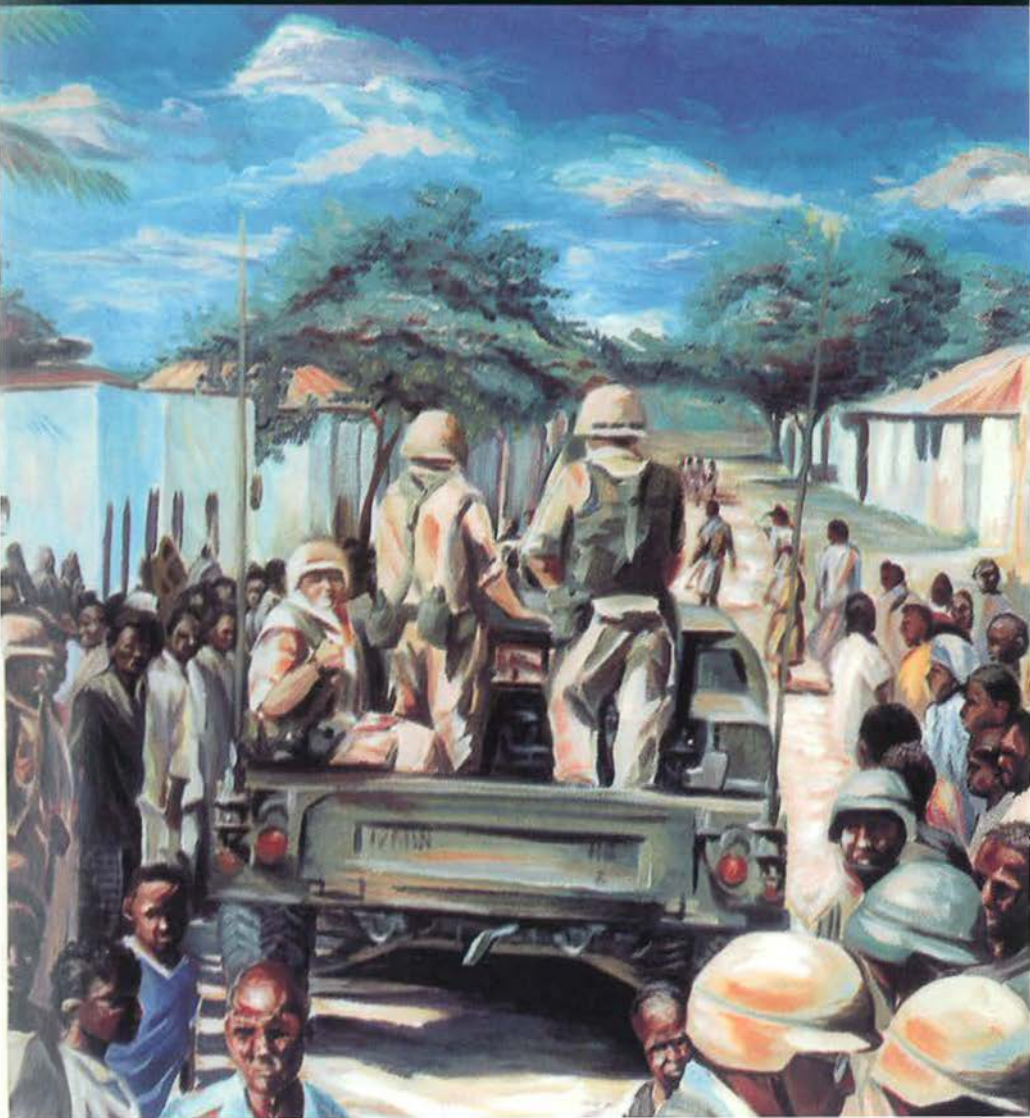
The United States Army in

SOMALIA

1992–1994



CMH Pub 70–81–1

Cover: On the Town, *Jeffrey T. Manuszak, 1994*

Introduction

The United States Army has a long tradition of humanitarian relief. No such operation has proven as costly or shocking, however, as that undertaken in Somalia from August 1992 to March 1994. Greeted initially by Somalis happy to be saved from starvation, U.S. troops were slowly drawn into interclan power struggles and ill-defined "nation-building" missions. The American people woke up one day in early October 1993 to news reports of dozens of our soldiers killed or wounded in fierce fighting in the streets of the capital city, Mogadishu. These disturbing events of a decade ago have taken on increasing meaning after the horrific attacks of 11 September 2001.

The Army began by assisting in relief operations in Somalia, but by December 1992 it was deeply engaged on the ground in Operation RESTORE HOPE in that chaotic African country. In the spring of the following year, the initial crisis of imminent starvation seemed to be over, and the U.S.-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) turned over the mission to the United Nations, leaving only a small logistical, aviation, and quick reaction force behind to assist. The American public seemed to forget about Somalia. That sense of "mission accomplished" made the events of 3–4 October 1993 more startling, as Americans reacted to the spectacle of dead U.S. soldiers being dragged through the streets by cheering Somali mobs—the very people Americans thought they had rescued from starvation.

This brochure, prepared to honor the tenth anniversary of Operation RESTORE HOPE beginning on 8 December, places the events of the firefight of 3–4 October 1993 into the wider context of the U.S. humanitarian, political, and military operation to rescue a people and a state from anarchy and chaos. The dedication and sacrifices made by U.S. soldiers, airmen, and marines in that war-torn country provide a lesson in heroism that remains compelling a decade later.

This brochure was prepared in the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Dr. Richard W. Stewart, Chief of the Histories Division and a veteran of Somalia. We hope that his absorbing account—with its list of further readings—will stimulate further interest in and study of this extraordinarily important U.S. operation.

JOHN S. BROWN
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

The United States Army in Somalia 1992–1994

Americans consider themselves to be a compassionate people, and the United States Army has a long tradition of humanitarian relief operations both within and outside the continental United States. Never has this humanitarian impulse proven more dangerous to follow than in 1992 when the United States intervened to arrest famine in the midst of an ongoing civil war in the east African country of Somalia. Ultimately hundreds of thousands were saved from starvation, but unintended involvement in Somali civil strife cost the lives of thirty American soldiers, four marines, and eight Air Force personnel and created the impression of chaos and disaster. How could a mission that had accomplished so much have ended in such unhappy circumstances?

