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Pvt Andrew Schnaubelt, USA, of the 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, takes a covering position on the airfield at Belet Weyne, as a Canadian C-130 Hercules cargo plane from Canadian Forces Base, Petawawa, Ontario, lands.

headed north on one of the few hard-surfaced roads. This was the old “*Strada Imperiale*,” or Imperial Way, built by the Italians during the 1930s. As the task force left the city, the light of dawn revealed a verdant countryside where the road paralleled the Shebelle. Armed sentries guarded large tracts of sorghum and other crops. Helicopter gunships would occasionally fly low over the length of the convoy. Interesting historical monuments were located every 10 kilometers along the roadside; these were markers of stone, bearing the Fascist insignia and noting the distance from the city. The condition of the road was as bad as had been reported. Years of neglect and battle damage from the civil war had taken their toll. The road was frequently cratered from artillery rounds, and in some places the paved surface was entirely gone for long stretches. The convoy, already slowed by the presence of the relief trucks, frequently had to drive through rutted tracks on the side of the road. Speeds averaged only about 10 kilometers per hour. By 1800, the assault forces in armored personnel carriers and

trucks entered the town. Crowds of waving, singing and smiling people greeted the remainder of the convoy. The Italian forces proceeded on to the airfield, setting security around it for the night with the convoy in the center, close to the landing strip. The next day, they set up platoon-sized defensive positions around the town and oversaw the unloading of the grain supplies at the distribution center.¹³¹

The last of the originally planned relief sectors to be secured was Belet Weyne. Planning for this operation had initially called for Army Forces Somalia to have the responsibility for the mission.¹³² During this time, the Army troop build-up was continuing. Major General Steven L. Arnold, commanding general of Army Forces Somalia, arrived on 22 December. At the same time, the Canadian forces were also preparing to enter the theater in large numbers. Fragmentary Order 14, issued on 23 December, placed the Canadian forces under the tactical control of Army Forces Somalia for the operation. Upon release from tactical control, the Canadians would assume respon-

sibility for the entire sector. The date for the operation was set for 28 December.

The city of Belet Weyne is 320 kilometers north of Mogadishu, and only 32 kilometers from the Ethiopian border. It also is situated closest of all the relief sectors in the northern portion of Somalia, which were outside UNITAF's area of operations. For these reasons, a U.S. Special Operations Forces team would also be a part of the operation. They would patrol along the boundary to keep the competing factions apart.¹³³ In staff meetings, the city was described as flat and situated on the Shebelle River, which was the only obstacle in the area. There were two bridges in town and one C-130 capable airfield. There was only one road into the city, but it was assessed as good for handling traffic. The Hawadle clan controlled the city with a small security force armed with some crew-served weapons and antiaircraft artillery.¹³⁴

General Arnold gave command of the operation to the 2d Brigade (Commando Brigade) of the 10th Mountain Division. The task force would be composed of the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, and a battalion of the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group. The plan was to seize the airfield with an air assault. On the 28th, the Army flew the assault units on board Sikorsky UH 60A "Blackhawk" helicopters, while MarFor provided additional support with four helicopters. Almost immediately following the securing of the air-

field, Canadian C-130 aircraft began to land, bringing additional troops and vehicles. In less than two days, about 1,000 soldiers had been brought to Belet Weyne. On 30 December, the Canadians assumed sole responsibility for the relief sector. The contingent from Army Forces Somalia departed for Bale Dogle, to prepare for another mission.¹³⁵

The successful completion of the Belet Weyne operation on 28 December marked the end of the second phase of Operation Restore Hope.¹³⁶ The purpose of this phase had been to secure the remaining five objectives as points from which to provide security throughout the area of operations to allow the unimpeded distribution of relief supplies. This was four to six weeks ahead of schedule, reflective of the amount of fast paced work accomplished by UNITAF and component level planners, and in execution by the multinational forces involved. It also was indicative of the flexibility of the command in the ability to prepare each operation even as forces were arriving in-theater. Logistics challenges were daunting and required close monitoring of the time-phased force deployment data, but it worked.

There was to be no letup in tempo and no time for self-congratulation. As soon as the 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry, arrived back in Bale Dogle, they were tasked with an additional mission: to secure the port of Merka, located about 70 kilometers southwest of Mogadishu. It was a



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On 31 December 1992, soldiers of the 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, jump from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in an air assault to take control of the airfield at Merka.

place where a corrupt mayor was acting in concert with local bandits to prevent relief supplies from getting to the humanitarian relief organizations for distribution to outlying towns. The relief organizations in the city had not received any supplies for six months. For these reasons, and also to secure another port, Merka was added to UNITAF's objectives and an operation to secure it was planned.¹³⁷

The original plan called for an amphibious operation, using the San Marco Battalion of the Italian forces. The date was set for 27 December. Unfortunately, the only good landing beaches were 22 kilometers south of the city. Those near the city were unsuitable, with a berm at the high-tide mark and rocky ledges on both flanks.¹³⁸ The lack of adequate landing beaches close to the objective caused a change in the initial concept of operations. By 28 December, Fragmentary Order 19 directed the Italian forces to place the San Marco Battalion under the tactical control of Army Forces Somalia for the operation, which was scheduled for the 31st. The operation would be a combined ground and air assault with the Italian forces proceeding in trucks while U.S. Army forces seized the airfield. The road leading to the city was described as poor and very dusty with a possible travel time of four to six hours. In addition, there were at least five bandit-run checkpoints on the road, each generally watched by one man armed with an AK-47 rifle; machine gun positions were also reported on the town mosque and along the road.¹³⁹

Control of the operation was again given to the 10th Mountain Division's 2d Brigade. The multinational task force was composed of one company of the San Marco Battalion attached to the 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry. Supported by the 10th Mountain Division's organic 10th Aviation Brigade, the American soldiers conducted an air assault to secure the airfield, and then immediately secured the port. They then linked up with the Italian forces that were proceeding overland escorting a convoy of relief supplies. The American soldiers and the Italians escorted the convoy to the outlying town of Qoryooley, the site of a refugee camp where the food was needed.¹⁴⁰

Thus, by the end of the year, and barely within three weeks of the initial landings, all the humanitarian relief sectors had been secured by the coalition forces. Convoys were running smoothly, but there was already a need to improve communications between all the major cities. One answer

to this was the establishment of an intra-theater flight schedule. Another was to establish a road network throughout the theater that could provide for quicker movement of convoys bearing supplies and troops. UNITAF Fragmentary Order 9, issued on 19 December, set up a network of nine main supply routes connecting the sectors. Each was named for a different color. Subsequent orders tasked particular forces with the inspection, clearance and repair of the roads. Of special concern were landmines that were so often encountered, thousands had been laid throughout the country, and now they had to be found and removed from the roads.

The UNITAF structure was largely in place at the end of the second phase. Its rapid success was undoubtedly assisted by two factors. The first was the heavy reliance on psychological operations that General Johnston had emphasized in his initial orders. The visits by Ambassador Oakley, the use of radio broadcasts, leaflet drops, and the publication of a Somali-language newspaper all kept the populace informed of what was happening and why. The second factor was the quiet reaction of Somali clan-based factions. While all claimed to welcome the arrival of UNITAF, the coalition forces' presence inserted an unknown quantity into their political and military calculations. There was some testing of UNITAF resolve in the early days, but those incidents were quickly and decisively resolved. The rules of engagement allowed for protection of the coalition forces, and Somali faction leaders would be presented with an unacceptable loss of men, arms, and prestige if they provoked UNITAF security elements. Such lessons kept the Somali leadership relatively quiet and receptive to the requests of UNITAF.

As the third phase of the operation began, it was recognized there was still much work to be done, and many more important decisions had to be made. In this phase, the operations were to expand the security of the interior of the country through the use of convoy security and the creation of additional distribution sites. This phase would set the stage for the delicate hand-off to the United Nations force, generally known as UNOSOM. As with a relay race, the smooth passing of the baton is critical to success, and this is no less true in military operations other than war. The UNITAF staff wanted to ensure the baton was passed without difficulty.

Chapter 5

Politics, Peace Talks, and Police

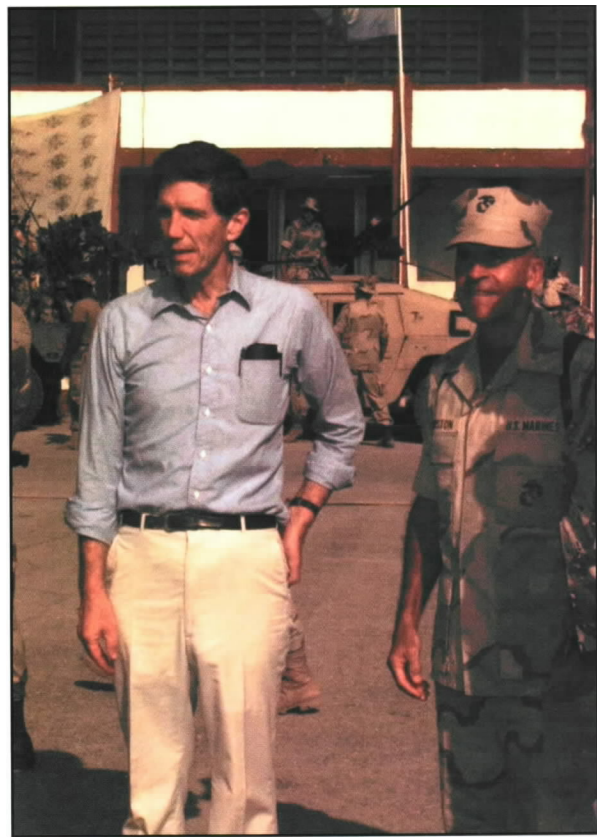
Military-Political Cooperation

The military aspects of the operation were proceeding smoothly by the end of December 1992. The long hours of planning, bringing together a staff, and forming the coalition were producing rapid success. But there were considerations that went beyond occupying and controlling territory. There were times when military commanders, as well as the Marines and soldiers in the field, had to act as diplomatists, negotiators, and statesmen. "I suppose if there is a blueprint for how the diplomatic and political side should work with the military on an operation like this, it was perfect," noted Lieutenant General Robert B. Johnston. "We recognized very early that this was a very, very complex environment."

