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**PCs AT WAR** This year's ultimate road warriors—U.S. soldiers in Iraq—carry rugged **Panasonic Toughbooks**, the leathernecks of the laptop world. Screen, keyboard and drives are hermetically sealed to keep moisture, dust and sand from getting in. They're built to withstand 120° F-plus temperatures. And the guts are enclosed in a shock-resistant magnesium alloy case. We saw one survive a drop from about waist high at a March industry event. A range of models is available to consumers (go to [www.panasonic.com/toughbook](http://www.panasonic.com/toughbook) for a list of retailers).

Among those used by the military: the CF-34, which weighs a reasonable 3.8 pounds but packs little firepower with a 400MHz processor and a measly 8.4-inch touchscreen; and the CF-28, which is relatively speedy but weighs in at a Nimitz-class-like nine pounds. The armed forces pay \$4,000 and \$2,700 for them, respectively. Consumer models don't have a secure wireless modem, built-in GPS or "tactical graphical user interface" that locates enemies on the battlefield, so they run about \$500 less.



PANASONIC  
TOUGHBOOK  
in the field

Even then, they're not an economically wise choice unless you use laptops the way the gorilla in the Samsonite commercials uses luggage. —BRIAN L. CLARK

**BEST PRICES IN MEMORY** Makers of memory for digital cameras have been waging an aggressive price war since February. Prices of the three most popular formats—compact flash, secure digital cards and memory sticks—are down as much as 80%. At online discounters such as **PC Mall** ([www.pcmall.com](http://www.pcmall.com)) and **Tiger Direct** ([www.tigerdirect.com](http://www.tigerdirect.com)), cards that hold more high-resolution images than 10 rolls of film sell for under \$50. The trend is likely to continue. By next year, expect cards that hold more than 1,000 images to cost under \$100. —TED C. FISHMAN