The Army's humanitarian relief efforts have generally been less complicated and more successful. Soldiers provided vital support to the stricken city of San Francisco in 1906 as it struggled to recover from the great earthquake and subsequent fires. National Guard units in communities across the nation frequently rush to the scene of communities hit by hurricanes, tornados, fires, or floods. In 1992, soldiers from the XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, deployed to restore order and bring in supplies in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, which destroyed large sections of Miami, Florida. U.S. Army personnel have also been involved in many overseas disaster relief and humanitarian operations, generally as part of joint task forces. In Operation SEA ANGEL in 1991, American soldiers assisted relief efforts in Bangladesh as it recovered from a disastrous cyclone. During Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, also in 1991, U.S. Army special operations soldiers rescued almost 400,000 Kurds from imminent starvation in the mountains of northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. The national impulse to intervene—to help—is a powerful one, and the U.S. military forces are uniquely suited to bringing to bear their skill, manpower, and logistical power anywhere in the world.

Strategic Setting

American interest in the Horn of Africa region dates back to the Cold War when both the Soviet Union and the United States competed to gain allies and influence throughout the world. In the early 1960s

the United States established a presence, including communications listening posts, in the northern part of Ethiopia and backed the traditional regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. The Soviets, on the other hand, replaced the weakened Italian influence in neighboring Somalia and supported the authoritarian regime of Somali strongman Mohammed Siad Barre, who took power in 1969. (*Map 1*)

After Siad Barre precipitated a disastrous war against Ethiopia over the status of the Ogaden region in 1977, the situation in Somalia grew worse. Western aid dried up, and Barre was forced to grow ever more repressive to maintain his grip on power. He began a policy of systematic kidnapping and murder against rival clan leaders that increased in ferocity over time. Finally, antigovernment riots led to overreaction on the part of Siad Barre's bodyguards, who killed 65 civilians and seriously injured over 300 in 1990. His legitimacy in shambles, the army and the people turned against him in a prolonged series of riots, political maneuvers, and violence. Siad Barre was forced to flee the country in January 1991 with some of his closest supporters. Almost immediately, a resurgence of clan violence led to the virtual destruction of any central government and to economic chaos.

As Somalia lapsed into sectarian and ethnic warfare, regional warlords drew upon clan loyalty to establish independent power bases. This situation led to a struggle over food supplies with each clan raiding the storehouses and depots of the others. Coupled with a drought, these actions brought famine to hundreds of thousands of the nation's poor. Although private and volunteer relief organizations established refugee camps to try to prevent widespread deaths from starvation, they could not handle the massive amounts of aid and the requisite security structure that were needed. International relief organizations paid protection money to the warlords as they tried to distribute what donated food supplies did arrive. More often than not, such supplies never reached the hands of those who needed them but instead were confiscated by the warlords who distributed or sold them to enhance their own power and prestige. The general misery was only compounded by the brutality of the Somali clans toward their rivals and the sporadic outbreaks of actual fighting. The most visible elements of the suffering—pictures of starving, fly-covered children—appeared nightly on American television screens. Fresh from its triumph in Operation DESERT STORM, the administration of President George H. W. Bush felt it could not ignore the situation, despite the obvious risks of intervening in a country still at war with itself.

The United Nations reacted to the worsening plight of Somalia in early 1992. On 24 April it approved Resolution 751, which authorized


YEMEN
GULF OF ADEN
DJIBOUTI
DJIBOUTI
Bender Cassim
(Boosaaso)
AWDAL
Berbera
SANAAG
BARI
Balamballe
WOQOOYI
GALBEED
Hargeysa
Burao
TOGDHEER
SOOL
Garoowe
(Garoe)
NUGAAL
PROVISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE LINE
ETHIOPIA
MUDUG
Galcaio
(Galkayo)
Dusa Marreb
GALGUDUUD
BAKOOL
Beledweyne
(Belet Uen)
Oddur
HIIRAAN
Jalalaqsi
GEDO
Baidoa
SHABEELLAHA
DHEXE
Baardheere
(Bardera)
BAY
Balli Doogle
INDIAN
OCEAN
BANAADIR
MOGADISHU
Merca
(Marka)
JUBBADA
DHEXE
SHABEELLAHA
HOOSE
KENYA
JUBBADA
HOOSE
Kismaayo
(Chisimayu)
SOMALIA
1993
0
200
Miles
0
200
Kilometers

MAP 1

humanitarian relief operations in the stricken country and established the United Nations Operations in Somalia, or UNOSOM. Almost immediately, a small group of peacekeepers deployed to the country and tried to sort out the confusing array of clans, private armies, and relief organizations, all competing over the distribution of food relief supplies. While some progress was made in the major cities, it was apparent that significant amounts of the supplies destined for the interior were being hijacked by the armies of the clans or by the relief organizations' security guards, hired by the UN and the relief agencies to guard the convoys of food. Since UN and private volunteer organizations were generally prohibited from hiring armed security forces, they instead hired local tribesmen as technical assistants—hence the nickname "technicals." The technicals were armed bodyguards, often driving pick-up trucks or land cruisers with machines guns or other heavy weapons mounted.

Operations

U.S. Relief Efforts

In response to the worsening famine, the United States decided to assist the relief efforts by airlifting food from nearby Kenya to remote airfields in the interior of Somalia for distribution, thus bypassing congested ports and reducing the need to send out easily looted convoys. For this purpose, the United States launched Operation PROVIDE RELIEF on 15 August 1992. The actual ground distribution continued to be accomplished by the international relief organizations already established in the country. PROVIDE RELIEF was thus a limited attempt to use U.S. expertise in logistics to help the relief effort without engaging American military forces on the ground.

Problems of distribution within the country continued to hamper the relief effort. In the countryside, lawless gangs seized relief supplies and used them to buy local loyalties while letting thousands starve. In the cities, the warring political factions, supported by their private armies, amassed food stockpiles as bargaining chips and signs of their power. These rival entities, often barely controlled by their clan leaders, terrorized the international organizations, stealing food and killing whoever did not pay protection money.

