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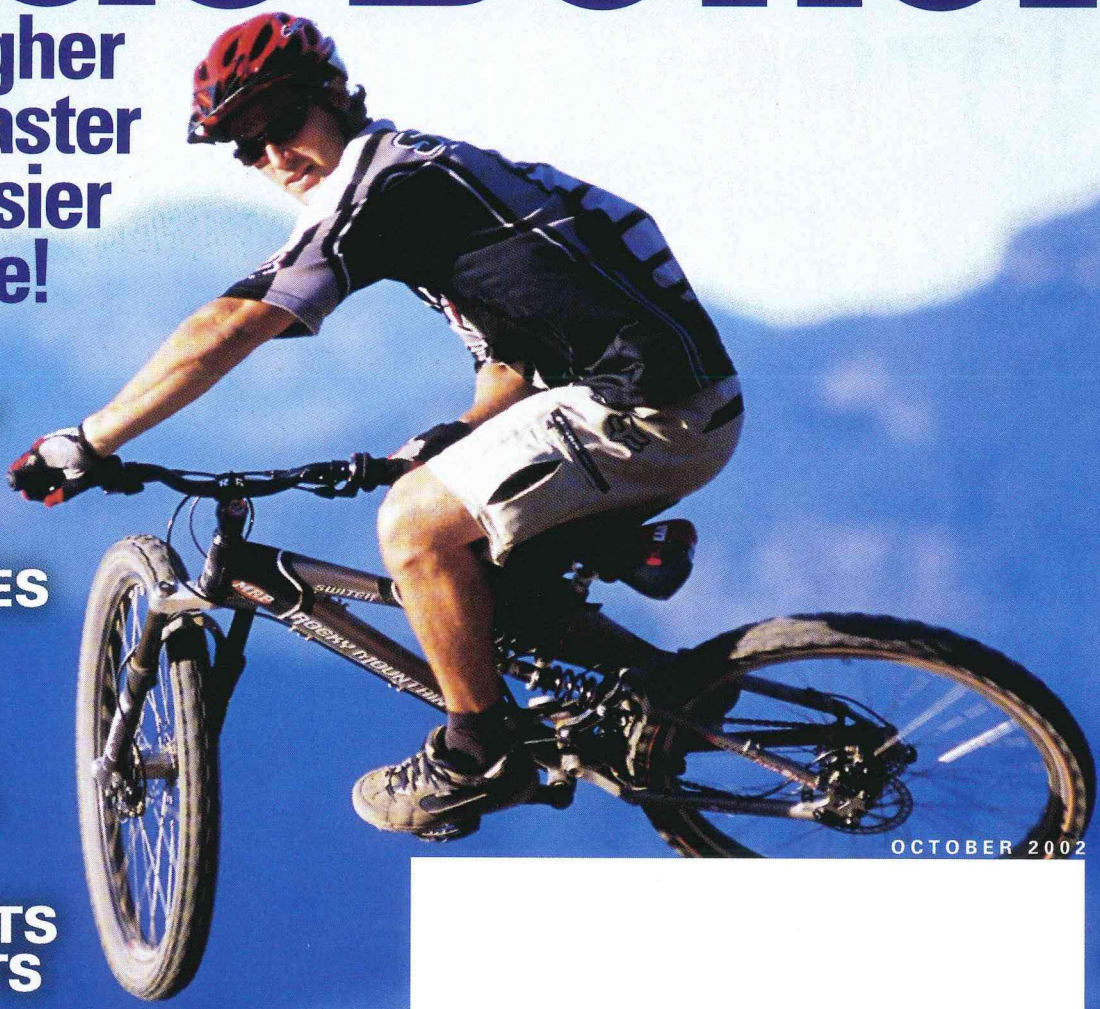
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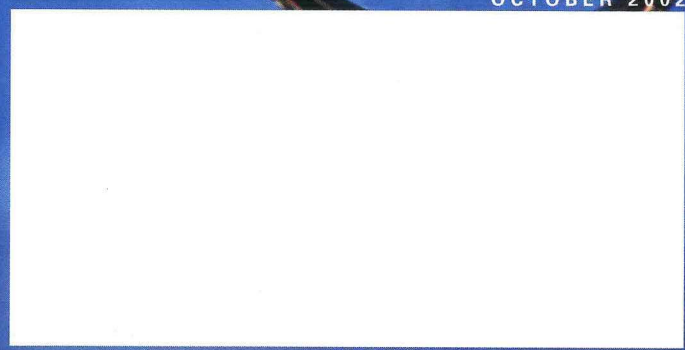
**3 FAST
ROAD BIKES**

**THE TRACK
WHERE
DREAMS
COME TRUE**

**THE BIKE
THAT FIGHTS
TERRORISTS**



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Soar like this
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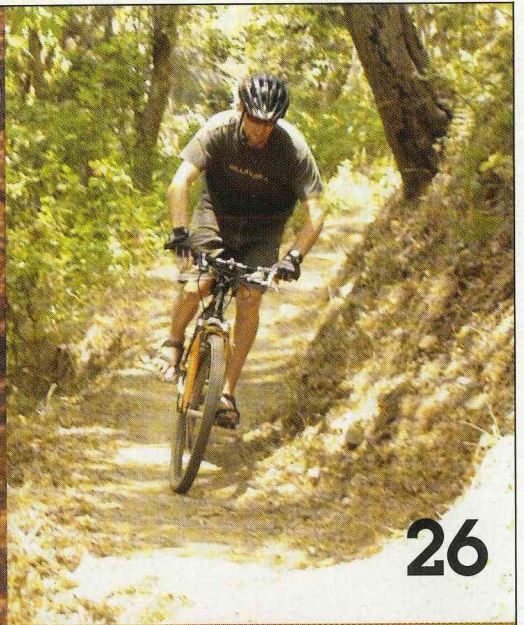
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Richie Schley (Rocky Mountain) takes it big in Whistler, BC. Photo: Blake Jorgenson.