Carl von Clausewitz, a 17th century Prussian soldier and philosopher, defined war as "merely a continuation of policy by other means." While Operation Restore Hope was not truly a war, as Clausewitz understood it, his maxim was nonetheless true. Even in this operation other than war, the commanding general and his staff officers had to keep in mind that "the political object is the goal ... and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."¹⁴¹ Matching military means to political objectives drove much of what the coalition did and how it continued to structure itself. Brigadier General Anthony C. Zinni, the operations officer, summed this up in an interview: "Operations such as this become less clear as far as military objectives. They become more politically driven. The humanitarian needs force the military to work differently. Terms must change to suit the mission; military terms will not work. Marines quickly and clearly moved to the humanitarian side. The key to the operation is the people; we must respond to their hope."¹⁴²

American Ambassador Robert B. Oakley recognized at the start that one of his greatest responsibilities would be to assist the military commanders with the myriad political issues this operation brought. Accordingly, he and General Johnston established a coordinating committee in which they met daily or more frequently as neces-

sary. General Johnston saw the committee's role was "to tie the diplomatic-political considerations with our military power, which allows us to pressure the factions to ... decrease violence."¹⁴³ The two sides of the committee got along very well, with their mutual work seeming to progress from a quick understanding of each other's needs. "We simply ... didn't sit down and say 'here is our joint strategy.' It just seemed like I knew when I was going to do something militarily that I needed diplomatic support. He [Ambassador Oakley] seemed to have the instincts of knowing what needed to be done up front. We talked a lot and that was the important thing. It was a very cooperative effort, helped a great deal by Mr. John Hirsch, who was my political advisor, and de



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LtGen Robert B. Johnston, commander of the joint task force, stands on the tarmac of Mogadishu airport with Ambassador Robert B. Oakley.

facto he became Ambassador Oakley's DCM [deputy chief of mission]."¹⁴⁴ Another important task for the committee was to present a clear message to the factions by ensuring the coalition spoke with one voice.¹⁴⁵ The faction leaders would take advantage of any confusion in aims or methods.

The two sides of the committee brought dual pressures against the factions. Diplomatic initiatives were begun to get the sides talking to resolve their differences, while the military might of the Unified Task Force Somalia (UNITAF) made the Somali factions take these steps seriously. To reduce the violence and bring the nation together, a series of reconciliation talks were scheduled in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was hoped these talks, held on neutral ground, would instill the faction leaders with a sense of responsibility for the future of their country. Only those who were willing to put down their arms and control their followers would take part in these talks; those who did not would have neither voice in the talks nor a place in the Somalia to come. As Ambassador Oakley later said about General Morgan: "My officers and UNITAF officers have met with him on several occasions and told him that the way Somalia is going today, the way to get into the ... future is not by using the gun. As a matter of fact, those who persist in taking the political power [by force] are losing out in the political future of Somalia. Nothing bars him from participating in the peace process except his own behavior."¹⁴⁶ Getting the faction leaders to accept their responsibilities and to give up their weapons would take a deliberate plan and a lot of coercion. Ultimately, there was a long and logical process of thought and action by which all of these ends were to be accomplished. It involved the issue of disarmament; defining the secure environment required by the mission; the use of overwhelming force when necessary; the assistance to the humanitarian organizations; the furtherance of the peace process among the faction leaders; and the rebuilding of Somali civil institutions. Each of these was a thread in a tapestry of peacemaking.

Weapons Control and the use of Force

One of the first points that had to be settled was the issue of disarmament. As explained earlier, disarmament of Somalia was neither a specified part of the mission nor an implied task. However, something had to be done to reduce the number of

arms. The program decided on was one of weapons collection or weapons control rather than total disarmament.* Of course, from the point of security, there were so many weapons in Mogadishu and elsewhere that their very presence posed a threat. General Johnston turned his attention to this matter immediately on his arrival. "At that point [11 December] we were trying to reduce any threat to the U.S. forces. My primary mission was security of the force ... and clearly, it was required to disarm those elements that would directly threaten our forces; i.e., the 'technicals' that were in Mogadishu or Baidoa or Bardera or anywhere on the road map."¹⁴⁷ In a meeting with Ambassador Oakley, the start of the weapons control program was laid out. "There were so-called technicals in almost every block and this was obviously a serious threat to the Somali people. It is a significant threat to our forces and it symbolizes the power of the warlords, both military and political, in the eyes of the Somali people. We decided the number one objective was to get these dangerous things out of town and at the first meeting between [General Mohamed Farah Hassan] Aideed and Ali Mahdi [Mohamed] that took place here with General Johnston and myself present we got them to agree and to issue a public statement that they would remove their heavy weapons from Mogadishu."¹⁴⁸ By 22 December, reports at staff meetings noted the turn-in of technicals and heavy weapons was proceeding well; Aideed had already moved his, and Ali Mahdi was in the process of moving his to a site east of the city. The actual cantonment of all these weapons took many days to complete, but was undoubtedly hurried by the knowledge that coalition forces would consider the weapons fair game.¹⁴⁹

This initial agreement by the two major faction leaders was used by UNITAF as the lever to get all heavy weapons and technicals in the country out of circulation. The initial ceasefire agreement,

* The correctness and efficacy of this decision for control as opposed to disarmament is made in *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned* by Colonel Kenneth Allard, published by the National Defense University Press in January 1995. In discussing UNITAF and its successor, UNOSOM II, Colonel Allard states: "There is a basic conceptual difference between arms control and disarmament. Removing or limiting the major weapons of an inferior or defeated military force can be thought of as a form of arms control, but to commit military forces to the mission of forcibly disarming a populace is to commit those forces to a combat situation that may thereafter involve them as an active belligerent."

signed by all faction leaders in early January, specified these weapons would be voluntarily impounded in cantonments.¹⁵⁰ The owning faction would identify these cantonments for UNITAF so movement of weapons into or out of them could be monitored. These were known as authorized weapons storage sites. There was a noticeable initial reluctance by some elements, especially Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess and Mohamed Said Hirsi, known as General Morgan, in Kismayo, to participate. Eventually, even they complied, spurred on by pressure applied by Belgian paratroopers and American soldiers in the city. These coalition forces in Task Force Kismayo confiscated several technicals, demonstrating the serious intent and strong resolve of UNITAF.¹⁵¹

The actions against the heavy weapons and technicals soon noticeably decreased their numbers.* There was still, however, a large number of small arms available in the country that had to be controlled. Again, there were no simple solutions to the issue. The sheer volume of weapons made total disarmament impossible. There also were some legitimate organizations that needed to be able to protect themselves. In many towns and villages, local militias were formed for the protection of the populace from bandits. To disarm these groups would leave them prey to the lawless elements or rival factions. Also, as General Johnston recognized, disarming them would convey the erroneous assumption that UNITAF would pick up the burden of their security.¹⁵² He emphasized this point to his commanders in a meeting on 5 January, when Canadian forces in Belet Weyne voiced concern about taking weapons from a valid militia brigade. General Johnston responded there was no intent to disarm legitimate militias. The weapons should be inventoried and local commanders should work with the militias, but UNITAF could not undertake the full security responsibility for the relief sectors.¹⁵³

Similarly, the various relief organizations had armed guards for the protection of their personnel or work sites. These were often moonlighting soldiers of one of the factions, which presented a source of extra income for the faction leaders. Simply disarming these guards posed several problems. First of all, to take away their rifles and

machine guns and dismiss them would cause relief personnel to be uneasy, as they could become targets of their former guards.* Second, the relief organizations did have legitimate security requirements in their work places and while traveling. Finally, as with the local militias, UNITAF did not have the resources to take up this large security mission, notwithstanding the political pressure to protect these organizations.¹⁵⁴ **

The question of small arms thus came down to authorized versus unauthorized weapons. General Johnston recognized that with the elimination of the technicals and other heavy weapons, relief organizations' security personnel did not have to possess heavy machine guns or similar armament. Rifles, such as the ubiquitous AK-47s, would now be adequate protection against the bandits, but would not give the guards so much firepower they would become a threat to others.

A system of identity cards was developed.¹⁵⁵ These were permits to carry firearms. Their purpose was to ensure that only those who were employed as guards could openly carry such weapons. The cards would be issued to the relief organizations, not to the Somalis who were in their employ. The card system went into effect on 8 January 1993.