Because of the increasingly chaotic situation on the ground, as a security measure U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, accompanied many of the relief flights. In the process they assessed the dangers of various regions, conducted a low-key reconnaissance of

the airfields, and gathered basic information that would be useful for any possible future U.S. ground involvement.

That involvement was not long in coming. Unable to explain to the world why the United States, the "sole remaining superpower" and leader of the "new world order," was not able to stop the starvation, President Bush ordered U.S. forces to deploy to Somalia. Their mission was to ensure that relief supplies reached the people who needed them and thus to "break the cycle" of starvation and save lives.

Restore Hope

The operation, code-named Restore Hope, began on 8 December 1992 under the direction of a Unified Task Force, or UNITAF. The I Marine Expeditionary Force from Camp Pendleton, California, formed the bulk of the headquarters, with augmentation from all the services. Commanded by Marine Lt. Gen. Robert B. Johnston, UNITAF included U.S. and allied troops working together in one task force, but under U.S. and not UN direction. And, like all modern humanitarian operations, it was a joint, combined, and interagency effort. The role of the U.S. State Department was critical. Once Ambassador Robert B. Oakley was appointed as President Bush's special envoy to Somalia, he and General Johnston moved quickly to establish a close working relationship. Although the United Nations continued to play an important part in the politics within the country, especially in the delicate negotiations between rival Somali factions, its role was soon overshadowed by U.S. military and diplomatic power. Security Council Resolution 794, passed on 3 December, endorsed the U.S.- led operation and gave it its international flavor and legitimacy, but the UN simply lacked the logistics, command and control, or intelligence capabilities to undertake such a complex mission.

Marine Corps and Navy special operations elements moved into Somalia in the early morning hours of 9 December, with the first 1,300 marines coming in by helicopter directly to Mogadishu airport. Emerging from the ocean surf in the predawn hours, the Navy Seals were immediately hit with the blazing lights of forewarned media crews. Luckily, the diplomatic groundwork had been laid for U.S. troops to arrive with no Somali resistance. Thereafter, Somali warlords quickly agreed to cooperate with each other (at least for a time) and work with the U.S. troops to establish a relatively benign and secure environment. The technicals and all Somali heavy weapons began to be moved into cantonment areas by the end of the month, and by mid-February most heavy weapons were either in such secure cantonment areas or moved out of Mogadishu and hidden to avoid confiscation or destruction.

The U.S. Army component of UNITAF was Task Force Mountain, initially commanded by Brig. Gen. Lawson William Magruder III, the Assistant Division Commander, Maneuver, of the 10th Mountain Division, based at Fort Drum, New York. He remained in command until 22 December when the division commander, Maj. Gen. Steven L. Arnold, replaced him. TF Mountain was built around the 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, and at its peak consisted of approximately 10,000 soldiers including two infantry battalions, an aviation brigade, and division artillery and support assets. It was a sizable and effective military force that overawed the poorly armed Somali militia.

Coalition forces including large components from France, Italy, Belgium, Morocco, Australia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Canada soon joined U.S. forces. During the course of RESTORE HOPE, some 38,000 soldiers from 23 different nations and representatives from 49 different humanitarian relief operations worked together to put food into the mouths of the starving people of Somalia.

The main challenge to the smooth flow of relief supplies continued to be the rivalry between feuding warlords, particularly between the forces of General Muhammed Farah Aideed of the Habr Gidr subclan and Ali Mahdi Mohamed of the Abgal subclan in Mogadishu. Aideed, previously a general in dictator Siad Barre's army and a former ambassador to India, now headed the Somali National Alliance (SNA) with pretensions to ruling the entire country. His opponent, Ali Mahdi, was a former businessman and farmer with little military experience and only an ad hoc militia. Their feud had led to open conflict from November 1991 to February 1992 and only added to the tragedy of Somalia by killing thousands of innocent Mogadishu citizens. Backed by overwhelming U.S. and allied power, Ambassador Oakley effectively established a cease-fire between the two forces as a precondition to establishing a military and relief presence in the interior of the country. However, it was not in the UN charter, nor in the U.S. mission guidance, to disarm or attack either faction. Ostensibly, the UNITAF forces were neutral and there only to ensure that relief supplies flowed. They achieved this mission by late December, as the port and the airport reopened and relief supplies began moving quickly ashore. Over 40,000 tons of grain were off-loaded by the end of December along with 6,668 vehicles and 96 helicopters for the military forces.

While Mogadishu maintained an uneasy calm, UNITAF forces began to move into the countryside. To aid in coordination, the southern part of the country, the area most marked by drought and famine,

