

If you liked Beirut, you'll love Mogadishu*

*Smith Hempstone, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya

An Introduction to ARSOF in Somalia

by Eugene G. Piasecki

FOR the U.S. Army, Somalia provided several unique challenges. Not since the Korean War had the American Army supported a large-scale United Nations effort. It was the first experience with Military Operations Other Than War, and the first time American troops had been deployed to a country without a functioning central government since the end of the war in Vietnam. The primary purpose of this article is to give a brief introduction to Somalia, its society, and a snapshot of the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) role there from 1992

until 1995. It will announce a forthcoming book that will explain in detail how and why ARSOF became the U.S. Army's "force of choice." It will also put the role of Task Force (TF) Ranger in proper perspective.

To understand the country, the first step is to identify Somalia. It is the easternmost country of Africa and consists of 246,000 square miles of land located in the "Horn of Africa." Somalia borders Djibouti in the north, Ethiopia in the west, and Kenya in the southwest. Of all African countries, Somalia, with the Indian Ocean on the East and the Gulf of Aden to the North, has the longest coastline. Proximity to the equator and the absence of mountains explains why it is hot and arid year-round with the average temperature ranging between 85 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. With an agrarian-based economy that produces agricultural and livestock products for internal sustenance and export, the climate is important. Water availability is critical to the economy. Somalia's only two rivers—the Juba and the Shebelle—are in the southern half of the country (see map to the left). These rivers are the major sources of water for agricultural crop production in the south. The agrarian livestock herders in the



Somalia terrain west of Oddur.



Somali city water delivery vehicle.



Italian arch from Somalia's colonial period.

rest of the country rely on wells for water. Indiscriminate and unregulated dumping of toxic waste, improper human waste disposal, and constant blowing dust have contaminated most ground-water sources. To survive, the Somalis have resorted to drinking this water and, consequently, are plagued with Hepatitis A, Typhoid Fever and Hepatitis E, all infectious water-borne diseases. Major countrywide droughts occur every two to five years and threaten human and animal survival. Unfortunately, regional warlords controlled the water and other scarce resources, thereby maintaining power.

in 1992 was estimated at 6.5 million people. The vast majority of people have descended from the Eastern Hamitic people of the Samaal ethnic group. Somalis have a common race, religion, language, dress, and culture, and share historical traditions. Nearly all are Muslims who trace their ancestry to Abu Talib, an uncle of the prophet Mohammed who established the Sunni Sect of Shafi'i. Somali society is dominated by five clan families: Darood, Hawiye, Issaq, Dir, and Digil-Mirifleh.¹ These clans provide societal structure and family connectivity, but contribute to national fragmentation. Somalis will not voluntarily separate themselves from family, lineage, or clan affiliation, so there is little hope for a unified country.²



Somali village well and pump.

Western European colonial rule from the 1880s through 1960 contributed to Somali disunity. Somalia was divided and ruled by Great Britain, France, Italy, Ethiopia, and Kenya until 1949, when the United Nations made it a trusteeship under Italian direction. On 1 July 1960, Italy granted independence and the Somali Republic was formed. The republic struggled to promote democracy, become autonomous, build the economy, and create an infrastructure to protect its territory. "Pan Somaliism," had been a part of Somali culture for many years when it was promoted to unify all peoples under one nation, including those Somalis living in

Somalia's population



Somali village water tank.

Islamic mosque.





Major General Mohammed Siad Barre

ary Council (SRC) and Commander of the Somali Armed Forces, seized power by a coup d'état on 21 October 1969. Barre dissolved the National Assembly, suspended the democratic constitution, and established "scientific socialism" as the basis for government. MG Barre nationalized foreign businesses, outlawed all clan affiliations, and eliminated all political organizations except the SRC. These actions prompted the Soviets to increase their aid to Somalia. A twentyyear treaty of friendship and cooperation between Russia and Somalia was signed in 1974. Somalia became the most important Russian satellite in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In May 1977, the United States offered aid on the condition that Barre terminate his relationship with the Soviets.³ This offer was an initiative of President Jimmy Carter.⁴ General Barre took advantage of the offer by sending Somali army troops to assist the Western Somali Liberation Front forces fighting the Ethiopian Army in the Ogaden Plateau region. That prompted the United States, Great Britain, and France to abandon plans to supply arms to Somalia. Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed not to transfer U.S. arms and ammunition to Somalia.⁵



Ali Mahdi Mohammed

Kenya's Northern Frontier District, the Ogaden Plateau in Ethiopia, and Djibouti. The Soviet Union, eager to expand its influence in the region, supported Pan Somaliism and provided the Somalis military weapons, equipment, and training for its national security.