The first cards were colored pink, with no provision for photographs. This led to attempts to circumvent the system by some Somalis. A second set of blue cards, with photographs, was put into place by late February. These cards provided greater access for the Somalis for whom they were issued, but there were still some problems. Soldiers or Marines who interpreted the rules too stringently sometimes still confiscated weapons from legitimate guards, much to the discomfort of the relief staff and their guards. In April, UNITAF addressed this problem by issuing a card to all coalition troops that explained the weapons confiscation policy and the identification card system.¹⁵⁶

The most effective instrument to get the faction leaders to cooperate with UNITAF's demands was

* This was especially true in Mogadishu. There continued to be reports, however, that technicals had been sent to outlying districts, where they were out of sight but ready for use as needed.

* During the course of the operation there were instances of members of humanitarian relief organizations being wounded or killed by guards over disagreements about employment or pay.

** UNITAF provided security to food convoys, coordinating such work with relief organizations. These actions were within UNITAF's explicit mission.

the willingness to use force when necessary. From the earliest days of the operation, the coalition partners demonstrated they would meet any aggression or threat with an overwhelming response. UNITAF controlled the skies and the seas along the coast, and the patrols and convoys of its Marines and soldiers demonstrated a strong and professional presence. Coalition leaders were therefore taken seriously, and if a local coalition commander said he would take a certain action, he was believed. This credibility allowed General Johnston to implement the policy of arms control in a more gradual way than might have been otherwise possible; as he later stated: "We have incrementally ratcheted up what we've been removing to get every weapon off the streets. To try to take them all right away was unrealistic. We could have imposed this militarily, but it would have impaired the important role of getting the Somali people to take charge of their own system."¹⁵⁷ Ambassador Oakley also saw the advantages of this system of credibility through strength: "We've been remarkably successful because we come from a position of force. It's an area [in] which you have to figure what, in our judgment is fair, and then tell them ... what they should do. If you negotiate, you quite frequently find yourself ending up at a disadvantage because they're very good at negotiations, twisting it around different ways."¹⁵⁸

The diplomatic negotiations and the reduction of weapons on the streets began to make Somalia relatively safer, but there was a need to be able to say just how much more secure the country actually was. Nearly every Marine serving with UNITAF had also served in Operation Desert Storm: the same was true for many of the American soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and some of the other coalition troops. A concept that had become familiar during that earlier conflict was the definition of the end state. The internal examination that had occurred in the American armed forces during the 1980s reinforced the idea that commanders had to know how an operation should come to its conclusion and what the resulting dynamic between the opponents should be like. The Marine Corps' FMFM 1-1, *Campaigning*, published in 1989, defined the end state as "the military conditions we must realize in order to reach that destination, those necessary conditions which we expect by their existence will provide us our established aim." It also stated: "in the main, the more general the conflict, the

more predominant are the military factors, and the easier it is to translate aims into military terms. But the more limited the aims of conflict, the less predominantly military is the conduct of the war, and the more difficult it is to translate those aims into military conditions." UNITAF was engaged in one of these limited operations, with all of the uncertainty that could entail.

The need to define this end state was recognized from the earliest days. If the mission was to produce a secure environment, how could that be measured? In the original Joint Task Force Somalia operation order, issued 6 December, the commander's intent stated: "The end state desired is to create an environment in which the U.N. and [nongovernmental organizations] can assume full responsibility for the security and operation of the Somali humanitarian relief efforts." As military forces spread throughout the area of operations, UNITAF planners sought a quantifiable definition of security. General Johnston saw the definition and refinement of the end state as an implied task, although a difficult one. As he said: "[We] now need a precise measure for success; how do you know when a secure environment is established? [We] need an objective measure."¹⁵⁹ By Christmas Day, the UNITAF staff was still searching for this precise measurement of security, recognizing that reducing the number of technicals and other arms was certainly a contributing factor.¹⁶⁰

Discussion of the secure environment turned to an appreciation of the relativity of the term. Some members of the staff noted there were cities in the United States that had problems with violent crime. Did that mean they were not secure? At what point was violence at an acceptable level? When was any place secure for its citizens? Taking that line of thought, could Mogadishu be considered secure if its level of violent crime met that of a major American city, such as Detroit? Interesting as these discussions were, they led to the recognition that the problem in Mogadishu and throughout Somalia was unique in being twofold. Here, violence was brought to the people by both the warring factions and by renegade criminal elements. The first could be controlled, because it was organized and its leaders had their own political goals that could be addressed. The other was a problem of the greater society, and while that problem might be reduced, it would always exist. Ultimately, then, the end state of establishing the secure environment would be



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Representatives of the Magadishu clan leaders dismantle a roadblock along the "Green Line," the border that separated both the city's north and south sections and members of opposing clans.

reached with the end of organized, as opposed to criminal, violence.¹⁶¹

By 7 January 1993, UNITAF planners, led by Colonel Peter A. Dotto, had developed a transition matrix, which included indicators of the stability of relief sectors. This matrix was presented to the commanders and published in a letter of instruction on the 15th. The indicators included quantifiable criteria in five categories. These were resistance, humanitarian relief, infrastructure, populace, and transition actions. The objective criteria included such concepts as the numbers of technicals and crew-served weapons in the sector; the numbers of roadblocks encountered and the visibility of weapons; breaches of agreements and actions against UNITAF; conditions of airfields, ports, and main supply routes; the establishment of local councils and civil-military coordination

teams; food shortages and numbers of unescorted convoys; and the state of security for relief warehouses. With each sector commander reporting on these indicators each week, UNITAF could take an objective view of how its actions were aiding the accomplishment of the mission.¹⁶²

Reconciliation Conferences

The weapons control policies and the actions of the commanders in the relief sectors were some of the building blocks to secure the environment. The series of peace conferences was another. The United Nations sponsored these with the support of UNITAF leaders. If the faction leaders could be kept talking to each other, with a purpose of reconstructing their nation, they would be less inclined to fight each other. Of course, such a plan

presupposed the willingness of these leaders to accept the diminution of their power to secure the common good. Such a proposition was tenuous at best, as events eventually showed. Nevertheless, the talks were necessary and proper if peaceful progress was to be made.

Only two days after the arrival of UNITAF headquarters, General Johnston and Ambassador Oakley had already begun a first round of talks and achieved some agreements among the faction leaders. At that time, General Aideed and Ali Mahdi "met face to face for the first time, and reached an agreement to respect the ceasefire to which they had agreed earlier in the year, and to remove their heavy weapons from the streets of Mogadishu."¹⁶³ Two weeks later, in a dramatic and well-publicized event, these two leaders met along the "Green Line" that divided the city into factional areas, pledging, "on this occasion the abolition of the artificial demarcation lines in the city that resulted from the civil war will be declared."¹⁶⁴

To help with these kinds of issues, and to prepare for the more formal talks that would come later at Addis Ababa, Ambassador Oakley and the UNITAF staff formed two committees. The first was strictly political. It was headed by Ambassador Oakley himself, and was intended to bring the faction leaders together so they could go over their differences point by point. In this manner, they moved incrementally along toward a peaceful political resolution. The second committee was for security. It was essentially a military-to-military organization headed by General Zinni, the UNITAF operations officer. Its members included the leaders of the factional militias. General Zinni described the committee's work: "We worked security issues and concerns. ... We tried to prevent problems and confrontations. It was our way of issuing ultimatums and that sort of thing. It was a good forum for military-to-military kinds of issues. We were working toward a cease fire, disarmament, cantonment of weapons, all that kind of thing ... and laying the ground work for a bigger discussion."¹⁶⁵

The bigger discussion was a series of national reconciliation talks. On 11 December 1992, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, formally invited 11 political faction leaders to "participate in an informal preparatory meeting for a conference of national reconciliation and unity in Somalia. This preparatory meeting, which I will personally chair, will be

held at the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa on 4 January 1993."¹⁶⁶ * Also invited were representatives of the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Standing Committee of the Countries of the Horn of Africa. Members of UNITAF and United Nations Organization Somalia (UNOSOM I) also attended. The setting in the capitol of Ethiopia was a good choice for two reasons. First, it was close enough that participants could travel there quickly with UNITAF and UNOSOM support. Also, Ethiopia had just come out of its own civil war, and its president, Meles Zenawi, was an advocate of the peace process. The talks would receive his strong support.

Three additional factions eventually joined these first rounds of talks.** Although intelligence assessments indicated not all faction leaders were enthusiastic about the talks, none wanted to be left out. This was especially true of Aideed, who was at first reluctant to attend because of a mistrust of the United Nations and Boutros-Ghali, but he eventually realized the only way to further his own aims and protect his political agenda was by taking part in the discussions.*** Perhaps because of mutual jealousy and mistrust, and perhaps partly from a desire by each faction to not be seen as the spoiler of national unity, surprising progress was made at these initial talks. Another factor was

* The original invitees were Mohamed Farah Abdullahi of the Somali Democratic Alliance; Mohamed Qanyare Afrah of the United Somali Congress; Abdurahman Dualeh Ali of the United Somali Front; General Mohamed Farah Aideed of the Somali National Alliance; Haji Mahmoud Barbar of the Somali Democratic Movement; Mahmud Khalif-Shire of the Somali National Front; Haji Aden Hussein Mohamed of the Somali Africans Muki Organization; General Mohamed Abshir Musse of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front; General Aden Abdillahi Noor of the Somali Patriotic Movement; Ibrahim Meigag Samatar of the Somali National Movement; and Abdi Dahir Warsame of the United Somali Party.