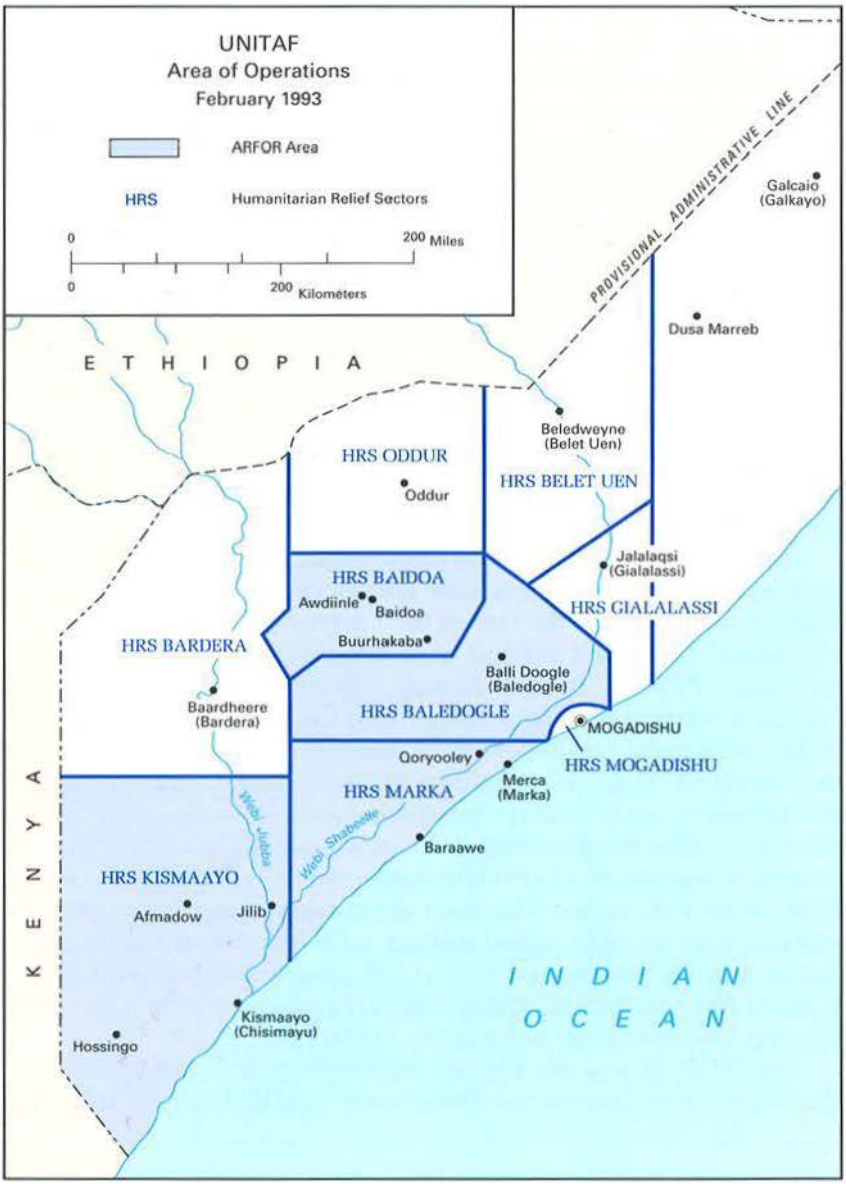
was divided into nine humanitarian relief sectors (HRS). U.S. Marine Forces (MARFOR) concentrated on Baardheere (Bardera)[1] and parts of Mogadishu while the U.S. Army Forces (ARFOR) of UNITAF focused on providing security, often in conjunction with allied forces, in four sectors: HRS Baidoa, HRS Balli Doogle (Baledogle), HRS Merca (Marka), and HRS Kismaayo. *(Map 2)*

Movement of U.S. units into their sectors occurred in a variety of ways. Some U.S. Army units flew first into Mogadishu and then moved out to their assigned relief sectors. On 28 December, TF 2–87, an infantry battalion task force, conducted a combined air assault operation with the 1st Canadian Airborne Battle Group from their base in Mogadishu into the town of Beledweyne (Belet Uen), some 180 miles north. Other units, such as TF 3–14, another infantry battalion task force, flew directly from the United States to the main airport in its sector, in this case Kismaayo, 250 miles southwest of Mogadishu. Rapid changes in plans and missions caused many delays in deployment, shifts in the airflow, and last minute modifications to aircraft load plans as units added, deleted, and changed types of equipment and quantities of supplies. However, by early January most of UNITAF was in place and conducting security operations throughout the nine relief sectors.

While conventional forces concentrated on major cities and regions, U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) moved quickly to establish a presence in the rest of the countryside, place liaison cells with allied forces, and conduct civil affairs (CA) and psychological operations (PSYOP). In early January, Special Operations Command Central, a major subordinate unit of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), deployed a small element to Mogadishu to assume command and control of all special operations forces in theater. This headquarters, known as Joint Special Operations Forces–Somalia or JSOFOR, was responsible for planning and conducting special operations in Somalia in support of all UNITAF humanitarian relief efforts, not just those in the U.S. sector. The main operational objectives of SOF in Somalia were to make initial contact with indigenous factions and leaders, provide information to UNITAF on potentially hostile forces to aid in force protection, and provide area assessments to assist with planning for future relief and security operations.

The JSOFOR was initially task organized with its headquarters in Mogadishu, five Operational Detachment A (ODA) teams from the

[1] Place names in this pamphlet reflect the Board of Geographic Names preferred spellings. Equivalent British spellings, which were carried on 1:250,000 maps widely used during the operation, are provided in parentheses at first mention.


UNITAF
Area of Operations
February 1993
ARFOR Area
HRS
Humanitarian Relief Sectors
0
200 Miles
0
200 Kilometers
PROVISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE LINE
Galcaio
(Galkayo)
Dusa Marreb
E T H I O P I A
Beledweyne
(Belet Uen)
HRS ODDUR
Oddur
HRS BELET UEN
Jalalaqsi
(Gialalassi)
HRS BAIDOA
Awdiinle
Baidoa
HRS GIALALASSI
HRS BARDERA
Buurhakaba
Balli Doogle
(Baledogle)
Baardheere
(Bardera)
HRS BALEDOGLE
MOGADISHU
Qoryooley
HRS MOGADISHU
Merca
(Marka)
HRS MARKA
Webi Jubba
Webi Shabeelle
Baraawe
K E N Y A
HRS KISMAAYO
Afmadow
Jilib
I N D I A N
O C E A N
Kismaayo
(Chisimayu)
Hossingo

MAP 2

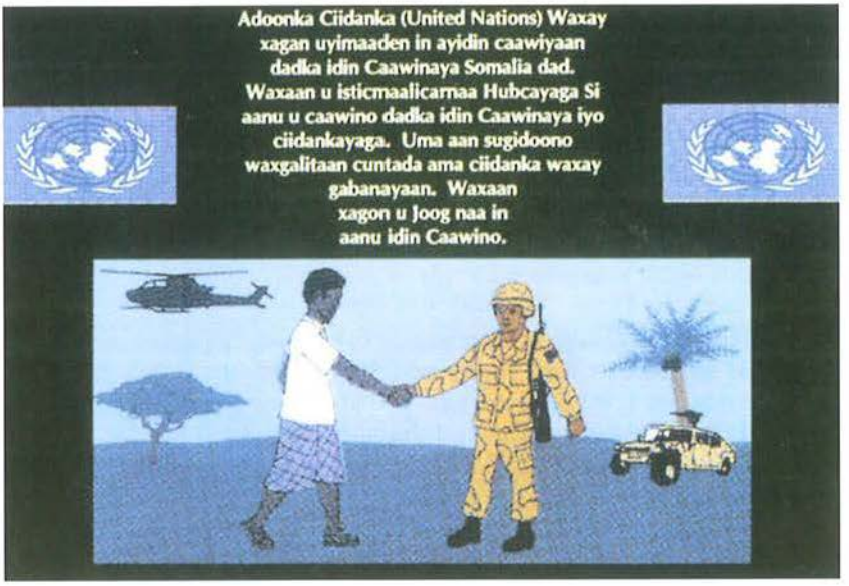
5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)—each consisting of approximately twelve cross-trained Special Forces soldiers—in Beledweyne (the Canadian sector), and another detachment in Baardeheere (the U.S. Marine Forces sector), 200 miles to the west of Mogadishu. By late February three additional detachments were in Kismaayo (the U.S. Army sector) and one in Baidoa (the shared Australian-U.S. Army sector).

