLE! SOON, THINGS SHOULD BE BACK TO NORMAL IN YOUR VILLAGE!



APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEKS LATER...

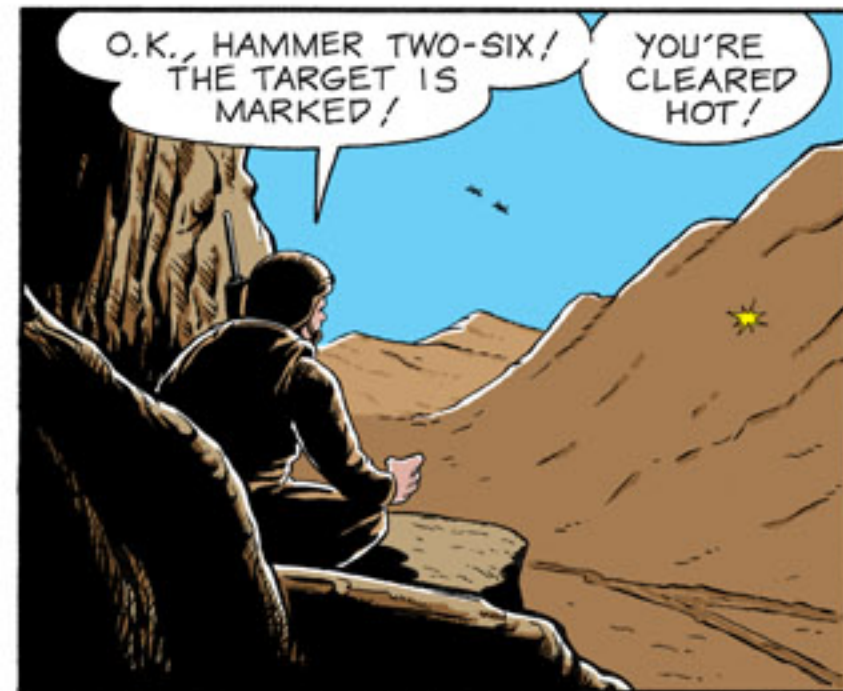
SIR, THE VILLAGERS JUST TIPPED OFF THE SPECIAL OPS SECURITY TEAM WE LEFT BEHIND ABOUT TALIBAN ACTIVITY IN A NEARBY CAVE COMPLEX! AN ENLISTED TERMINAL ATTACK CONTROLLER ON THE GROUND THERE HAS JUST CALLED IN AN AIR STRIKE!

LOOKS LIKE WE ALSO HAVE A LIVE FEED!

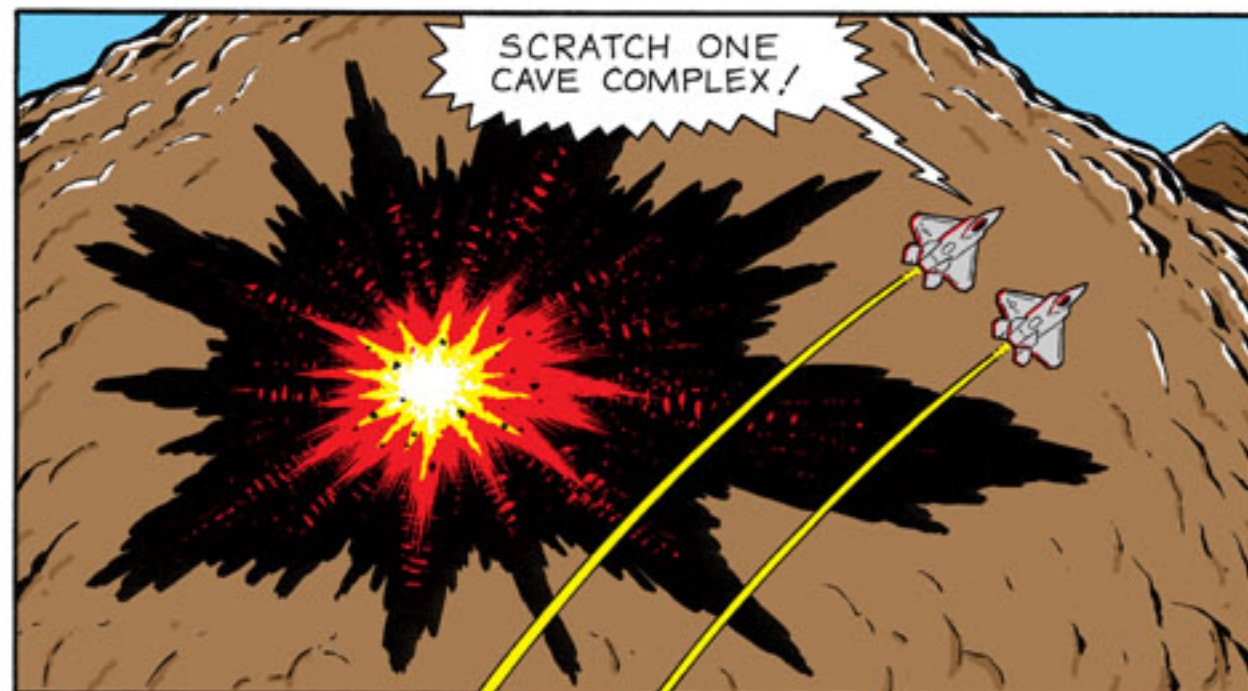


O.K., HAMMER TWO-SIX! THE TARGET IS MARKED!

YOU'RE CLEARED HOT!



SCRATCH ONE CAVE COMPLEX!



LATER

YOU KNOW, D.J., I'VE BEEN AROUND A LONG TIME, AND THE CURRENT CAPABILITIES OF OUR PEOPLE AND EQUIPMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNIMAGINABLE EVEN 20 YEARS AGO!



AND DESPITE THE CHALLENGES AHEAD, LIKE FORCE-SHAPING, AND REPLACING HUNDREDS OF HALF-CENTURY-OLD AIRCRAFT, I HAVE A HUNCH WE'LL CONTINUE TO ADAPT OUR MISSION AND CAPABILITIES, AND KEEP PUSHING THE ENVELOPE IN AIR, SPACE, AND CYBERSPACE!

I THINK YOU CAN BANK ON IT, SIR!

