

ARMS & THE MAN



N.Y. Post: David Pentas

MUSKET LOVE: Christian Cranmer — sometimes compared to movie adventurer Indiana Jones (right) — shows off part of the huge Nepalese weapons cache at his New Jersey warehouse.

Modern 'Indiana Jones' brings back tons of guns

EXCLUSIVE

By FREDRIC U. DICKER

GILLETTE, N.J. — He's a real-life Indiana Jones and, after a sometimes dangerous, 35-year quest for the "hidden treasure" of Lagan Silekhan — a long-sealed palace in Katmandu, Nepal — Christian Cranmer has finally brought his extraordinary treasure home.

To New Jersey.

The British-born Cranmer, a 60-year-old internationally known arms

dealer whose company in Britain supplied the machine guns used in "Saving Private Ryan" and "Band of Brothers," created a sensation in the arms-collecting world in 2003 when he inked a \$5 million deal with the Nepalese military.

The complex deal — which involved details Cranmer was unwilling to describe on the record — resulted from the Nepalese army's need for cash to combat the Maoists.

It netted Cranmer and his Indian-born business partner, Sudhir Windlass, a breathtaking 430 tons of antique war materiel.

The haul included over 50,000 rifles — some dating back to the early 19th century.

There were tens of thousands of cartridge-firing Martini-Henry rifles, circa 1870s, many of which are believed to have been used during the legendary Zulu Wars in South Africa.

There were thousands of muzzle-loading Pattern 1839 and 1842 muskets, 1853 Enfield rifles, thousands of copies of the famed American Sharps rifles — apparently made by the British East India Co. — and several dozen rare Lewis ma-

chine guns, of later-World War I vintage.

But the *pieces de resistance* — which still bring a childlike smile and a genuine sense of excitement to Cranmer — were the huge number of cannons: 146 in all, mostly bronze and many from the Napoleonic period.

Most of the guns were in relatively good condition, although covered with heavy layers of ancient dust, and a thick, hardened skin of original grease, which Cranmer's employees have worked to remove.

Business is brisk.

Cranmer said he's receiving about 100 orders a day from collectors and — in the case of the rarest items — museums from throughout the world.

"We paid \$5 million and we'll make \$25 million back, even if we have to wait 10 years," said Cranmer.

Cranmer has his eyes set on another rumored cache of antique arms — somewhere in Southeast Asia.

"I don't want to mention the country," he said. "I have competitors, you know."