Army civil affairs and PSYOP forces, other elements of the special operations team, also provided critical support to U.S. relief operations during RESTORE HOPE. The 96th CA Battalion (Airborne) deployed a civil affairs tactical support team and six CA direct support teams that provided support to both Army and Marine forces. They interacted with numerous international and private aid organizations, staffed humanitarian operations centers throughout Somalia, conducted medical and engineer assessments of local facilities, and coordinated medical and engineer civic action projects.

Psychological operations were also used extensively to support operations in Somalia. UNITAF established a Joint PSYOP Task Force made up primarily of elements of the 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to ensure that information operations were effectively integrated into all plans and operations in theater. PSYOP troops ran a local newspaper (called *Rajo*—the truth) and set up a radio broadcasting system. They also provided tactical loudspeaker teams to U.S. and international forces. In addition, the task force designed, printed, and distributed more than 7 million copies of 49 different leaflets, posters, and handbills.

On the whole, the relief mission proceeded well, with few incidents of violence from February to May 1993. It seemed that life was assuming some measure of normalcy. Markets reopened, travel became more common, and there was even some hope of restarting a Somali national police force with promising initial results. However, clan rivalry and U.S. reluctance to engage in long-term "nation-building" operations soon doomed the effort.

Daily soldier life settled into a routine. Troops conducted mounted and dismounted patrols throughout the cities in their sectors with occasional brushes with bandits and unruly crowds. Carefully written UNITAF Rules of Engagement (ROE) limited their responses by reminding the soldiers that this was not a wartime environment, that all persons were to be treated with dignity and respect, and that only the minimum force necessary for the mission was authorized. These ROE did not in any way, however, interfere with the right to defend oneself or one's unit. In one instance a noncommissioned officer shot



Over 7 million PSYOP leaflets were distributed during RESTORE HOPE.

and killed a young Somali who ran up to his vehicle carrying a small box that the sergeant believed might be a bomb. Despite the tragic nature of the event, charges against the soldier were dismissed under legitimate self-defense grounds. However, in another instance, a sergeant shot and killed an individual who had stolen his sunglasses. His claim of self-defense was rejected, and he was convicted at a general court-martial. On the whole, however, U.S. Army soldiers behaved with care and restraint. By April the situation had stabilized enough that the U.S. administration determined that it was time to turn the mission over to the United Nations entirely.

Despite some setbacks and incidents, Operation RESTORE HOPE succeeded in its goal of bringing an end to mass starvation. The heavily armed UNITAF units quickly established security in their sectors, and an uneasy truce kept the peace between the factions. There were some warning signs on the horizon, however, as UN diplomats began to press for a more active role of the military in confiscating weapons and in forcing some kind of political settlement. "Mission creep" began to enter the vocabulary of those serving in Somalia, and soon after the United States turned over the mission completely to the United Nations in May, the situation began to unravel.

UNOSOM II: Operation CONTINUE HOPE

While U.S. and allied forces maintained the peace in Somalia, U.S. leaders were working hard to push the United Nations into establishing a new mission in Somalia to take over the majority of the responsibilities for running the relief effort while allowing the United States to reduce the size of its committed forces and handle only limited aspects of security and logistics. On 26 March 1993, the United Nations passed Resolution 814 which considerably broadened its mandate to intervene in another country's affairs. The UN was now intervening militarily in a peacemaking role under Chapter VII of its charter. The more frequently used Chapter VI addressed only the deployment of peacekeeping troops to reinforce a previously agreed upon settlement between warring parties. But Chapter VII dealt with peace enforcement and not merely peacekeeping. The resolution underlined the charters of the first UNOSOM mission and Operation RESTORE HOPE and that of the new mission, UNOSOM II.

Turkish Lt. Gen. Cevik Bir was appointed commander of the UNOSOM II force, with U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Thomas M. Montgomery as his deputy. General Montgomery also retained his position as commander of U.S. Forces in Somalia (USFORSOM) under Marine Corps General Joseph P. Hoar, CENTCOM commander in chief. Thus the U.S. forces retained their own national chain of command while inserting themselves into the UN structure. Only if the forces were committed to any combat operation would U.S. units fall under the tactical control (TACON) of the United Nations. Even in those circumstances, however, with the deputy commander of the UN force an American, U.S. national interests would remain protected. By October 1993 UNOSOM II consisted of over 16,000 peacekeepers from 21 nations. This number would jump to 29,732 soldiers from 29 nations by mid-November with the arrival of over 17,000 additional U.S. personnel as part of a U.S. joint task force.

The slow passage of Security Council Resolution 814 left all parties with little time to plan for an orderly transition, set for 4 May. It took time to fill the UN positions for the new force and, by all accounts, the handover of the mission was poorly done with only 30 percent of the UN staff in place on the date of transfer. However, despite the challenges of transition, General Bir assumed command of forces in Somalia on 4 May 1993 as UNOSOM II assumed the mission. In support of UNOSOM II, the United States provided a substantial logistics structure (consisting of about 2,600 troops) and a small special operations element. The U.S. military also provided a 1,100-soldier ground-

based quick reaction force (QRF) for UNOSOM II, consisting of a brigade-level headquarters from the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum. Jonathan Howe, a retired U.S. admiral, was appointed the new UN envoy to Somalia with wide-ranging powers.