The futile efforts to establish a democratic national government ended when Major General Siad Barre, head of the Supreme Revolution-

ary Council (SRC) and Commander of the Somali Armed Forces, seized power by a coup d'état on 21 October 1969. Barre dissolved the National Assembly, suspended the democratic constitution, and established "scientific socialism" as the basis for government. MG Barre nationalized foreign businesses, outlawed all clan affiliations, and eliminated all political organizations except the SRC. These actions prompted the Soviets to increase their aid to Somalia. A twentyyear treaty of friendship and cooperation between Russia and Somalia was signed in 1974. Somalia became the most important Russian satellite in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Incredibly, in July 1977, the Soviets committed a grievous error that jeopardized their domination of the Horn of Africa; they switched sides in the midst of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict. The Soviets airlifted 25,000 Cuban troops and considerable Eastern Bloc military vehicles and equipment into Ethiopia to restore the border. Barre tore up the twenty-year friendship and cooperation treaty and expelled Soviet advisors,

technicians, and diplomats. A major Ethiopian victory in March 1978 ended the fighting. However, Somali refugees fleeing the war-torn areas became the next issue. By 1980, an estimated one million refugees had relocated to Somalia. Several world agencies provided \$132 million in non-military refugee aid to relief organizations such as the International Red Cross (IRC), the Red Crescent (the Muslim counterpart of the IRC), and Doctors Without Borders to reduce suffering in the southern border refugee camps.⁶

International relief work was in progress when two major events forced the U.S. government to focus attention on the region. First, Americans in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran were taken hostage in November 1979, and one month later, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Somalia was once more of interest to the United States. On 22 August 1980, a mutual support agreement was signed.

In return for a \$40 million security assistance package, the United States gained access to the Somali ports of Mogadishu and Berbera. U.S. military defensive weapons and training and economic aid continued until 1988 and 1989, respectively. Human rights violations associated with Barre's attacks on Somali National Movement elements in Northern Somalia in 1988 cancelled U.S. aid. Without outside support, Somalia became a country split among heavily-armed clan chieftains. The rise of General Mohammed Farah Aideed of the Hawiye clan weakened Barre's grip on Somalia. Aideed's militia drove Barre and his army out of Mogadishu and into exile in Kenya in January 1991. With Barre gone, Aideed and businessman Ali Mahdi Mohammed of the Abgal clan fought for the presidency.

Fighting between Aideed's and Ali Mahdi's factions divided Mogadishu into two armed camps. By the time Mahdi controlled northern Mogadishu and Aideed controlled southern Mogadishu, 14,000 had been killed and 40,000 wounded. North and south Mogadishu was divided by the "Green Line" which followed Via Hiram north, then east on the Sinai Road, and north again along Via Mohammed Harbi. While the fight to control Mogadishu raged in 1991, the Somali National Movement established a separate government in northern Somalia, named Somaliland (the old British Somalia) and independent from Somalia. By then, internal law and order in Mogadishu had disintegrated to a point that U.S. dip-



General Mohammed Farah Aideed



Map of Mogadishu showing the division of the city after the cease fire.

lomatic and UN personnel were evacuated by U.S. Navy helicopters (USCENTCOM Operation EASTERN EXIT).

Constant fighting and drought-induced famine spread starvation nationwide. The International Red Cross and the Somali Red Crescent Society, at great risk, supplied food to the Somalis. Food replaced water as the new tool of power. Starvation captured the attention of the United Nations. Once committed to humanitarian relief, the UN headquarters in Somalia went through difficult, frustrating, and confusing periods from August 1992 through March 1995.

