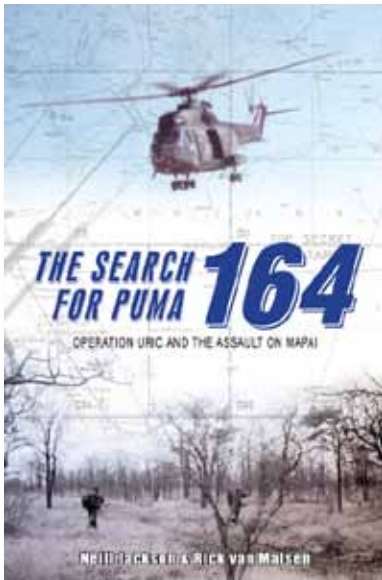




# The Search for Puma 164

Operation Uric and the assault on Mapai

Neill Jackson & Rick van Malsen



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## The battle for Mapai ... and the final closure

September 6, 1979 a lone Puma helicopter flies northward, leaving behind the desolation of the battle for Mapai, in Mozambique's Gaza Province. Huddled in the cabin, two weary soldiers sit silently immersed in their own thoughts, contemplating their difficult duties ahead. WOII Graham Enslin, CSM, Support Commando, is struggling to come to terms with the death in action that morning of his younger brother Brian. The other, Lt Rick van Malsen BCR, 2IC, 1 Commando, works through the list of names in his hand, names of the 16 men who died with Trooper Brian Enslin when a South African Air Force Puma was shot out of the sky during the assault on the Frelimo and ZANLA stronghold at Mapai. It will be his job to send out the official death notices and to advise the next of kin that the bodies of the three South African airmen and 14 Rhodesian soldiers were not recovered. Both men vow that night, each for reasons of his own, to one day return to the scene of the crash to pay proper tribute to the fallen men. And so it was, almost 30 years later, that Rick van Malsen returns to the scene of that horrendous battle, to search for the crash site of the downed Puma, in an effort to achieve closure for the relatives of the dead. This is a story of courage and devotion to duty but, above all, it is a story of comradeship and loyalty undimmed by the passage of time, of a band of brothers bonded together in war, united still in peace.

**Neill Jackson** was born in Malta in 1953, where his father was stationed with the Royal Marines and his mother the WRENs. The family moved to Rhodesia in 1956. In 1975 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant with 5 (Independent) Company based in Umtali, before serving three years as a Troop Commander with Support Commando, the Rhodesian Light Infantry. In 1978 he was posted as 2IC to 1 (Independent) Company at Victoria Falls and Beitbridge, and then to 1 Brigade HQ in Bulawayo as Intelligence Officer from December 1979 until his retirement a year later, with the rank of captain.

**Rick van Malsen** was born in Kenya in 1954, immigrated to Rhodesia in 1960 and joined the Rhodesian Light Infantry in 1974, being commissioned the following year. In 1978, as a Troop Commander in 1 Commando, IRLI, Rick was awarded the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia for valour during combat. At the cessation of hostilities in 1980 he was appointed Battalion Adjutant and attended a staff course at the Staff College at Camberley in the UK. He set up the Army Diving School at Kariba, at the time the most modern facility of its type in southern Africa, before retiring from service in 1984.

## SELLING POINTS

- Cover shoutlines from Sgt Dan Mills, author of *Sniper One*, Brig-Gen Dick Lord and the *South African Military History Journal*
- A history of the operation and a personal account which leads the recovery team to a small village whose headman has been guarding the site for 30 years
- Personal journeys of the next of kin

## MARKET

- As for *Fireforce*, *19 with a Bullet* and *The Saints*

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