It quickly became apparent that Aideed had little respect for the new organization, the UN, or Admiral Howe. On 5 June 1993, his Somalia National Alliance forces ambushed and killed 24 Pakistani soldiers assigned to UNOSOM II. Another 44 were wounded. The following day, the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 837 adopting a more aggressive military stance toward Aideed and asking member states for more troops and equipment. In Mogadishu, Pakistani and Italian forces conducted heavy armored patrols throughout the city, concentrating on the areas near the ambush site. Also on 6 June, General Hoar asked the Joint Staff to send four Air Force AC–130 gunships, special C–130 cargo planes modified for direct ground support, to carry out air strikes against the Somalis. The gunships deployed on 7 June and remained until 14 July, flying a total of thirty-two interdiction, reconnaissance, and PSYOP missions in support of UNOSOM II. Eight of those missions were combat sorties flown over the streets of Mogadishu between 11 and 17 June. As part of the initial strike against Aideed, three gunships flew over Mogadishu on 11–12 June and used their 105-mm. and 40-mm. cannons to demolish two weapons storage facilities and cripple Radio Mogadishu, Aideed's propaganda station, by destroying its transmission capability. On 13, 14, and 17 June several additional AC–130 missions concentrated on destroying weapons storage areas and vehicle compounds belonging to Aideed and his key supporters. On 17 June Admiral Howe issued a warrant for Aideed's arrest and authorized a $25,000 reward. This only served to harden the political lines in Mogadishu. Skirmishing between UN and U.S. elements and Aideed's Habr Gidr subclan continued, and on 12 July, in a direct challenge to Aideed's leadership, the American QRF attacked a major Aideed compound with helicopter gunships. After the raid, a hostile crowd near the compound killed four western journalists covering the action, displaying their bodies for the world to see.

Immediately, UNOSOM II Force Command focused its intelligence and operational capability on locating, capturing, and arresting Aideed and any of his supporters whom it deemed responsible for the attacks of June and July. U.S. Task Force 3–25 Aviation was designated the command and control element and established three teams to conduct operations to capture Aideed: Team Attack, Team Snatch, and Team Secure. Composed of attack, scout, and cargo helicopters with



On the Alert, *Jeffrey Manuszak, 1994*

snipers and a scout platoon, they were to conduct continuous intelligence surveillance of Aideed, leading to an attack on his escort convoy when he was traveling around the city and most vulnerable. Team Attack would destroy the lead and trail vehicles, Team Snatch would then capture Aideed, and Team Secure would provide ground security by occupying blocking positions to prevent civilians from entering while keeping targeted individuals in the ambush site. However, despite several alerts, Aideed began lowering his profile in the city and was seldom noted moving around.

Aideed did not take this personal threat to him lying down. On 8 August his forces detonated a mine under a passing U.S. Military Police (MP) vehicle on Jialle-Siaad Street in Mogadishu killing four U.S. MPs. As the military situation worsened, the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked the new U.S. administration of President William J. Clinton to assist him in capturing Aideed.

On 22 August 1993, the new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, directed the deployment of a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) to Somalia in response to attacks made by Aideed supporters upon American and UNOSOM forces and installations. The JSOTF,

named Task Force Ranger, had the mission of capturing Aideed and his key lieutenants and turning them over to UNOSOM II forces. The task would prove extraordinarily difficult, for Aideed had gone underground after the AC–130 air raids and ground assaults on his strongholds in June and July.

The command and control structure of TF Ranger evolved during its time in theater. It eventually was a carefully worked out arrangement that ensured coordination of American elements on the ground without compromising its security or U.S. national interests. In accord with the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, the unified commander (in this case, General Hoar) had command and control over all U.S. military resources in theater, including the units supporting UNOSOM II and TF Ranger. However, TF Ranger did not report to General Montgomery, the U.S. commander on the ground in Somalia who was dual-hatted as the UNOSOM II deputy commander. Instead, General Hoar had the TF Ranger commander, Maj. Gen. William F. Garrison, report to him directly. Thus, TF Ranger, as a strategic U.S. asset, did not fall under the UNOSOM II commander but rather remained strictly under American operational command and control. For his part, after an initial misstep during a poorly coordinated mission that hit a UN compound, General Garrison worked to ensure that he coordinated all TF Ranger operations with General Montgomery. He also closely tied in his force to the U.S. QRF by exchanging liaison officers.

All major elements of TF Ranger were in Somalia by 28 August. The task force consisted of special operations ground forces, special operations helicopters, U.S. Air Force special tactics personnel, and U.S. Navy Seals. During August and September 1993, the task force conducted six missions into Mogadishu, all of which were tactical successes, although in one instance the task force members mistakenly raided an unlisted UN facility and temporarily restrained some UN employees. The raids were launched by day and night and used both helicopters and vehicles to reach their targets. During one of these operations, a raid near Digfer Hospital on 21 September, Osman Atto, one of Aideed's closest advisers and his chief financial aide, was captured. The operation went smoothly, but for the first time the U.S. Rangers received massed rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire from nearby Somali militia. Although Aideed himself remained free, the cumulative result of these efforts was to severely hamper his movements and effectiveness. However, his forces were also showing a greater willingness to engage TF Ranger elements with heavy small arms and rocket fire.

The situation in Mogadishu worsened even as the raids continued. In one of the most violent and costly incidents, on 8 September U.S. and Pakistani soldiers were clearing roadblocks near a site known as the Cigarette Factory when they were attacked by Somali militia using 106-mm. recoilless rifles, RPGs, and small arms. It took extensive fires from ground and aviation units to suppress the enemy fire. Later that same day, near an abandoned allied checkpoint, the same clearing element was again attacked by militiamen, this time joined by a mob of approximately 1,000 Somali civilians. Six UNOSOM II soldiers were injured. On 16 and 21 September two roadblock-clearing teams were attacked on 21 October Road. The team attacked on 21 September was a Pakistani element, and it lost an armored personnel carrier and suffered nine casualties, including two killed. On 25 September a U.S. Black Hawk helicopter was shot down and three soldiers killed: one from the 25th Aviation Regiment, Fort Drum, and two from the 101st Aviation Regiment, Fort Campbell, Kentucky. U.S. and Pakistani forces secured the area and evacuated the casualties under fire. Particularly unsettling was the fact that the Somalis shot down the helicopter using simple RPGs, normally used to attack armored vehicles. This fact did not bode well for the helicopter raids of TF Ranger.