UN involvement in Somalia began when World War II ended. The British Army had captured Somalia from Italian forces. The country was made a ward of the UN Trusteeship Council in 1949. In 1950, the United Nations appointed Italy as the trustee responsible for Somalia. The Italian government was to prepare the country for independence by the end of 1960. The problem was that Somalia was not prepared to be a democracy. Major General Said Barre's overthrow of the democratic government in 1969 conveyed the impression that the country could be united under socialism. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) invested heavily in Somalia's rural development. The UN

High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) had begun providing \$70 million a year in aid to the Somali refugee camps in the early 1980s.⁷ As Barre's power base began to diminish in the late 1980s, he conscripted men and supplies and garnered protection money from the camps. The UN negotiated a cease fire between the Aideed and Mahdi clan militias in Mogadishu in April 1992.⁸

The collapse of law and order led to continued human rights abuses such as rape, murder, torture, destruction of food, and contamination of water. Mass starvation resulted. Human rights and humanitarian relief organizations attempted to reduce the lawlessness by getting the international media focused on Somalia's problems.

The UN did not become involved in Somali internal affairs until its Department of Humanitarian Affairs was established in 1991. UN Under Secretary-General James

Jonah was sent to Mogadishu in January 1992 to perform an in-country assessment of the situation. Jonah's report prompted the UN Security Council to pass Resolution 751 on 24 April 1992. The resolution allocated more than \$20 million in food and ordered 550 Pakistani peacekeepers to Somalia. These initiatives became the basis for formal UN-headquarters involvement to exercise some control over events in Somalia. The UN never managed to get positive control over the situation.

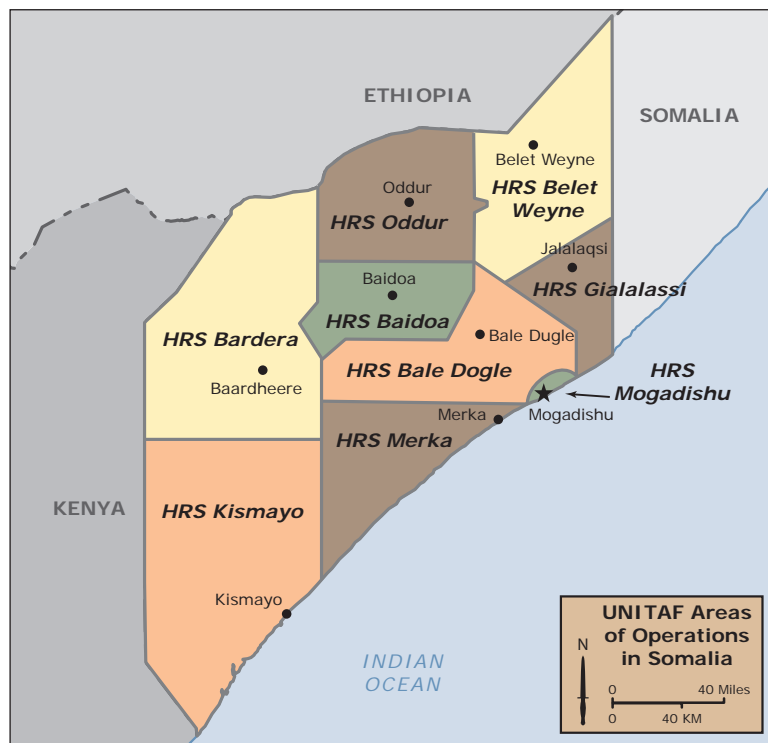
UNOSOM I	Aug–Dec 1992
UNITAF	Dec 1992–May 1993
JTF Somalia	Oct 1993–Mar 1994
UNITED SHIELD	Jan 1994–Mar 1995

The world organization was essentially ineffective. Its agencies were not properly staffed, equipped, or trained to take charge and manage the resolution of problems. During UNOSOM I, UNITAF, UNOSOM II, JTF SOMALIA, and UNITED SHIELD, the United Nations was only capable of directing humanitarian activities and coordinating Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) efforts. The TF Ranger raid to capture Aideed during UNOSOM II was the result of the UN's inability to conduct combat operations and deal with the subsequent consequences. Aideed's hatred for UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali—because he had supported Siad Barre—made him suspect all UN nation-building efforts.

