

## ▶ THE SPIRIT OF A SOLDIER:

Mike Levy's gallantry as a soldier was first brought to light during the Second World War

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**LAST MONTH, AUTHOR** Jack Bates wrote about how little recognition Lieutenant Mike Levy received for his gallantry during the Korean War's Battle of Kapyong. Here, Mr. Bates relates Mike Levy's harrowing exploits of the Second World War.

The eldest of four siblings, Michael George Levy was born in Bombay, India in 1925 to parents George and Sophie. His father was a businessman, so the family travelled throughout Asia and the Middle East before settling down in Shanghai, China. This is where Michael, his brother Albert, and sisters Emma and Katie spent most of their childhood years. Michael attended the Shanghai Public School for Boys, joined the Boy Scouts and YMCA, and excelled in recreational boxing, roller skating, rugby, soccer and swimming.

In December 1941, the Japanese Army attacked and occupied Shanghai. As a British subject and aged 16, Michael was arrested by the Japanese and placed in the Pootung Internment Camp. In 1943 he was transferred to the Lunghua Civil Assembly Centre, the story of which is depicted in the 1987 Steven Spielberg movie *Empire of the Sun*.

Under cover of darkness, Michael and four British internees escaped from Lunghua camp on May 22, 1944 and set off for India. The group travelled through occupied China and successfully evaded the Japanese for nearly two months, completing a harrowing 3,200-kilometre (2,000-mile) journey on foot and by junk. The men finally reached an Allied base in Kunming in the Yunnan Province of Southwest China, where the Royal Air Force flew them "over the hump" to freedom in India. This remarkable journey was the subject of a 1992 Granada Television



documentary in Great Britain titled *Across the Jade Divide*; it was also featured on the American television channel PBS.

Once in India, Michael was recruited by the British Army's elite Special Operations Executive (SOE), and known under its general cover name of Force 136. With his knowledge of Chinese culture and the ability to speak the native language, he was sent to Poona and Jessore for specialized training in industrial espionage, guerilla warfare and parachuting. Now 19 years of age, Michael was given the wartime rank of captain and placed second in command of the "Galvanic Brown" Patrol Liaison Team.

On July 22, 1945, the team departed from Ceylon on an 11-hour flight in a Dakota and was dropped behind enemy lines in the Malayan jungle north of Kuala Lumpur. An earlier drop

ABOVE: The men who escaped the Lunghua Civil Assembly Centre in 1943 and successfully reached India pose with a Chinese guerilla commander. From left to right: Reg Uhlich, Michael Levy, Tom Huxley, Chinese General, Roy Scott, Louis Murray Kidd. Their epic journey was detailed in the 1992 British documentary "Across the Jade Divide."

*“The group travelled through occupied China and successfully evaded the Japanese for nearly two months, completing a harrowing 3,200-kilometre (2,000-mile) journey on foot and by junk.”*



had been attempted on the 20<sup>th</sup> but the plane had to return to base due to a malfunction. It took six hours of additional flying to use up the fuel that could not be jettisoned before they could safely land. Once they were in action on the second attempt, it took the team nearly one week on foot to reach their camp near Kajang, where they met up with the Guerilla Regiment. “Galvanic Brown” operated in the Malayan jungle until after the Japanese final surrender on September 2, 1945.

In the days following, the team entered Kajang, located about 20 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, but the Japanese stationed there refused to discuss surrender until the British Army arrived. The team engaged in diffusing hostilities between the Malayan Peoples’ Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and collaborators as well as maintaining control of the Japanese and warding off bandits until an Indian Army detachment arrived on September 9/10. The team then relocated to Kuala Lumpur.

Captain Mike Levy received a Mention in Despatches (MID) award for his bravery in one of Force 136’s engagements at Salak South. His commanding officer described Levy as “a young chap with previous experience in a recent escape from internment in China, full of guts and really at his happiest when Japs or Puppets were reported in the vicinity, deserves full praise when he led his

*After his successful escape from a Japanese internment camp, 19-year-old Michael Levy was recruited into the British Army’s elite Special Operations Executive (SOE). He was appointed second in command of Force 136 and assigned to a patrol liaison team in Malaya. Here is a photo of his team, circa 1945. (Note the captain’s pips on his uniform.)*

men with flying colours.” The wartime exploits of Force 136 were immortalized in the Oscar-winning film *Bridge on the River Kwai*.

Following the war Levy was attached as an investigator to the War Crimes Tribunal in Hong Kong and Singapore. One of his duties was to proceed to Shanghai by air on July 6, 1946 for the purpose of recovering the remains of Empire soldiers interred in the Hung Jao Road Cemetery and transfer them to Hong Kong.

The following is from an article in the *Singapore Free Press*, published on November 20, 1947 under the headline “Parachuted Into Malaya After Escape”:

*The exploits of a man who escaped from a Japanese prisoner camp, trekked 1,500 miles to friendly Chinese territory, and later parachuted into Malaya on a special mission to the Malayan resistance movement, have now been revealed for the first time. Capt. Mike Levy, a 24-year-old Canadian who is leaving Singapore this week on the Empress of Scotland, broke out of the internment camp at Lung Wha, Shanghai, in May 1944 with four other men. Until they reached Kunming three months later, they were in constant danger from the Japs.*

*“Looking back,” said Captain Levy, “it seemed more of a thrill than a desperate adventure. I shall never forget the reception given us at Kunming by American flyers and Chinese officers, after they had really decided we were not spies. “We escaped so that we could enlist, and when we presented ourselves to the astonished military authorities in Calcutta, we were all passed “medically fit.” After gaining a commission, Captain Levy was parachuted into Malaya in July 1945 with five companions on a special mission with guerillas. He has been Movements Officer at Nee Soon Camp for the past six months and is now going on transfer to the Middle East.*

Captain Mike Levy retired from the British Army in 1948 and relocated with his family from Shanghai to Vancouver, where he maintained an active connection with the military by immediately enlisting in a local militia regiment, the Irish Fusiliers of Canada.