On 3 October TF Ranger launched its seventh mission, this time into Aideed's stronghold in the so-called Black Sea slum district, near the Bakara Market to capture two of his key lieutenants. Helicopters carrying assault and blocking forces launched around 1530 from the task force compound at the western end of Mogadishu airport, with a ground convoy moving out three minutes later. By 1542 the ground forces had arrived at the target location, near the Olympic Hotel. *(Map 3)* The blocking force quickly established perimeter positions while the assault force searched the compound for Aideed's supporters. Both came under increasingly heavy enemy fire, more intense than during previous raids. The assault team captured twenty-four Somalis and was about to load them onto the convoy trucks when a circling MH–60 Black Hawk was hit by an RPG and crashed about three blocks from the target location. Almost immediately, one six-man element of the blocking force, as well as a small MH–6 assault helicopter and a modified MH–60 Black Hawk carrying a fifteen-man combat search and rescue (CSAR) team, went to the scene. The MH–6 crew arrived first, landed in a narrow alley in the middle of a firefight, and evacuated two wounded soldiers to a military field hospital. Next, the six-man Ranger blocking element arrived on foot, followed by the CSAR helicopter. As the last two members of the search and rescue team were sliding down the fast ropes to the crash site, their helicopter was also hit by an RPG,


PAKISTANI HQ
Stadium
21 October Road
Armed Forces Street
BLACK SEA AREA
Crash Site #1
Olympic Hotel
Crash Site #2
National Street
Shalalawi St
Hawal Wadag St
Maxud Herbi
Via Lenin
Via Agfoye
Via Nigeria
K4 Circle
Via Moscow
NEW PORT FACILITY
MOGADISHU AIRPORT
HQ TASK FORCE RANGER
MOGADISHU
3–4 October 1993
0
1 Mile
0
1 Kilometer

MAP 3

but somehow the pilot kept the helicopter steady until the two reached the ground safely and then nursed the helicopter back to the airport.

The situation now worsened. Ground fire struck two more MH–60s, with one going down less than a mile south of the first destroyed helicopter while the other limped to safety at the airport. A Somali mob overran this second crash site and, despite a heroic defense, killed everyone except one of the pilots, whom they took prisoner. Two defenders at this location, M. Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sfc. Randall Shughart, were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for their sacrifice.

Meanwhile, after loading the detainees on the ground convoy trucks, the remaining assault and blocking forces moved on foot to the first crash area, passing through heavy fire that wounded a number of soldiers, and occupied buildings south and southwest of the downed helicopter. There they established defensive positions, laying down suppressive fire to hold the Somalis at bay, and treated their wounded while working to free the pilot's body from the wreckage. Taking a different route, the ground convoy force with the detainees loaded in trucks attempted to reach the first crash site from the north. Unable to find it among the narrow, winding alleyways, they came under withering small arms and RPG fire. Finally, after suffering numerous casualties, losing two 5-ton trucks, and sustaining substantial damage to the other vehicles, the convoy commander decided to return to the airfield.

On the way, the returning convoy encountered a second convoy consisting of the task force's internal quick reaction element. This pick-up force of Ranger and Special Forces support personnel had left the airport in hopes of reaching the site of the second crash. This element loaded some of the casualties of the first convoy onto its vehicles and both returned to base. About this time, the U.S. QRF for the UN, a company of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, also tried to reach the second crash site, but the soldiers were pinned down by Somali fire. After a tough, dismounted firefight near the K–4 traffic circle, the QRF commander, Lt. Col. William C. David, was compelled to move his small and outgunned force back to the safety of the airport to regroup and work with task force personnel on a coordinated rescue plan.

While these elements moved back and forth through the suddenly lethal streets of Mogadishu, the TF Ranger soldiers at the first crash site were running short of critical supplies. They received a resupply of water and ammunition from a helicopter that evening, but that MH–60 was also hit with RPGs and barely managed to power back to the airport before breaking down completely.



Sergeants Gordon and Shughart

The relief column was slowly being formed first at the airport and then at the New Port area of the city. It took some time to assemble tanks and armored vehicles from the Pakistani and Malaysian forces nearby, explain the plan to them, and integrate their forces with the 2–14th Infantry elements. The time spent in coordination was vital, however, for such a complex, multinational force operation. Armor was essential as well, given the numerous roadblocks and RPGs flying across the streets of the city.[2] Finally, after hours of planning and collecting forces, the sixty-plus vehicle convoy of the 10th Mountain Division and attached elements moved out of the New Port area north to National Street, the Pakistani tanks in the lead. Closely followed by circling AH–1 Cobra gunships, command and control UH–60s, and reconnaissance OH–58A helicopters, the convoy moved in fits and starts along National Street toward the crash sites. Accidentally, two of the Malaysian armored personnel carriers with soldiers from the 2d Platoon,

[2] General Montgomery had discussed additional mechanized and armored units with CINCCENT in August and had formally requested a mechanized infantry team with a platoon of tanks and an artillery battery in early September. However, CINCCENT deleted the artillery before forwarding the request to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and, despite the chairman's recommendation for approval, Secretary of Defense Aspin disapproved the request in late September.

Company A, 2–14th Infantry, turned south off National and were ambushed. The soldiers moved quickly into the cover of nearby buildings. It would be four hours before they were rescued. The rest of the convoy continued up National and turned north on Shalalawi Street past the Olympic Hotel toward the first crash site. The 10th Mountain "Lightfighters" in the Malaysian armored personnel carriers broke through to the site at 0155 on 4 October. The combined Ranger–Special Forces–mountain infantry force worked until dawn to free the pilot's body, receiving grenade and small arms fire throughout the night. Close fire support by AH–6 and AH–1 attack helicopters, in some instances firing 2.75-inch rockets, helped keep the enemy at bay during those long hours of darkness. Company A, 2–14th Infantry, less its second platoon, reached the second crash site, but no trace could be found of the lost soldiers and aviators. As dawn broke, all the casualties from the first site were loaded onto the armored personnel carriers; the remainder of the force moved rapidly on foot south along Shalalawi Street to National Street in what became known as the Mogadishu Mile.