The UN was never able to accomplish population disarmament because the United States did not support the program. President George H. W. Bush concurred with his ground commanders' assessments: disarmament was unnecessary and impractical based upon the quantity of weapons in the country. President Bush believed that a conciliatory approach to the warlords would reduce tension and assist relief operations.⁹ Most UN efforts were



UN shoulder patch and tab



UNITAF Humanitarian Relief Sector (HRS) Map.



Variety of weapons taken at Checkpoint Condor south of Merca by the U.S. forces.

performed by an overly bureaucratic staff that possessed little in-country expertise and could not agree among its members. The absence of strong UN leadership fragmented the individual national relief efforts. There was no central direction. The only forces that provided any consistency during the entire Somali experience were U.S. Army Special Operations Forces. The ability of Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations soldiers to operate independently and as members of a coalition force made them true force multipliers.

Special Forces (SF) involvement in Somalia began during the Reagan administration, long before Operation PROVIDE RELIEF in August 1992. Security Assistance served a dual purpose: it established U.S. influence and promoted regional stability. The program included foreign military sales (FMS), international military education and training programs in the United States (IMET), mobile training teams (MTT), and combined exercises with all the U.S. defense services. Small, three- or four-man Technical Assistance Fielding Teams (TAFTs) from the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) spent a year at a time in Mogadishu providing light infantry, anti-tank missile, and urban military operations training to the Somali Army. These Security Assistance programs continued until 1989. Human rights abuses associated with Barre's atrocities on the people of Northern Somalia ended U.S. support.

Special Forces did not return to Somalia until President Bush directed Operation PROVIDE RELIEF be conducted on 13 August 1992. This time, the 5th SFG was to protect the transportation and delivery of relief supplies from Mombassa, Kenya, to airfields in Somalia aboard U.S. military aircraft. While force protection was the primary mission, the 2nd Battalion, 5th SFG teams also conducted medical and airfield assessments, assisted U.S. AID, UN relief agencies, and NGOs with food distribution, as well as establishing liaison with local factions and clan elders.

When Operation PROVIDE RELIEF ended and Operation RESTORE HOPE began on 8 December 1992, Special Forces was tasked to support the Unified Task Force



5th SFG SATMO MTT—1982 Americans (left to right): Sergeant First Class Bill Rambo, Master Sergeant Henry Beck, Sergeant John Haines, Colonel Marvin Rosenstein, and Captain Jerry Hill.

(UNITAF) Humanitarian Relief effort as part of the coalition force package. SF ODAs from the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 10th Special Forces Groups performed coalition support team (CST) duties for incoming foreign troop elements. Once the coalition elements had been settled, the CSTs, except for the 5th SFG teams, returned to the United States.

Unlike conventional military units manning static positions in and around Mogadishu and other major cities, the 5th SFG teams moved into the countryside. There, they established a U.S. presence, maintained liaison cells with neighboring coalition elements, conducted additional Civil Affairs (CA) and PSYOP missions, performed area assessments, conducted route reconnaissance, gathered information and intelligence, and provided border surveillance (where applicable). Special Forces established rapport with local populations, performed demining operations, coordinated humanitarian activities with



5th SFG SATMO MTT—1982, Captain Jerry Hill with the commander of the Somali Commando Brigade (fourth from right) observing TOW missile launch.



SF performing a Humanitarian Assistance delivery in Belet Weyne.



Sergeant First Class Alan Beuscher, ODA 562, uncovering a Russian TM46 Mine during SF demining operations.

NGOs, and evaluated the general health conditions in their areas of operation. Unlike Special Forces, CA work in Somalia was not officially sanctioned until UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 794 was passed on 3 December 1992, to support the U. S. Operation RESTORE HOPE.

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) CA planning had already begun. When the UN Resolution passed, the CA staff position in the Joint Operations Section (J-3) of the UNITAF staff was filled. Under the provisions of UNSCR 794, CA was tasked to secure ports and airfields, to facilitate safe passage of relief supplies, and to assist the UN and NGOs with humanitarian relief. UNITAF Headquarters later changed the CA's primary mission to one of minimizing civilian interference with military operations.¹⁰ Experience proved that the CA mission was much easier to accomplish when supported by PSYOP.

