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Going great guns

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With Osama gone, the Navy SEALs have become the new heroes. Whether you're a member or a wannabe, these magazines will help you take aim.

If history means anything in the war on terror, then **Military History** is encamped on the front lines. Thoroughly enriching for buffs of this genre, even engaging for general readers, the magazine uses historical photos, academic research and military professionals to take audiences across centuries of conflicts. The cover story examines what happened to the French Foreign Legion. Another good piece looks at Russian women and their fierce roles as top fighters who helped defeat Hitler. For the uberpatriotic longing for days of the American Revolution, there's an eye-opening article about cowardice at Bunker Hill.

Guns magazine may miss the mark in readability but it makes a game attempt to make up for it in straight-shooting talk about guns, blades and hunting strategy. One feature declares that the traditional pocketknife is back. The article notes that recent laws in New York and abroad restricting shipping of knives that feature so-called more dangerous "locking mechanisms" have undercut their sales. Elsewhere, the huntsman magazine boasts that the .44 Magnum -- made famous by Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry flicks -- is still the "King of Six Guns" more than 50 years after the special pocket rocket was designed.

Are you into soldiers? If so, **Armchair General** has several short features that, while not written particularly well, do provide interesting angles about soldiers from many battles. This ranges from the role of African-Americans during World War I who represented 11 percent of the US fighting force to how Major General Lewis Brereton ignored General Douglas MacArthur's orders to fly jets out of Manila in the hours following Pearl Harbor. The Japanese destroyed our aircraft in the Philippines like they did in Hawaii. We particularly liked a Q&A with Vietnam vet and former Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rocky Bleier, who compared football head injuries to those received in combat.

Soldier of Fortune is the baddest of military magazines. Just read it and you feel like a mercenary. Unfortunately -- probably because of deadline -- this month's issue has no great coverage of the military take-out of bin Laden. You'll have to settle for a look into the funneling of guns into Mexican drug cartels. Despite no big breakdown of the Navy SEALs and how they stormed Abbottabad, Soldier of Fortune still covers some cool gunfighting ground with features on elite units and militaries around the world. Also, you'll learn a bit of how to handle yourself in a life-and-death situation.

New York largely sidesteps the tumult over bin Laden to make way for a startling feature about life after college for Asian Americans. Wesley Yang said he feels like "an invisible person. An icon of so much that the culture pretends to honor but that it in fact patronizes and exploits. Not just people who are 'good at math' but a mass of stifled, repressed, abused, conformist quasi-robots who simply do not matter." We also liked the story about drag queen Justin Bond and his ambition to "be both sexes at once."

There has been much hand-wringing over whether Pakistan can be trusted, but the **New Yorker** does the best job of explaining why the answer was always "no" when it came to bin Laden: Pakistan's army and intelligence "were in the looking-for-bin Laden business, and if they found him they'd be out of business." Elsewhere, a story about PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi's efforts to make the company's drinks and snacks healthier concludes by quoting an NYU professor who declares "The best thing Pepsi could do for worldwide obesity would be to go out of business."

Time's bin Laden coverage is mostly a rehash, although there's a feature about Leon Panetta's tenure as head of the CIA. While it mostly reads like the previous week's puff piece on outgoing FBI director Bob Mueller, it does make the point that cost-cutting and downsizing has made CIA leaders "able to concentrate on their core mission." On Obama's cool, patient approach to foreign policy, Joe Klein reports in his column that the president told Egypt's Hosni Mubarak he had "no interest in embarrassing" the deposed dictator and that "I respect my elders" as he eased him toward the exit.

Newsweek scrambled to deliver an early "bin Laden is dead" issue last week. But the urgency evaporates with a column ticking off obvious points about "how the president should seize the day," followed by some cluck-clucking that bin Laden's death "raises uncomfortable moral questions." Salman Rushdie, however, points some good barbs at Pakistan, noting that bin Laden was living 800 yards from a military academy "in an extremely large house [that] had neither a telephone nor an Internet connection . . . with couriers coming and going, for five years."