With the armored personnel carriers providing rolling cover, the run-and-gun movement began at 0542 on 4 October. Somalis continued firing at the convoy while U.S. helicopter gunships raked the cross streets with fire to support the movement. The main force of the convoy arrived at the so-called Pakistani Stadium in the northeast section of the city by around 0630. Medical personnel gave emergency treatment to the wounded, and all personnel were prepared for movement to the hospital or the airfield. Thus ended one of the bloodiest and fiercest urban firefights since the Vietnam War.

Casualties were heavy. TF Ranger lost 16 soldiers on 3–4 October and had another 57 wounded, with 1 other killed and 12 wounded on 6 October by a mortar attack on their hangar complex at the airport. The 2–14th Infantry suffered 2 Americans killed and 22 wounded while the Malaysian coalition partners had 2 killed and 7 wounded and the Pakistanis suffered 2 wounded. Various estimates placed Somali casualties between 500 and 1,500.

The battles of 3–4 October were a watershed in U.S. involvement in Somalia. The already complex mission and difficult environment took a dramatic turn with those events. The situation required constant innovation and rapid decisions from all the troops and commanders involved, under conditions that did not allow the American soldiers to take advantage of their great technological superiority. Experience, common sense, group cohesion, and superior tactical training were the virtues that made survival in the new environment possible as the decision-makers in Washington grappled with what to do next.

The Withdrawal from Somalia

In the aftermath of the 3–4 October battle, U.S. military presence in Somalia increased significantly, although temporarily. A company from the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) was immediately dispatched from Fort Stewart, Georgia, with Bradley fighting vehicles along with an attached platoon of M1 Abrams tanks. They were soon joined by the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, with additional support assets. Another unit of the 10th Mountain Division—the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry—arrived in Somalia soon after, along with a Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) and additional special operations personnel including more AC–130 gunships. These forces were organized under a new Joint Task Force Somalia under the command of Maj. Gen. Carl F. Ernst who was placed under General Montgomery's tactical control but remained under the operational control of the theater commander, General Hoar.

However, it soon became clear that the Clinton administration was focused on using those forces to facilitate the withdrawal of U.S. troops rather than use them to punish Aideed. General Montgomery had clear guidance: protect the force, protect the UN, and bring the force out with a minimum of casualties. In a national security policy review session held in the White House on 6 October, the president directed the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral David G. Jeremiah, to stop all actions by U.S. forces against Aideed except those required in self-defense. He also reappointed Ambassador Oakley as special envoy to Somalia in an attempt to broker a peace settlement and then announced that all U.S. forces would withdraw from Somalia no later than 31 March 1994. Shortly thereafter Secretary Aspin stepped down, taking much of the blame for what was deemed a failed policy. For all intents and purposes, the United States was now determined to withdraw from Somalia as quickly as possible. All additional forces sent would be used solely for self-defense of U.S. soldiers rather than for further offensive operations.

Ambassador Oakley arrived in Mogadishu on 9 October, determined to obtain the release of U.S. helicopter pilot CW2 Michael Durant, captured at the second crash site by Somali forces loyal to Aideed. After intense negotiations, Aideed agreed to release the wounded Durant and a previously captured Nigerian soldier on 14 October as a "goodwill gesture." Despite this gesture and a unilateral cease-fire declared by Aideed, it quickly became apparent that the U.S. role in Somalia was ending and that the UN would receive no substantive cooperation from the warlord and his clan.



Soldiers of Task Force Ranger take cover and return fire during the 3–4 October battle.

After several months of comparatively limited activity and few further instances of violence, U.S. forces began withdrawing. Most of the American troops were out of Somalia by 25 March 1994, ending Operation CONTINUE HOPE, the follow-on mission to RESTORE HOPE. Only a few hundred marines remained offshore to assist with any non-combatant evacuation mission that might occur in the event violence broke out that necessitated the removal of the over 1,000 U.S. civilians and military advisers remaining as part of the U.S. liaison mission. All UN and U.S. personnel were finally withdrawn almost a year later in March 1995.

All attempts to reconcile the Somali factions had proven futile, and the international community gradually lost its patience with the total lack of political results. Operation UNITED SHIELD, the final UN withdrawal from Somalia, was completed on 3 March 1995. The United States, as part of the international community, had made major contributions to the Somalia humanitarian operations for over two years. Starvation had been stopped and hundreds of thousands of lives saved. The U.S. had accomplished much in the initial stages of the operation, but the political situation had unraveled even as the food supplies increased, allowing Somalia to slide backwards into disorder and anarchy.

Analysis

The United States entered Somalia in December 1992 to stop the imminent starvation of hundreds of thousands of people. Although it succeeded in this mission, the chaotic political situation of that unhappy land bogged down U.S. and allied forces in what became, in effect, a poorly organized United Nations nation-building operation. In a country where the United States, perhaps naively, expected some measure of gratitude for its help, its forces received increasing hostility as they became more deeply embroiled into trying to establish a stable government. The military and diplomatic effort to bring together all the clans and political entities was doomed to failure as each subelement continued to attempt to out-jockey the others for supreme power. The Somali people were the main victims of their own leaders, but forty-two Americans died and dozens more were wounded before the United States and the United Nations capitulated to events and withdrew. American military power had established the conditions for peace in the midst of a famine and civil war, but, unlike later in Bosnia, the factions were not exhausted from the fighting and were not yet willing to stop killing each other and anyone caught in the middle. There was no peace to keep. The American soldier had, as always, done his best under difficult circumstances to perform a complex and often confusing mission. But the best soldiers in the world can only lay the foundation for peace; they cannot create peace itself.

Additional Readings

Allard, Kenneth. *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned.* Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995.

Bowden, Mark. *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999.

Casper, Lawrence E. *Falcon Brigade, Combat and Command in Somalia and Haiti.* Boulder, Colo., and London: Lynne Rienner, 2001.

DeLong, Kent, and Tuckey, Steven. *Mogadishu! Heroism and Tragedy.* Westport, Conn., and London: Praeger Publishers, 1994.

Hirsch, John L., and Oakley, Robert B. *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995.

Resource Guide Unified Task Force Somalia, December 1992–May 1993, Operation Restore Hope. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1994.

USSOCOM History Office. *United States Special Operations Command History.* Tampa, Fla., 1998.

PIN : 080256-000