The 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG) began preparing for operations in Somalia in August 1992 to support Operation PROVIDE RELIEF. Since CENTCOM considered PROVIDE RELIEF a "low-profile" mission, no PSYOP products were produced nor personnel deployed. It was different for Operation RESTORE HOPE. Lieutenant General Robert B. Johnston (USMC), the UNITAF commander, wanted PSYOP "up front" with the intention of preventing armed conflict.¹¹ A Joint PSYOP Task Force (JPOTF) of 125 personnel was formed by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Charles

P. Borchini, the 8th PSYOP Battalion commander. The JPOTF was under the staff supervision of Brigadier General Anthony C. Zinni (USMC), the JTF J-3. The 8th PSYOP Battalion provided the JPOTF command and control element and directed the PSYOP Development Center and PSYOP Dissemination Battalion assets. The 9th PSYOP Battalion furnished two Brigade PSYOP Support Elements and eight Tactical PSYOP Loudspeaker Teams. PSYOP soon discovered that it too was rapidly becoming a force multiplier much like its SF counterparts.

A UNITAF mission for Special Forces was to support demobilization of Somali factions. During one of these missions, Sergeant First Class Robert Deeks, while driving a Desert Mobility Vehicle (DMV), was killed by a landmine. The senior medic was the only active duty SF soldier killed in action in Somalia. There were two distinct changes during the transition from Operation RESTORE HOPE (UNITAF) to Operation CONTINUE HOPE (UNOSOM II) in May 1993. First, operational control of U. S. military forces was given to the United Nations. Second, the Somali factions were more willing to violently engage coalition forces. In Mogadishu, Special Forces snipers manned static positions and rode helicopters to reduce hostile fire from Somali crew-served weapons and sniper activity. While SF elements assisted in maintaining order in Mogadishu, UNITAF established a Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) on 11 December 92. The CMOC was co-located with the Headquarters UN Operation Somalia Humanitarian Operations Center. By 13 December 1992, a CA Tactical Headquarters Support Team of six personnel that arrived to augment the CMOC operated by the UNITAF J-3. The

Staff Sergeant Jimmie Wilson, ODA 562, checking for mines with a mine detector near Belet Weyne.



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5th SFG beret flash



96th CAB DUI



9th POB DUI



8th POB DUI



9th PSYOP Battalion HMMWV mounted with loudspeakers escorted by 10th Mountain troops broadcasting in Kismayo.

CMOC became the focal point for all Somali humanitarian relief operations and the direct liaison to the JTF headquarters.¹² To provide CA assistance to coalition and U.S. military units and NGOs in the countryside, Company C, 96th CA Battalion sent six Direct Support Teams of four men each to various locations in Somalia.

The JPOTF, based on LTG Johnston's guidance, arrived in Somalia with two major themes: the JTF could carry out its promises and could meet force with force if necessary, and the JTF treated all groups equally during the humanitarian operations. Several mediums were to be used. The most effective PSYOP products proved to be face-to-face discussions, radio and loudspeaker broadcasts, leaflets, posters, coloring books, and handbills. The most successful were newspaper and radio broadcasts. Both were labeled "RAJO" which is the Somali word for truth. During RESTORE HOPE, PSYOP applied pressure on Aideed to reduce violence in Mogadishu, and tried to convince the Somali people to cooperate with UNITAF and its coalition forces.¹³

On 4 May 1993, the UN assumed full control of mili-



Special Forces sniper doing pre-mission preparation for "Eyes Over Mogadishu" mission.

tary and humanitarian operations in Somalia as part of Operation CONTINUE HOPE (UNOSOM II). During transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II, it became apparent that the UN command was unprepared and unsure how to proceed. Special Forces missions did not change. They had no role with TF Ranger. Only after the ill-fated attempt to capture Aideed failed did they become involved. SF provided DMVs with TOW anti-tank missiles to the quick reaction force and their medics to assist at the U.S. military hospital in October 1993.

