

Cross-Country

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CROSS-COUNTRY. The code name used by U.S. Army Sergeant Robert M. Blais. Cross-Country was born in Greensboro, North Carolina to a father who operated bulldozers and a mother who drove a grader. This gave him an affinity for driving heavy machinery. After enlisting in the Army, Cross-Country joined the G.I. Joe team as driver of the HAVOC armored vehicle. His uncanny sense of direction and fearless nature made him perfectly suited to the job.

Cross-Country's first mission for the Joe team began just after the Joes returned from the invasion of Springfield. The Dreadnoks broke Zartan out of Joe headquarters, where he was being held prisoner and Cross-Country was part of the team sent to find them in the New Jersey swampland. The Joes came up against the Dreadnok's Thunder Machine for the first time, and Cross-Country found himself playing a game of chicken with the vehicle on a submerged highway. As the two vehicles headed straight for each other, the passengers in the Thunder Machine all leaned to one side, sending the vehicle up on two wheels, and right past the HAVOC. The Dreadnoks soon got away, leaving the angry Cross-Country with a bruised ego. Some time later, Cross-Country was one of the many Joes who participated in the Cobra Island civil war on the side of Serpentor. The HAVOC was part of a second wave of reinforcements sent through the swamps to ambush Cobra Commander's forces. When the Cobras ended the war with a deal that left the Joes defeated, the committee of corrupt Generals who had authorized the mission claimed the Joes had acted without their consent. Cross-Country and the other Joes involved were arrested and held in custody until the remaining Joes went underground and exposed the Generals' guilt. Just after their release Cross-Country was part of a small group tracking the Dreadnoks to their hideout in New Jersey. He finally got the chance for a rematch with Thrasher's Thunder Machine, and this time Cross-Country came out on top.

Cross-Country's most difficult mission started as a routine raid on Cobra Terrordromes in the desert nation of Trucial Abysmia. The mission soon turned disastrous when the team, led by Lt. Falcon and Duke, discovered that Cobra was involved more in the Middle East than was first believed. Trying to retreat into friendly territory, the group was overrun by Cobra soldiers led by Tomax and Xamot. Surrounded on all sides, Duke knew it was suicidal to fight on and surrendered to save his troops. When Tomax and Xamot reported to Cobra Commander, they misunderstood his orders and sent a SAW-Viper to kill the prisoners. Four Joes were shot in cold blood before the rest of the group could escape in a captured Cobra tank. The escaping Joes were followed and the tank exploded, killing all of the Joes except for Duke, Falcon and Cross-Country. When a Joe rescue team arrived, Cross-Country and the others went after the SAW-Viper, but Duke couldn't bring himself to shoot the now-unarmed man. The discoveries made on that mission led to the Joes' biggest operation, fighting against Cobra in the nearby nation of Benzheen. The remainder of Cross-Country's missions remain classified, but he stayed with the team until it was shut down in 1994. Like most former Joes, he is currently a reserve member of the team.

An early version of Cross Country's filecard seen in *Marvel Age* #34 and a version printed in *The G.I. Joe Order of Battle* listed his real name as "Arlen W. Slaughter".

(GI 51, 52, 59, 67, 72, 76, 77, 79, 92, 108, 109, 110, 111; Figures: 1, 2)