** These were Ali Ismael Abdi of the Somali National Democratic Union; Mohamed Ragis Mohamed of the Somali National Union; and Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess of the Somali Patriotic Movement.

*** Boutros-Ghali worked under a triple suspicion in the eyes of General Aideed; he was not only the Secretary General of the United Nations, he also was Egyptian and a Coptic Christian.



Photo courtesy of Col Frederick M. Lorenz

Col Peter Dotto, UNITAF operations future plans officer, along the Green Line in Mogadishu during a route reconnaissance for a food convoy.

American determination. "Most Somali factions appeared ready to take the disarmament process seriously, in large part because they understood the U.S. expectation that the process would move forward. At General Johnston's insistence, the U.N. organized and convened early February follow-up meetings in Mogadishu with representatives of all the factions, who were asked to identify specific cantonment and transition sites and to establish a time table for implementation."¹⁶⁷

Between 8 and 15 January 1993 all participants signed three sets of agreements. These were broad, far-reaching, and significant. The first set called for "an immediate and binding ceasefire in all parts of the country under the control of the concerned warring factions;" for "the immediate cessation of all hostile propaganda against each other;" for "cooperation with all international organizations working inside and outside Somalia

to distribute humanitarian relief;" and for "the free movement of Somali people throughout the entire country as a measure of confidence-building." Of equal importance was the call for a national reconciliation conference to be held in Addis Ababa on 15 March. The second set, signed on 15 January, provided specific agreements on disarmament. First, all heavy weapons under the control of the political factions were to be handed over to a ceasefire-monitoring group. The militias of the factions were themselves to be encamped in areas outside the cities and towns where they would not threaten the peace. There they would be disarmed, and with the help of the international community they would be retrained in civilian skills in preparation for demobilization. The ceasefire-monitoring group would be comprised of troops from UNITAF and UNOSOM and would have a committee made up of representa-

tives of all the warring factions. Finally, in a separate agreement, the factions agreed to establish an ad hoc committee to prepare for the conference in March.¹⁶⁸

There were some issues in these agreements that would have a tremendous impact on UNITAF. The ceasefire was not the first one the factions had agreed to; but it was the first in which they had voluntarily agreed to disarm and demobilize.¹⁶⁹ This was a large task to which UNITAF and the United Nations were now committed as members of the ceasefire-monitoring group. The only United Nations presence in Somalia was the 500-man Pakistani brigade, so the work of preparing the plans for cantonment and encampment and monitoring the factions' activities fell primarily to the UNITAF staff. Colonel Dotto explained UNITAF's participation in the planning: "General Johnston told Brigadier General Imtiaz Shaheen [the commander of the UNOSOM I force, the Pakistani brigade] that he would provide his planning cell, [that is] us, future plans, and we'd help him in any way to come up at least with a plan to go back to the U.N. with."¹⁷⁰ As General Zinni said: "Probably the vast majority of the work in this area is done by our staff since it was much more robust."¹⁷¹ The future plans section of Colonel Dotto's operations unit formed a cell composed of four UNITAF planners, plus five or six liaison officers from coalition countries and two planners from UNOSOM. The cell was augmented by the arrival of Colonel Mark Hamilton, USA, and Ms. Katie Sullivan, a political officer, both of whom had just come from El Salvador, where a similar peace process had occurred.¹⁷² In an effort to further the progress of the talks, General Johnston and General Shaheen issued a joint letter to all of the signees of the accords of 8 January. The letter called upon them to "begin the disarmament process. ... [W]e request that you provide the commanders of UNOSOM/UNITAF a detailed list of all weapons heavy and light, under the control of your political movements. ... Additionally, to begin the planning for transition of armed combatants to Somalian society, we request the general geographic locations and numbers of all forces under your control." This letter was issued on 8 February, and the information was requested by the 15th.¹⁷³

The problem now faced by UNITAF was to determine how much of this work was within its proper sphere. "We were asked if we could participate in the disarmament process and we felt that

our participation could only be limited to conduct of tasks that were within our mission statement and our mission constraints or parameters, and also within our area of operations. If cantoning weapons, if supporting transition sites, if picking up weapons, if all these sorts of things happened in our area and happened so that they coincided with our current mission we would be glad to accommodate within the system in doing them."¹⁷⁴ UNITAF would not be monitoring the ceasefire. That task would remain a mission of the United Nations, for which it would have to come in quickly to take advantage of the cooperative attitude evident at that time.¹⁷⁵ As General Zinni said in March, there was a window of opportunity for the United Nations that they could not afford to lose, but getting the U.N. to act with resolution and dispatch was an issue that would confront the UNITAF staff until May.¹⁷⁶

The Addis Ababa talks needed more than a good sense of timing if they were to succeed. National reconciliation, like a fragile flower, required the careful nurturing of trust if it was to bloom. The United Nations would have to ensure that trust among all players and be an impartial moderator itself. In the end, this was a major stumbling block.

Somali Police Forces

While national reconciliation among the numerous factions received great attention, the rebuilding of national structures was also important. Within a month of the initial landings, UNITAF encouraged the rebuilding of the Somali police force. Before the civil war, the Somali police were a respected national force of 40,000 men and women.¹⁷⁷ Since they were not aligned with any clan, they also were trusted to be impartial. But the police had left their posts with the anarchy that came with the civil war and the rise of bandits who were often better armed than the police. A few did stay on at their precinct houses, usually to try to protect the property itself, but they performed no real police duties except in the immediate area. Faction comrades usually liberated apprehended criminals from the Mogadishu prison.¹⁷⁸

The arrival of UNITAF provided these officers a chance to regain their positions and once again to serve a meaningful purpose. There was as yet no government to back them, or even to pay them, but the interest and desire to serve were still evi-



Photo courtesy of the author

Two Somali policemen, wearing their old uniforms, voluntarily returned to their posts to provide security at the airport in Kismayo.

dent. General Johnston used one telling example to illustrate this point. "Early in the game, this old, gray-haired policeman showed up. ... He was asked, 'Who do you work for?' because we knew there was no government, no police force, nothing in uniform. 'I'm working for the government.' 'There is no government.' 'Well, then I must be working for the people.' So you could see some spontaneous interest on the part of the Somalis, of trying to get hold of their own city again."^{179*}

* In travels throughout the area of operations, the author also noticed the emergence of the police. The first time was on a trip to Kismayo in early January where two Somali policemen were on duty at the airport. The men were working without official sanction but were highly visible in their khaki uniforms with blue berets and silver badges. When Army officers at Kismayo were asked about them, no one could say much. They had simply shown up and kept away the crowds of curious and especially kept an eye on the adolescent boys to ensure they did not cause trouble.

But it was more than just individual policemen who wanted to resurrect the police force. The security committee that worked closely with General Johnston and Ambassador Oakley also saw an opportunity to establish a police force with its former reputation as an impartial agency. "The defined Security Committee ... came to see me and said the day after the first Marine had been killed [13 January 1993], 'We want to assume responsibilities for our own security. You are all doing things in the city that we should be doing and we'd like to help.' I said 'What kind?' "He said 'We want some material assistance, but we want assistance in fending off the political and clan influences that would try to turn such a force into their [instrument] rather than something that is relatively independent and national.'"¹⁸⁰

This particular interest of some Somalis coincided with the interest of the leaders of UNITAF in the creation of a structure by which the Somalis could start to reclaim responsibility for their own security. The recreation of a police force would make it easier for UNITAF to accomplish its overall security mission and prepare for the hand-off to the United Nations. Also, it would weaken the faction leaders. As General Johnston said: "We felt that [the recreation of a police force] was healthy to the extent that you can get somebody other than the warlords providing security, then you enfeeble the warlords. ... It is as effective as taking away their weapons, if there's another authoritarian figure that the Somalis recognize."¹⁸¹ Of course, this effect would also assist UNITAF by relieving the members of the coalition forces of some duties. "We'd been around long enough to know that if you have a Somali who is a figure of authority, then he'll take care of the rock-throwing kids better than a Marine with a machinegun."¹⁸²

There were, of course, problems in the recreation of the Somali police that had to be addressed and resolved before any work on the project could begin. First, such an action was far beyond UNITAF's mission. It clearly fell into the category of nation building. This broad and vague term covered several kinds of projects that could easily become long-term and expensive measures more properly performed by the United Nations. However, it was recognized this project, so useful to all parties involved with Operation Restore Hope (UNITAF, United Nations, humanitarian relief organizations, and Somali people) should be actively supported and encouraged. In a staff