The CA profile was lowered to preclude further "mission creep." The CA presence during CONTINUE HOPE consisted of a major (O-4), a three-man Direct Support Team (DST) to fulfill G-5 and S-5 (CA officer) staff requirements, and another DST with the quick reaction force. CA personnel rotated every ninety days. This policy prevailed until December 1993 when a Reserve component DST (39A) arrived in Somalia. It stayed until the CA mission was declared ended four months later.

The UN had no internal PSYOP capability. The UN command wanted the UNITAF PSYOP personnel and equipment to stay and perform the same missions for



Sergeant First Class Robert Deeks, ODA 562 SF medic, treating boy.

Special Forces sniper position K-7 in Mogadishu.





CA soldier distributing humanitarian relief supplies.



PSYOP leaflet drop.



CADST-34. Left to Right: (rear) Major Robert Biller, Sergeant First Class Pete Cooper, Master Sergeant Eddie Ricord, and Staff Sergeant Greg Haberman; (front) translators Omer Mohamed and Suad Yusef.



Somali boy holds leaflet from UNITAF PSYOP Campaign.



SF medic with MI interpreter during a MEDCAP.



9th PSYOP Battalion soldier distributing RAJO newspaper in Kismayo.

them. The request was not sent until 3 May 1993. In the interim, four active component sergeants remained in Somalia for an additional sixty days to man a Tactical Loudspeaker Team in support of the Army Forces quick reaction force. After the JPOTF was shut down on 4 May 1993, a PSYOP Task Force (POTF) was not reestablished until 13 October 1993 under the control of the Joint Task Force Somalia. The number of loudspeaker teams was increased. Until its departure in March 1994, the POTF coordinated operations and plans with the U.S. Information Service. It was more of an information sharing forum because the U.S. Forces Somalia PSYOP campaign was not as active as it was under UNITAF. Operation RESTORE HOPE (UNITAF) was the only effective psychological operation to go to Somalia in August 1993. The UN leadership in Somalia did not understand PSYOP and how to capitalize on its capabilities.

While the UN command continued organizing, increased Somali violence was directed toward coalition forces. Intelligence determined the instigators were members of Aideed's Somalia National Alliance (SNA). On 5 June 1993, SNA militiamen killed twenty-four Pakistani soldiers. On 6 June 1993, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 837 and authorized Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to investigate, arrest, bring to trial, and punish the Pakistani's attackers. General Mohammed Farah Aideed was identified

as the person responsible for the attack. Retired U.S. Navy Admiral Jonathan Howe, the UN Secretary General's personal representative in Somalia, initiated an arrest warrant and offered a \$25,000 reward for Aideed's capture. Howe and Boutros-Ghali also requested the Clinton administration's assistance in providing a special operations task force dedicated to capturing Aideed. General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; General Michael Hoar, Commander, USCENTCOM; and Secretary of Defense Les Aspin initially did not support the request. However, after landmine attacks in Mogadishu against U.S. personnel on 19 and 22 August 1993 wounded ten U.S. soldiers, Powell, Hoar, and Aspin reversed their position and directed TF Ranger to go to Somalia.

TF Ranger was composed of 440 U.S. Special Operations Command personnel from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, Georgia; the 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Fort



Army SOF soldiers fast-roping out of a 160th SOAR MH-60L Black Hawk helicopter.

Campbell, Kentucky; and other special operations forces. The TF mission (GOTHIC SERPENT) was to capture Aideed and his key leaders in order to end clan fighting in and around Mogadishu.¹⁴

Based on the mission, 1st Battalion, 160th SOAR, provided sixteen special operations helicopters, crews, and ground support personnel (four AH-6, four MH-6, and eight MH-60L Black Hawks). The AH-6 "Little Bird" attack helicopter was armed with a 2.75-inch, seven-shot rocket pod and a 7.62mm, six-



AH-6 "Little Bird" with rocket pods and miniguns.



MH-6 "Little Bird" rigged for a fast-rope insertion.



Aideed wanted poster in the Somali language.