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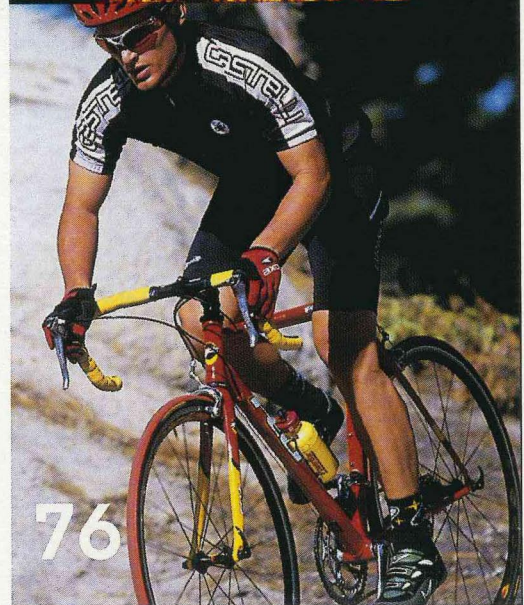
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THE WEAPON

IT'S BEEN A TOY, AN EXERCISE MACHINE AND THE WORLD'S MOST EFFICIENT VEHICLE. NOW OUR BELOVED BIKE HAS A NEW MISSION.

BY ANDREW CURRY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MITCH MANDEL

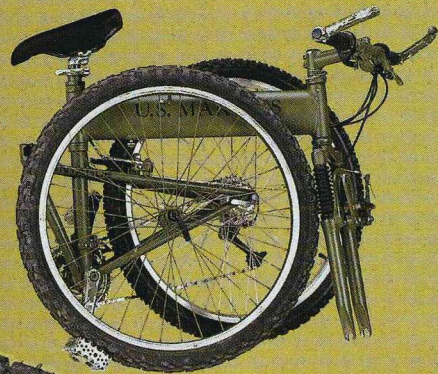
In an era of sci-tech weaponry such as mechanical assault insects that “think,” the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency risked its reputation five years ago when it funded research for the next secret project: a bicycle. ■ The idea initially inspired giggles from military leaders, says David Montague, who developed the Paratrooper bike shown here. But Vietnam vets in the Pentagon remembered seeing North Vietnamese haul 500 pounds of gear on bikes and pushed through approval. ■ The bikes were tested for combat (in one simulation, cyclists rescued hostages and returned to base before foot soldiers even reached the target) but aren’t likely to be used in actual warfare. ■ Paratroopers are used for speedy patrols and transport in areas cleared of enemies. ■ Military versions cost up to \$1,000; you can buy one from Montague Bikes for \$650.





GOOD TO GO

The bike folds to 36x30x12 inches, about half the size of a typical boxed bike. It's sometimes tethered to a paratrooper during dives. (The load hits the ground first.)



1. In testing, 250-pound marines with 75-pound combat loads rode off 5-foot drops. During a year of such grueling treatment, they tacoed 20 wheels. Durability was improved by upgrading to these beefy 48-spoke, double-walled tandem wheels.

2. The military wanted a singlespeed bike for its low maintenance. But designer David Montague argued that gears let you pedal in any conditions. He won, so the drivetrain is a 24-speed Deore.

3. No tools are required for folding. Remove the front wheel and flip the quick-release lever on the top tube, and the bike collapses in less than 30 seconds. If you forget to retighten the QR after unfolding, a safety lock prevents the frame from collapsing.

4. After you release the QR, the rear triangle folds over the front of the frame. While easy to transport, this design preserves the structural integrity and strength when unfolded—it rides as stable as a traditional bike.

5. At about 30 pounds, the Paratrooper is chunky. But the thick aluminum tubes up front and steel rear triangle withstand harsh pounding, says Texas National Guard 1st Lt. Joaquin Campos. "The performance is great. They're extremely rigid."

6. Toe straps or clipless pedals are out of the question. Marines need serrated platform pedals with plenty of room to plant their combat boots.

7. Like this bike, the consumer version comes in "Cammy Green." Military models get real camo paint—sand is popular now. Once at a base, the bikes also get another coat to cover shiny components.

8. The Paratrooper can be equipped with Shimano trigger shifters or SRAM Grip Shifters, but the military often spec Grip Shift because it has fewer moving parts.

9. The frame has a lifetime warranty. But, says Montague, "If you're in Afghanistan and your bike breaks, I'm not sure how you can warranty a frame anyway."

10. Front suspension was a must. "Not for comfort, but to avoid killing the front rim. These guys just barrel into stuff," says Montague. Standard-issue fork: RockShox with 100mm of travel.

11. One of the beautiful details: You don't have to mess with unhitching brake or shift cables. Smart routing runs cables together along the top tube to eliminate tangling when folded.