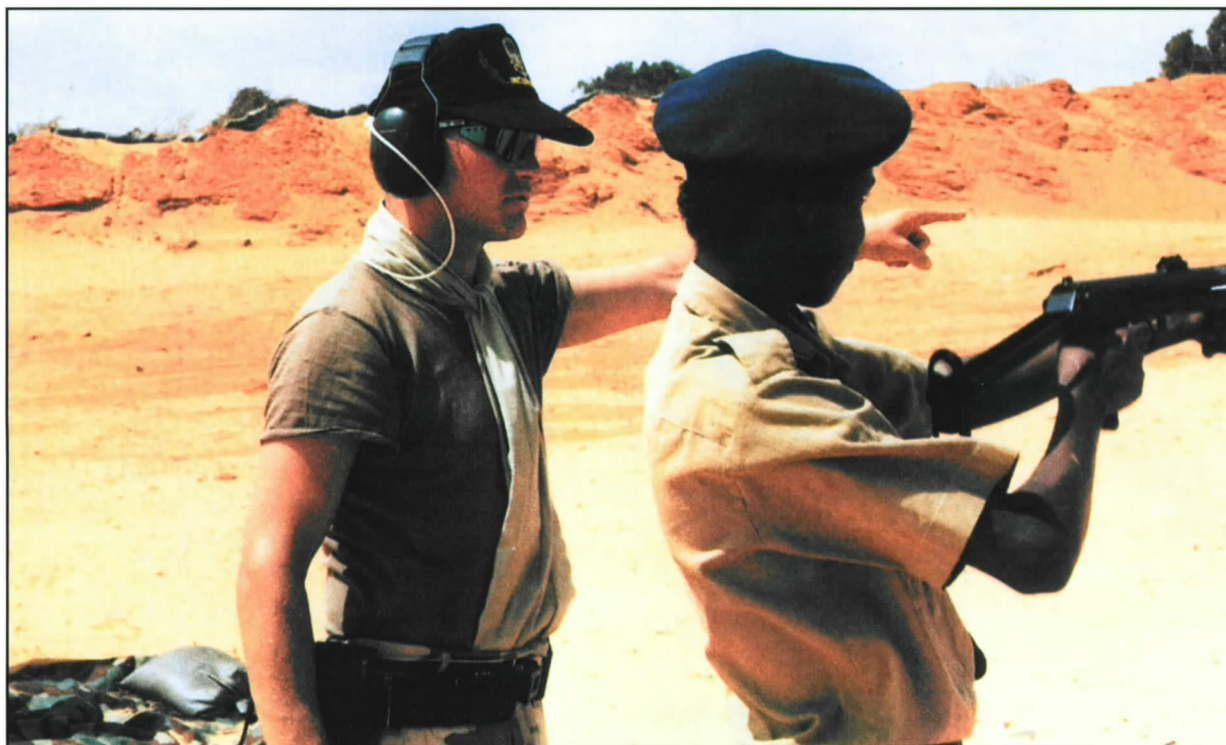


Photo courtesy of the Italian Armed Forces

An Italian soldier provides weapons training to a member of the Somali auxiliary security force in the Italian camp at Balad.

meeting held on 1 February, General Johnston described this as the “most important thing right now, even more important than the reconstitution of the government.”¹⁸³

But how far could that support go? United States law was very explicit about assistance to foreign nations for the training and establishment of police forces. Section 2420, Chapter 32 of the United States Code, “Foreign Assistance; Miscellaneous Provisions,” states: “On and after July 1, 1975, none of the funds made available to carry out this chapter, and none of the local currencies generated under this chapter, shall be used to provide training or advice, or provide any financial support, for police, prisons, or other law enforcement forces for any foreign government or any program of national intelligence or surveillance on behalf of any foreign government within the United States or abroad.” Even more specifically, the 1991 Appropriations Act prohibited a foreign military financing program or international military education and training programs for Somalia, among other countries.¹⁸⁴

Even as the UNITAF staff and Ambassador Oakley worked to define the basic structure of support that could be provided under U.S. law,

contact was made with senior officers of the old national police. The coalition’s representative was Lieutenant Colonel Stephen M. Spataro, USA, UNITAF’s provost marshal. By 27 January 1993, he had met six times with the subcommittee of 10, an informal group of senior police officials, criminal investigation division officers, and lawyers.* At these meetings, the subcommittee presented their views on the rebuilding of the police force; its size, transportation and communications needs, logistics requirements, and pay and food allotments for the officers and their families. They also took Lieutenant Colonel Spataro on a tour of all Mogadishu police stations and the prison. From them he learned about Somali police operating procedures and the rules for the use of force.

Initially, the Somalis sought a national force of 6,000 to 7,000 men. Lieutenant Colonel Spataro determined the national force was too difficult at that time, but that a 3,000-man auxiliary security force for Mogadishu was an appropriate and workable start. He also noted their logistical

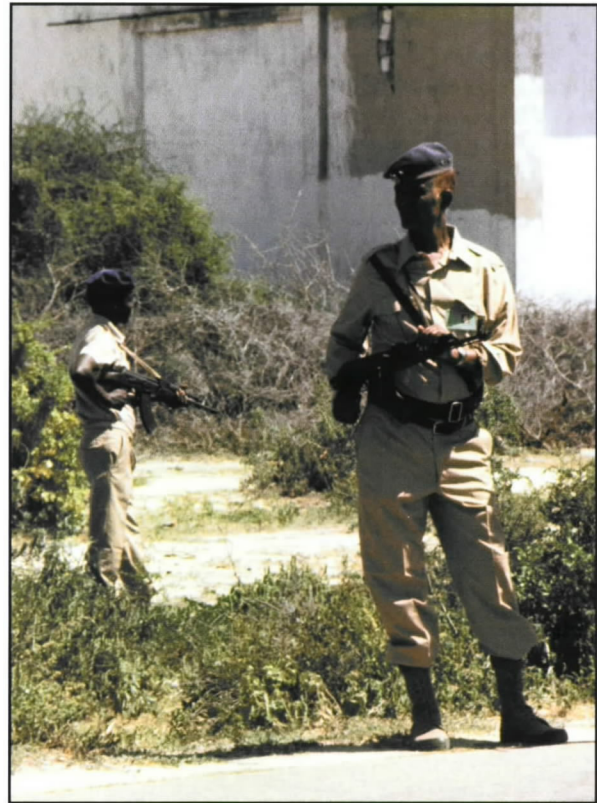
* A subcommittee of the Security Committee discussed earlier.

request was bare bones, listing only 15 trucks, 42 hand-held radios, two uniforms per man (two pair of trousers, two shirts, one pair of boots, one pair of low-quarter shoes, two pair of socks, one pistol belt, canteen, handcuffs, beret with rank insignia, and nightstick) and small arms. Lieutenant Colonel Spataro noted the old Somali police were "armed more like soldiers with rifles and in fact called their personnel soldiers, NCOs [noncommissioned officers] and officers." He determined that "we need to change that. Rifle carrying personnel connote soldiers not police officers or auxiliary forces. Probably need to look at giving rifles to selected and trained personnel for very specific missions."¹⁸⁵

These meetings also provided information about the judicial and prison systems. Two judges were still working in Mogadishu, along with two prosecutors. This rudimentary judicial system took care of criminals unlucky enough to be apprehended and actually brought to justice. They were sent for incarceration in the prison by the port, a facility described as "built around 1905-1910, and is really in need of repair, however, it was really kept well ... [and] operated very professionally."¹⁸⁶

With needs and basic structures recognized, UNITAF could now get down to practical assistance. The new force would be called an auxiliary security force, and senior Somalis would vet the officers applying for positions. There were several criteria for appointment. Candidates must have been a member of the old force for two years prior to 26 January 1991, and would be reinstated at their old rank. They had to be Somali nationals and could not have been involved in any "tangible offenses against ... Somali society." They also had to be in good physical condition. Pay was a matter of some concern, and originally the new auxiliary force would be paid with food. This was more practical than it might at first seem; in a land of famine, it not only provided sustenance for the police and their families, but they could sell or barter any surplus to fill other needs.

There was an advantage to working with an international coalition with respect to establishing this auxiliary force. Foreign nations or organizations that did not have the same proscriptions as the U.S. forces could provide what the Americans could not. Thus, the United Nations provided most of the funds for the program; the World Food Program gave the food that was the initial pay; the Italians were among the most generous of the



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Two Somali military policemen man a roadside checkpoint near Buurhakaba. The men are armed with a variation of the AK-47 and FAMAS rifles.

allies, providing uniforms, money, and training in police duties. The Australians in Baidoa also helped with training and created an excellent program with support from their lawyers. In Oddur, the French also participated by providing training. The Americans provided advice to the auxiliary security force through liaison officers. Very specifically, there was no doubt about the limits of American involvement with the force. "We're not commanding the police. We have neither the responsibility nor the authority to command and control."¹⁸⁷ *

The work of Lieutenant Colonel Spataro and UNITAF proceeded quickly. By 30 January 1993, 3,000 officers were ready to work at 14 stations around the city. Pending the final decision to start

* General Johnston emphasized this in a staff meeting held on 1 February 1993. "We are facilitating, assisting and advising. We cannot, by law, train a national police force; therefore, we have oversight, not control. We are fulfilling this role in UNITAF because there is no one else to take it up." (Mroczkowski journal, entry dtd 1Feb93.)

the program, coalition engineers worked on repairs to the stations and the auxiliary security forces were uniformed, equipped, and trained. It was initially expected they would begin their duties by 14 February. These would be standard police duties, such as would be found anywhere else in the world. Their mission was to protect lives and property and maintain public order. This would be accomplished through basic law enforcement, traffic and crowd control, neighborhood patrols, and security at food distribution sites.

By the first week in February, the new officers were receiving refresher training in the use of force and how to handle their batons. Their first real test came when UNITAF and the humanitarian relief organizations implemented a mass-feeding program, whereby food would be dis-

tributed at several sites throughout the city. The auxiliary security force was needed to provide crowd control and these officers performed well. The program was successful and was soon feeding up to a million people a week, a number that could not have been reached without the police presence. Neighborhood patrols started soon after and were not without their own dangers; two police officers were killed in the line of duty within two weeks.¹⁸⁸

By the end of February, UNITAF was making great progress on several lines. The reconciliation talks were taking place, the auxiliary security force was coming back into existence in Mogadishu, and weapons were being removed from the streets. In the relief sectors, local UNITAF commanders were also successfully pursuing their own missions.