Pakistani M-113A2 armed personnel carriers at the U.S. Embassy Compound October 1993.

barrelled mini-gun. The MH-6 “Little Bird” lift helicopter had external benches to carry six combat assault personnel. The MH-60L Black Hawk was crewed by a pilot, copilot, and two crew chiefs and was capable of transporting as many as eighteen assault troops. The Black Hawk standard armament was 7.62mm mini-guns operated by the crew-chiefs. When specifically configured as a Defensive Armed Penetrator, the MH-60L could carry seven-shot 2.75-inch rocket pods and/or wing-mounted 30mm M-230 chain guns.

Six attempts were made to capture Aideed between 29 August and 21 September 1993. Several of Aideed’s key lieutenants were taken. This temporarily disrupted his organization. The seventh attempt occurred on 3–4 October 1993, when intelligence sources reported that Aideed was in Mogadishu in the area of the Olympic Hotel. The TF conducted the assault, but became surrounded by Somali militia forces. After eighteen hours of intense combat, TF Ranger broke contact with the help of a 10th Mountain Division battalion supported with the Pakistani and Malaysian armored vehicles. Total TF Ranger casualties were eighteen killed, eighty-four wounded, and one missing in action. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael J. Durant, 160th SOAR, was held captive until 14 October 1993. President William J. Clinton directed that TF Ranger return to the United States on 19 October 1993. The special task force was in Somalia for a total of fifty-six days. When America’s finest force failed to capture Aideed, it had major consequences.

After the TF Ranger debacle, the U.S. government’s resolve to “fix” Somalia’s problems began to waver, as did that of the other countries providing military forces to the UN. Coalition forces began planning to withdraw. The 5th SFG was the only U.S. force continuously



An observation position in the vicinity of Mogadishu airport.

involved in Somalia from August 1992 until March 1995. The final Special Forces mission in Somalia was to provide sniper coverage for coalition forces around the Mogadishu airport while assisting the U.S. forces withdrawal in Operation UNITED SHIELD. The ARSOF mission in Somalia officially ended on 3 March 1995.

Today the situation in Somalia remains just as confusing as it was from 1992 to 1995. There have been changes in leadership. But, as long as the individual Somali’s first allegiance remains to his clan, Somalia will not progress from a country of independent clans to a unified nation.

As with all experiences, the passage of time brings reflection. Initially, Somalia began as a humanitarian assistance operation, but very quickly changed to one of confrontation and conflict. Several factors contributed to this situation:

- a. The UN took very little interest in conditions in Somalia from its independence in 1960 until the media began to publicize the effects of factional civil war on the population.
- b. When the UN finally decided to assist, there was no forceful united presence to direct relief efforts.



U.S. Marine Corps Landing Craft Air Cushion lands on the beach in Mogadishu to effect the exfiltration of troops and equipment.



75th Ranger Regiment DUI
26 Veritas



USASOC DUI



160th SOAR DUI

- c. The UN command in Somalia was not equipped, staffed, knowledgeable, or prepared to conduct the multitude of tasks required to accomplish the mission.¹⁵
- d. No plans or conditions had been established to decide when to release coalition forces back to their own countries.
- e. National organizations, such as a police force or interim government, were never established to gain and maintain population controls.¹⁶
- f. The most important negotiations concerning Somalia's future were conducted with warlords and militia chiefs, and not clan elders.
- g. Most coalition forces had little understanding of the culture, people, and situation in Somalia prior to arriving there.
- h. Psychological operations were not as successful after the UN assumed control of the operation on 4 May 1993.¹⁷
- i. Somali human intelligence sources were never fully developed or employed to provide information or warnings about possible outbreaks of violence.
- j. Very little coordination was conducted between coalition force units so none fully understood the others' capabilities and limitations.¹⁸

This article was presented to serve a three-fold purpose. First, to introduce and provide an overview of ARSOF in Somalia. Second, to preview a forthcoming book describing ARSOF operations in Somalia. Third, to show that while Task Force Ranger's mission was important, it was a very small part of the overall ARSOF contributions to the Somalia experience. ARSOF in Somalia proved its versatility throughout its involvement by assisting fellow U.S. Army units, other U.S. services, coalition forces, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the United Nations. Army SOF became the "force of choice" for these type operations. The skills and operational tactics, techniques, and procedures learned in Somalia would prove beneficial in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM–Afghanistan. ▲

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