At the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, this valiant soldier volunteered and enlisted in the newly formed Second Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry and proceeded to Korea as commander of “D” Company, # 10 Platoon. During the 1951 Battle of Kapyong, while under heavy attack, Lt. Levy initiated and personally directed the artillery bombardment from his Platoon’s position on the ground onto this location for maximum effect on the charging enemy.

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*Weighing in at 18,482 kg, the TAPV's 365-horsepower engine and can also navigate slopes of 60 per cent grade. (TEXTRON SYSTEMS)*

Alongside the vehicle's three primary crewmembers — driver, gunner, commander — the TAPV can comfortably accommodate up to three additional soldiers depending on variant. The TAPV is also equipped with four hatches and three doors to provide occupants with multiple sources for entry and exit. It has a high ground clearance to help defeat the threat of landmines.

The Canadian Army's TAPV will be equipped with a dual remote weapons system (RWS), which is based on the Kongsberg M117 Protector. The RWS can mount a C6 7.62mm general-purpose machine gun and the Heckler & Koch 40mm automatic grenade launcher. The vehicle is also outfitted with smoke grenade launchers to provide smoke cover for evasive manoeuvres.

Michael Gelpi, Textron Systems' vice president of Land Systems, is confident in the ruggedness of the TAPV. "The Canadian Army's TAPV is an extremely reliable vehicle that has been proven to provide an optimal balance of mobility and survivability," stated Gelpi.

With a focus on crew protection, mobility, performance and payload, the TAPV is the game-changing solution for Canada's national security requirements of the next 25 years. ❁

to the design and manufacture of the mission system itself, which will be at the heart of the modernized SAR system. Canadian technology companies are providing: the flight management system from Esterline CMC Electronics, based in Montreal; the EO/IR sensor system from L-3 WESCAM; the Iridium SATCOM system from Flyht Aerospace Solutions of Calgary; the bubble windows from Airdyne Technologies with facilities in Calgary; and Rolls Royce AE 2100 engines will be serviced by Winnipeg-based Standard Aero in partnership with Rolls Royce.

Team Spartan points out that it is not only the Canadian content that matters, but the experience in providing Canadian content-rich platforms to the military. General Dynamics Mission Systems-Canada has a number of proven mission systems currently flying in military aircraft platforms as well as being a prime contractor on many successful military programs. The company says that familiarity with these existing mission systems will reduce long-term training and support costs.

DRS Technologies-Canada, also a Finmeccanica company, has been an integrator on a number of Canadian military programs ranging from aircraft-mounted infrared search and tracking technologies to integrated ship-board communication systems. The company will be the training systems provider on the FWSAR program and has a long history in the pilot training environment with the United States military. The company has partnered with Canadian suppliers across the country to source the elements of the training systems.

"We are excited to highlight these and the many more Canadian companies that are partnering with Team Spartan to bring this aircraft to the Canadian people," Ibbetson said. "This is an important mission and we look forward to putting many Canadians to work to support it." ❁

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Following the Korean War, Lieutenant Levy married Marjorie in 1951 (with whom he had one daughter and three sons) and remained in the PPCLI, undertaking postings to Calgary, Germany, Edmonton and Esquimalt. He was promoted to Major in December 1960. Levy spent one year in Vietnam as part of the International Commission for Supervision and Control and did a tour in Cyprus as the deputy commander of Canada's peacekeeping force.

In 1968 Levy was posted to the prestigious United States Marine Corps Command Staff College in Quantico, Virginia, then to Washington, D.C. for two years with the Canadian Defence Liaison Staff. In 1971 he moved into the Military Intelligence Directorate at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa manning the "China Desk." In 1974 Levy retired from the CAF as a major after a distinguished 25-year career and settled back in Vancouver.

During his years of service, Levy was awarded the following awards: 1939-1945 Star, Burma Star, Defence Medal, War Medal with Oak Leaf (MID), General Service Medal Malaya, Korea Medal, Volunteer Service Medal, NATO Medal, Canadian Peacekeeping Medal, United Nations Korea Medal, UNFICYP Medal, ICCS



*LEFT: Major Mike Levy in 1963.*

*RIGHT: The motto "I Have Prevailed" on his coat of arms (issued by the Governor General of Canada on April 14, 2004) indicates Major Levy's ultimate triumph through many harrowing challenges.*



Vietnam Medal, CD with Bar, and the United States Presidential Unit Citation (Personal – Battle of Kapyong). A Grant of Arms, flag and badge were awarded to Major (ret'd) Michael George Levy in April 2004 by the Governor General of Canada. The motto on Levy's coat of arms reads: "I HAVE PREVAILED."

"The Spirit of a Soldier" remained intact until Mike passed away on June 4, 2007 in Vancouver, proud of his loyal comrades and his regiment, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. ❁