Chapter 6

Moving to the Third Phase

Settling In and Daily Work

As the members of Unified Task Force Somalia (UNITAF) moved throughout the area of operations, they found themselves in a part of the world that was at once foreign and exciting, forbidding and enticing. Except for some of the French soldiers stationed in Djibouti or the members of the contingents from the African countries, nearly every one of the coalition's Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers was a stranger to this part of the world.* In spite of the harshness of the country, many were attracted by this unfamiliar landscape.

When they traveled outside of Mogadishu, what they saw in equatorial Africa seemed to match the picture that existed in everyone's imagination. Roads were often no more than tracks across flat, barren terrain of dust and broken stone. The beige colors of the land contrasted with the deep blue of the sky, across which a few small, stark, white clouds might wander.

The monotony of the landscape was broken by an occasional grove of scrub bushes, thorn trees, and acacias. Some of these trees grew to a height of about 25 feet and spread their branches wide, providing shade for the passing herders or people walking along the roads. Convoys frequently passed herds of camels, cattle, or goats moving to grazing lands or to market in some remote village.

Donkeys pulled two-wheeled carts laden with firewood or drums of water. In the early morning hours, women would be interspersed with the pedestrian traffic, walking in small groups or by themselves and carrying large jugs of water or bundles of wood on their backs. Frequently they would be encountered miles from the nearest village, leaving one to wonder about where they were coming from or going to.

The villages themselves were often small collections of huts fashioned of upright poles stuck in the ground and covered with daub. The roofs were thatched, held in place with poles forming a simple dome. The huts might be round or square, depending on the traditions of the resident clan. In larger settlements, houses were bigger and more elaborate, often constructed of stone and plastered and painted in soft colors.

Where the roads drew close to one of the rivers, farmlands were encountered, and the resultant green of growing crops was a relief to the eyes. Large trees such as sycamores grew in these locations and gave welcome shade to the local inhabitants.

These areas were also the locations for larger towns and cities. Here the buildings were of stone or mud brick, plastered and whitewashed or painted in pastel colors. As in Mogadishu, two years of civil war had relieved many of these structures of their roofs and windows. The main streets of these cities were usually tree-lined and shady and crowded with people. In the center of town, the markets were coming back into life, with vendors offering such wares as were available. Often these were limited to locally produced cigarettes, bits and pieces of unrelated merchandise, fixtures salvaged from vehicles or buildings, small amounts of local farm produce, surprisingly large quantities of laundry detergent, parts of rations from all of the coalition allies (the small bottles of Tabasco sauce from the meal ready-to-eat packet were especially popular), and numerous bolts of brilliantly colored cloth. The women used these last items to make their colorful dresses. Vivid reds, blues, greens, yellows, and other bright hues splashing against the dull brown background made them look, as one Marine put it, "like exotic birds." The women usually did not wear a veil.

But occasionally some women were seen who kept their faces covered, leaving only their eyes visible, which only increased the attraction. The men dressed much more plainly, with simple buttoned shirts or tee shirts over trousers (often of military camouflage) or the traditional sarong-like skirt, called "*ma-awis*," extending from waist to

* There were a few Marines who had been to Somalia before. In the days of the Muhammad Siad Barre regime's ties to the West, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit participated in Exercise Eastern Wind in August 1987 in the area of Geesalay. Other Marines who served in Somalia included those attached to the embassy or who performed security inspections.



Photo courtesy of Italian Armed Forces

Somali women, in typical brilliantly colored dresses, carry firewood on a donkey cart. Traditionally, they play a passive role in both family and political spheres.

ankles. Leather shoes were sometimes seen, but footwear was usually leather sandals or rubber shower shoes. Local elders generally dressed traditionally, in the *ma-awis* with colorful shirts and headdress. They also wore beards, which the older men dyed with henna.

Inland, as water grew scarce, communities might center on ancient wells. There, women and herdsman would gather to draw up buckets of the life-giving liquid for their families or thirsty animals. Even farther afield, solitary houses might be encountered. *Zaribas* enclosures made of interwoven branches of thorn trees and bushes protected the houses and also were used as corrals for the herds. In these isolated places, deep pits were often dug to hold the precious rainwater from the wet seasons. After many dry weeks, these pits were muddy enclosures containing pools of green-topped liquid. Unappetizing as it appeared, these bits of water were necessary for survival.

Nomad camps were very simple. *Zaribas* were quickly set up for the protection of herds and people. The huts of these herdsman and their families consisted of structures about five feet in height, made of bent poles covered with hides or sheets of green plastic. Similar huts were seen in every refugee camp.

The climate was particularly harsh, and the native people had to be equally hard to survive in it. For the coalition's troops, the heat posed a real challenge, especially before they became acclimated. During the hot, dry months, the temperatures climbed and the arid air sucked the moisture right out of the coalition soldiers. The sun at mid-day felt, as one Marine later said, "like it was 10 feet over your head." For safety reasons, soldiers on patrol or other duty outside the compounds wore their full utility uniforms with protective vests, helmets and other gear. This increased the dehydrating effects of the climate. Everyone was supposed to drink at least five liters of water a day. When out on patrol, or doing heavy work, this might have to be increased. Providing this much bottled water to the thousands of Marines and soldiers and allies scattered throughout the area of operations was one of the most important logistics functions of UNITAF.

In contrast to the brilliance and heat of the days were the dark and cool of the nights. On a moonless night the desert sky assumed a deep black that was set off by the lustrous stars, giving them a brilliance rarely seen except at sea. Marines or soldiers who had sweated while on patrol or while standing guard at some sun-beaten post would

shiver when the desert sand gave up its heat after sundown. This was especially noticeable at those sites near the coast, where there was a continuous sea breeze, which added to the cooling effect. In the various tent areas, the constant blowing of the wind also produced a steady flapping of canvas. This rhythmic accompaniment to daily life became so much a part of existence that its absence was noticeable and a cause for comment. The strong breezes kept tugging at the lines of the tents, requiring the residents to pull them taut every day, lest a sudden gust lift their canvas homes off their poles. The same wind also brought an unending drift of sand, which infiltrated every nook and cranny of tents, bedding, and equipment. Weapons had to be cleaned two or three times a day to keep them in proper order.

Native animals were sometimes encountered along the tracks or in the compounds. *Dik-dik*, a tiny antelope, would occasionally be seen running through the brush. More rarely, gazelles or boars might be spotted from convoys heading to the out-

lying relief sectors. Large storks would alight in the villages near the rivers, standing with equanimity close to the people passing by. In the pre-dawn hours, flights of silver-colored ibis would be seen noiselessly flying just a few feet overhead. There were rare encounters with poisonous snakes, such as the spitting cobra and the puff adder. At night, a flashlight might freeze a tiny jerboa, a small rodent, in its beam, or a scorpion might be seen scuttling across the sand.

This was the world in which UNITAF conducted its daily work. For all its exotic attraction, it was still a dangerous place, as events would soon prove. Sniping and harassing fire continued, with compounds and convoys being the usual targets. The large cities of Mogadishu and Kismayo, in particular, were especially troublesome, since these were the scenes of frequent factional fighting and general banditry. The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) command chronology for this period notes: "Mogadishu remained volatile. The [Marine Forces Somalia] elements ...



Photo courtesy of the author

The village chief of El Berde, Abdil Ugas Husen, poses with elders after meeting with French officers. Husen's interpreter, Abdil Kader Abdilahi Ali, is in the center.



Photo courtesy of the author

Hastily constructed for the protection of herdsmen and their herds of cattle, camels, or goats, zariabas were often encountered far from any village.

which moved into northern Mogadishu found themselves constantly harassed by minor incidents of deliberate but inaccurate sniping and spillover fire from factional fighting. These attacks were particularly frequent at the newly occupied soccer stadium and along the 21 October Road.”¹⁸⁹

However, while these incidents were annoying, they were not the most serious threats. Occasionally, a grenade would be rolled into the path of a vehicle, causing casualties and damage and increasing the need for being always on the alert. As dangerous as these incidents were, in the early days of the operation the greatest threat was more passive. During the civil war and resultant factional fighting, land mines had been sown in scores of thousands all across the splintered country. These silent killers were placed on roads and tracks or in areas the unwary might stumble into. Efforts to report and clear these weapons began immediately. But they soon had their deadly effect.

The first two weeks of the operation had passed with no fatalities, a happy circumstance for all. But this good fortune was offset by an unspoken question; how long would it last? It ran out on 23 December. On that day, a UNITAF vehicle struck an old Soviet land mine near Bardera. Three people were injured and one was killed. Lawrence N.

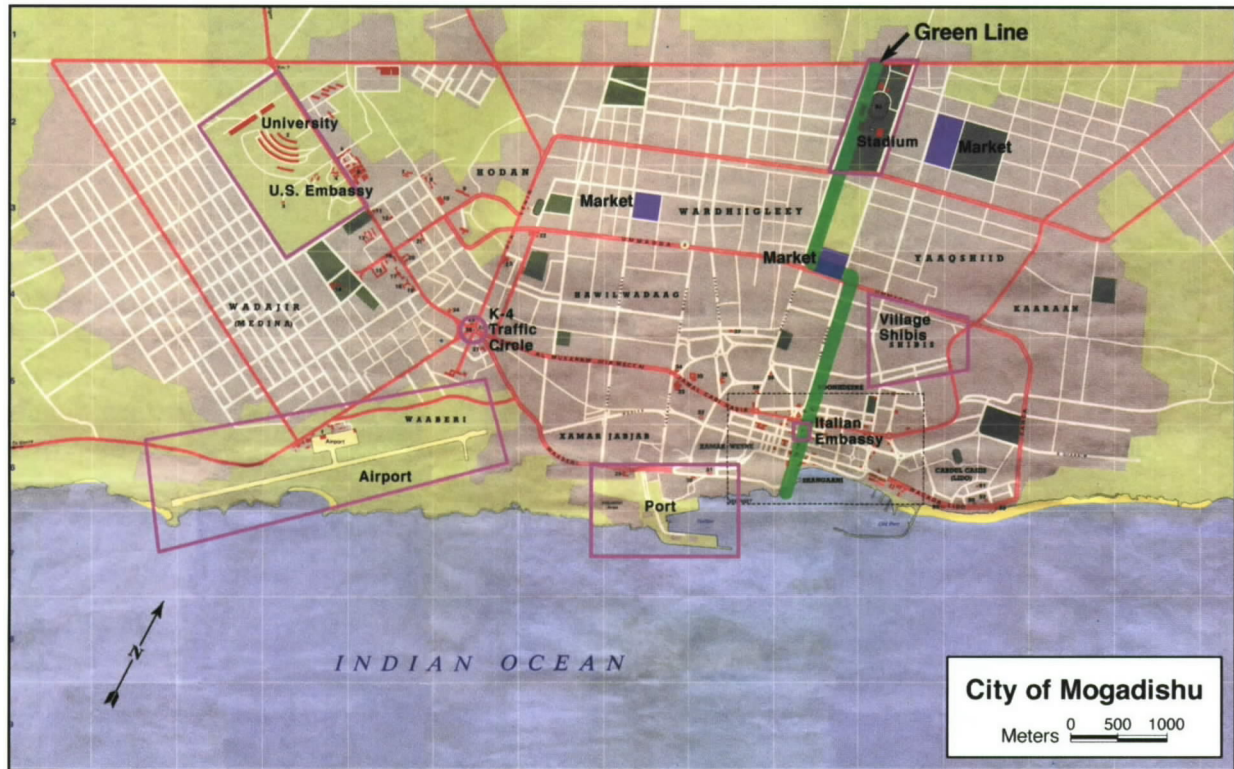
Freedman, a United States government civilian employee and retired U.S. Army sergeant major, was the first member of UNITAF to be killed in the performance of duty.¹⁹⁰

Mogadishu

A more serious and direct threat to UNITAF personnel and mission accomplishment came two weeks later. On 6 January 1993, a convoy moving through Mogadishu was fired on from two of the authorized weapons storage sites belonging to General Mohamed Farah Hassan Aideed's faction. Lieutenant General Robert B. Johnston knew he had to take strong and immediate action against such an egregious and violent threat.

Throughout the remainder of that day, a plan was developed by Marine Forces Somalia (MarFor) and coordinated with the UNITAF staff.

The plan was simple but effective, and by using all the types of firepower available, it was also a dramatic demonstration of UNITAF power. Company K, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, and Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, would surround the two weapons storage sites. Light armored vehicles from the 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion were to screen the area, and snipers would be positioned to overlook the target areas. A reserve force was formed from a compa-



ny of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU (SOC)) and positioned at the embassy compound. The two rifle companies (Team Alpha and Team Bravo) were strengthened by the attachment of M1A1 Abrams tanks and amphibious assault vehicles, as well as high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (humvees) mounting tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missiles and heavy machine guns. Team Alpha, Company K, also had four light armored vehicles. Seven helicopters were assigned to the operation, three AH-1Ws with Hell Fire missiles and four UH-1Ns with 20mm guns.¹⁹¹

At 2200, Colonel Michael W. Hagee of the UNITAF staff met with Brigadier General Ali Mohamed Kedeye Elmi, one of Aideed's chief subordinates.* Colonel Hagee informed General Elmi that because of the recent violations, the authorized weapons storage sites were invalidated and were surrounded by UNITAF troops. The Marines would enter the compounds at dawn of the next day, 7 January, and confiscate all the equipment and weapons located there.¹⁹²

* At the time, General Aideed was in Addis Ababa for the preliminary reconciliation talks.

By 2300, the two storage sites were surrounded and kept under surveillance throughout the night. Psychological operations teams from the U.S. Army's Company B, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion, were attached to each of the rifle companies. At 0553, they began to broadcast warnings to the Somali fighters that they were surrounded, and that if they came out with their hands up, they would not be hurt. At about the same time, the helicopters appeared in the sky.¹⁹³

The Somalis in weapons storage site Number 8 surrendered. But those in the other site, Number 2, chose to resist. The helicopter crews and snipers reported that one of the tanks in the compound was manned and two Somalis were also preparing to fire a heavy anti-aircraft machine gun. The commanding officer of the task force, Colonel Jack W. Klimp ordered a sniper to shoot the crew of the machine gun. The sniper did so, and also fired a round against the barrel of the weapon, rendering it unserviceable. This opened the engagement, which was short, sharp, and one-sided. Initially, the Marines came under a heavy volume of fire from recoilless rifles, machine guns, and small arms, but this was quickly suppressed. At 0615, the helicopters were cleared to fire their rockets against targets in the compound. They continued to fire for about 30 minutes, interrupting their fire only once for another psychological operations



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Early in the multinational relief effort, Operation Restore Hope, Marines in a humvee patrol the streets of Mogadishu.

broadcast. At 0647, the tanks entered the compound, followed 14 minutes later by the Marines of Company K.*

Resistance ended except some sporadic sniping at the aircraft. The riflemen cleared the buildings that had not been destroyed by the helicopters. Major General Charles E. Wilhelm declared the area secured at 0926, by which time additional trucks were enroute to help carry off the confiscated weapons. In addition to numerous small arms and ammunition, there were 4 M47 tanks, 9 howitzers of various calibers, 13 armored personnel carriers, 3 anti-aircraft guns, 11 mortars, and 1 recoilless rifle.¹⁹⁴ All was accomplished at the cost of only one casualty, a corporal wounded by an accidental discharge.

* Colonel Klimp referred to this part of the action as a "bluff." The tanks had no ammunition for their main guns, although they did have rounds for their machine guns. It was believed the armor of the M1A1 Abrams tanks would be proof against anything the Somalis had, and the machine guns would be firepower enough.

The action was a blow to General Aideed's prestige and pride. At a staff meeting later that day, General Johnston mentioned that Aideed "was embarrassed by his lack of control [over his soldiers] and regrets what happened."

The commanding general also told his staff that "[we] told Aideed we view his initiating clan fighting to be destabilizing. ... [We] want all to know how we regard what they do. ... We communicated with the faction involved. They accept responsibility and we don't expect to see it again." More importantly, UNITAF had demonstrated to all factions that "our reach is long."¹⁹⁵

This strong action did reduce the more blatant attacks against UNITAF forces by factional forces, although the sniping continued at about the same levels. The spot reports received every day at the headquarters contained the tally of such incidents. Generally, these were just random shots into compounds, most likely fired by individuals who were seeking to prove something. As Brigadier General Anthony C. Zinni said: "I think it's in the Somali nature to test you. I think it's part of the warrior ethic; maybe it's part of the



DVIC DD-SD-00-00737

As Marines take cover behind a wall, a UH-1N Huey helicopter supports the assault on one of Gen Aideed's weapons storage sites.

proof of manhood and bravery, and of course for two years around here the rule of the gun had gone about unchallenged. I think that the [reduction of the cantonment] sent a strong message and showed them that we weren't to be messed with and I think that test worked well in our favor."¹⁹⁶

The streets remained dangerous, however, precisely because the threat was random. Marines or soldiers on patrol or at checkpoints could never be certain when they would walk into a factional firefight, come upon a violent criminal act, or just be a ready target for someone's need to assert his authority or manhood. Such an incident occurred on 12 January and resulted in the death of UNITAF's first serviceman. That night, a security patrol was making a routine sweep along the southwest border of the airport. At about 2147, the patrol was ambushed and engaged in a firefight with several Somalis. In the course of the fight Private First Class Domingo Arroyo was hit by small arms fire. He died of his wounds about two hours later.¹⁹⁷

Private First Class Arroyo was a veteran of the Persian Gulf War and was a field wireman with Headquarters Battery, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, at the time of his death. His service on a security patrol was in the Marine Corps' tradition of "every Marine a rifleman." Although a communicator by military occupational specialty, he was serving as a rifleman with Task Force Mogadishu, which had been formed specifically to provide security within the city.*

By the end of December, the MarFor commander, Major General Wilhelm, recognized the city needed to be stabilized to carry out the overall security mission. He instructed Colonel Klimp to devise an aggressive plan that would put MarFor ahead of the factions in terms of knowing what was happening in the city and in prepared

* The units participating in the seizure of the weapons storage sites on 7 January were also part of Task Force Mogadishu.

actions that may be necessary. Colonel Klimp came up with a four-phased plan in which each phase would “turn at the same time” as the others, like the gears in a clock, as opposed to being sequential. The first phase was for the collection of information; “information on the city; where are the different clans located, where are the gangs headquartered.” The next phase established MarFor presence by conducting foot patrols, manning checkpoints, and basically getting into the city and being seen by the people. The third phase was for direct action when necessary, such as when an important target like a weapons cache was identified. The fourth phase was for the evaluation of actions taken, assessment of new information, and formulating new tactics.¹⁹⁸ Task Force Mogadishu was the instrument created to undertake this stabilization mission. It was formed at the beginning of January from the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines; 3d Amphibious Assault Battalion; 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion; Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines; and Company K, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. Colonel Klimp was assigned as the commanding officer of the task force.¹⁹⁹

Task Force Mogadishu numbered about 2,000 Marines. It moved to the sports stadium in the northern part of the city, where criminal activity and fighting among factions were common, and soon began its operations. The main activity was patrolling, which helped Marines gather information from the local populace and provided the presence envisioned in Colonel Klimp’s original plan. Like a cop on a beat in the United States, this very presence helped reduce violence and reassured the majority of citizens of UNITAF’s benign intent.²⁰⁰ Another important task was reducing the number of weapons on the streets by raiding the infamous arms markets operating in the city.

The word market cannot convey a true image of what these bazaars were like. Set into crowded sections of the city, the shops were little more than huts of wood and corrugated metal inside a maze of twisting, unpaved streets and alleys.

The ramshackle appearance of the business locations belied the richness of types and amounts of arms available. Rocket propelled grenades and launchers and AK-47 assault rifles were the most frequently encountered weapons. Machine guns,



DVIC DD-SD-00-00731

Two Marines run for cover while being fired on by clansmen snipers protecting the weapons storage site. The Marine in the foreground is carrying an M16A2 rifle with a M203 grenade launcher attached.



DVIC DD-SD-00-00736

Supporting the Marine assault, an M1A1 Abrams tank approaches the weapons storage site. Its main gun was empty, but there was ammunition for the machine guns.

mortars, missiles, and even rounds for a tank's main gun were available. Arms of every major weapons-producing nation could be found there; American, Soviet, Czechoslovakian, British, French, and Chinese weaponry were available. The two large markets in the city, the Argentine and the Barkera, were soon targeted by Task Force Mogadishu.* The truckloads of weapons confiscated in these sweeps were hauled away for destruction.

The first of these raids was against the Argentine Market on 8 January, followed by a raid on the Barkera Market on the 11th. Although

more than 1,500 weapons were confiscated, it was no secret that many others had been removed from the markets before the arrival of the Marines.²⁰¹ Both markets, and other identified arms caches, were the targets of subsequent raids.

The patrols, raids, and checkpoints did have an effect. As the I MEF command chronology for this period noted, MarFor's increased presence drove weapons off the streets, transforming Mogadishu into a much safer city.²⁰² However, there was still cause for concern and coalition soldiers could not afford to drop their guard. In late February, violent events in the Kismayo relief sector were reflected in Mogadishu.

When the Somali Patriotic Movement forces of Mohamed Said Hirsi, known as General Morgan and allied to Ali Mahdi Mohamed, attacked the followers of Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess in a fierce fight for the control of Kismayo, General Aideed

* Fortunately, these two markets were on opposite sides of the green line, which divided Mogadishu into sections loyal to Aideed or Ali Mahdi. A raid against one could be balanced with a raid against the other, thus showing UNITAF's impartiality.



DVIC DD-SD-00-00729

Patrolling the mean streets of Mogadishu near a possible weapons storage area, well-armed Marines keep a sharp watch from the bed of a 5-ton cargo truck.

was quick to respond in Mogadishu. On 23 February, the day after the attacks in Kismayo, Aideed used his own propaganda services, such as his radio station, leaflets, and loudspeaker broadcasts to spread the story that Morgan had only been able to succeed because of the complicity of UNITAF. He also called upon his followers to attack UNITAF forces in the city.

That evening, thousands of people took to the streets, erecting barricades, starting fires, pelting convoys with stones, impeding the progress of UNITAF vehicles, and noisily demonstrating. As annoying as these activities were, the crowds were made up mostly of women and children and represented no real threat to the coalition forces. Nonetheless, as MarFor units attempted to clear the roadblocks and keep traffic lanes open, they were subjected to rock throwing that seriously injured several Marines, sailors, and coalition soldiers. But the main roads were reopened and the city quieted down by about 2300.²⁰³

The crowds were back the next morning. Again, roadblocks were put up and fires started. Again, Major General Wilhelm ordered MarFor to

keep the main roads open. On this day, the main disturbances were centered near the United States Embassy compound and the important traffic circle known as K-4. This circle, at the intersection of two major roads, controlled traffic leading to UNITAF headquarters, the airport, and the port. It was considered a key point and was the site of a heavily manned checkpoint. Rocks and Molotov cocktails were thrown at Marines in these areas.* Two Somali auxiliary security policemen were killed during the disturbances and three Marines and one Somali policeman were wounded. To provide his men all possible support, Major General Wilhelm ordered every available MarFor attack helicopter to provide reconnaissance and support to the forces on the ground. He also requested, and received from Lieutenant General Johnston,

* These are gasoline-filled glass bottles, stopped with a soaked rag as a wick. When thrown against a vehicle or in the area of troops, the bottles break, spreading flames. They are an inexpensive and easy to make incendiary device, named for Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar during World War II.



DVIC DN-ST-93-02402

Marines man a checkpoint in Mogadishu on New Year's Day 1993. The presence of coalition troops often drew crowds of curious Somalis, usually composed of young men and boys.

permission to distribute CS riot control agents, a non-lethal tear gas. As an additional measure, he called out a P-19 aviation crash fire truck from the air base at Bale Dogle. The truck's high-pressure hose would be useful in dispersing rioting crowds, if necessary. In the end, these extraordinary measures were not needed. The crowds dispersed by about noon.²⁰⁴ But more trouble was brewing.

On 25 February, the K-4 traffic circle was again the center of tension. There, at about 0900, some Somalis began to fire at the most available UNITAF targets: Marines and Nigerian soldiers of the 245th Reconnaissance Battalion who were responsible for the security of the traffic circle and surrounding area.* The Marines returned fire, and the Nigerians also began to fire rocket propelled grenades at the buildings where the Somali gunmen were hiding. The heavy firing continued throughout the day. Major General Wilhelm

ordered the area sealed off and swept within two hours. A strong force of Marines and coalition soldiers was called out for the mission. With the Marines of the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, and the Nigerians as a blocking force, two companies of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, and soldiers of the Botswana Defense Force Contingent acted as the maneuver element. Shortly after 1400, the Marines and Botswana soldiers began their sweep down three main approaches toward their comrades at the traffic circle, converging with them shortly before sunset. The action had a salutary effect: the firing ceased and quiet returned to the area. Three Marines and two Nigerian soldiers were wounded during the action.²⁰⁵

Valuable lessons were learned from these events, and changes were made to better protect coalition forces should anything similar occur again. Some active measures, short of the use of deadly force, were put into place. While MarFor had received permission to distribute tear gas to its units, this riot control agent is non-specific, blanketing an area and affecting the innocent as well as those engaged in hostile acts. It can also

* At the time, and later, Aideed claimed these gunmen were bandits attempting to use the unrest of the past two days for their own purposes, and that he had no control over them.

linger. Cayenne pepper spray was determined to be a better agent because it comes in an aerosol can and can be directed against a specific target. Beginning on 1 March, pepper spray was issued to MarFor units, although control of its use remained with Lieutenant General Johnston and only persons trained in its use were to employ it. At about the same time, two P-19 crash fire trucks were moved to Mogadishu to support MarFor. One of these was placed at the port and the other at the stadium. A third truck was ordered for use in Mogadishu and was available by 10 March.

More passive measures also were taken to protect troops from rocks and other thrown items. Protective visors that attached to the Kevlar helmets were issued and combat service support personnel created wire mesh shields to be attached to humvees to protect the windows and occupants. These resourceful Marines also created another special piece of gear to attach to amphibious assault vehicles. During the February disturbances, crowds of Somalis had effectively stopped these vehicles by simply lying down in front of them. The drivers were naturally loath to

run over these people and risk injuring or killing them. Service support Marines made cowcatchers that attached to the front of the amphibious assault vehicles and allowed them to move through crowds or barricades with minimal harm to demonstrators.²⁰⁶

With these measures in place, MarFor increased its activities in the city and the number of patrols was boosted to create a greater presence. MarFor officers continued to meet regularly with neighborhood representatives and a greater degree of order and safety was achieved in the city. Operations to clear the streets of traffic obstructions and debris and distribute food were restarted as soon as possible after the February riots. When the forces of General Morgan and Colonel Jess again clashed in Kismayo in the middle of March, coalition units braced for trouble, but nothing of significance occurred. Throughout the remainder of March and April, the efforts of MarFor and coalition allies continued to stabilize the city. The demonstrations that took place during this time were described as peaceful and some were even held in support of UNITAF.



DVIC DD-SD-00-00770

As Somali civilians watch, U.S. Marines walk single file down a small alley in the capital's Bekara Market. The Marines swept the market looking for arms and munitions as part of Operation Nutcracker.