

## Chapter 4

# Coming Ashore

### *Initial Landings*

All of the pieces of the operation came together in Somalia in the early days of December 1992. Actually, some forces were already in place. Teams from Special Operations Forces, as part of Operation Provide Relief, were providing security at airfields, as well as protecting the Air Force combat control teams that were operating at them. These specially trained teams also were a component of Provide Relief and were sent into the airfields to prepare the fields for subsequent air operations and to control the aircraft. Also, on 7 December, members of Company C, 2d Battalion,

5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) provided security and sniper support for America's special envoy when he arrived in Mogadishu.

The U.S. Navy and Marines were the first underway. The *Tripoli* Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), composed of the USS *Tripoli* (LPH 10), USS *Juneau* (LPD 10), and USS *Rushmore* (LSD 47), left Singapore on 23 November and headed toward the Persian Gulf. Commanded by Captain John W. Peterson, USN, the ready group moved into the waters off the southern Somali coast on 3 December. Planning for the operation by the group began in earnest the week before, when a warning order was received. At about the same



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*Marines and sailors stand at the edge of the deck of the Tripoli (LPH 10). In the background are four Marine CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters scouting the area before the landings at Mogadishu.*



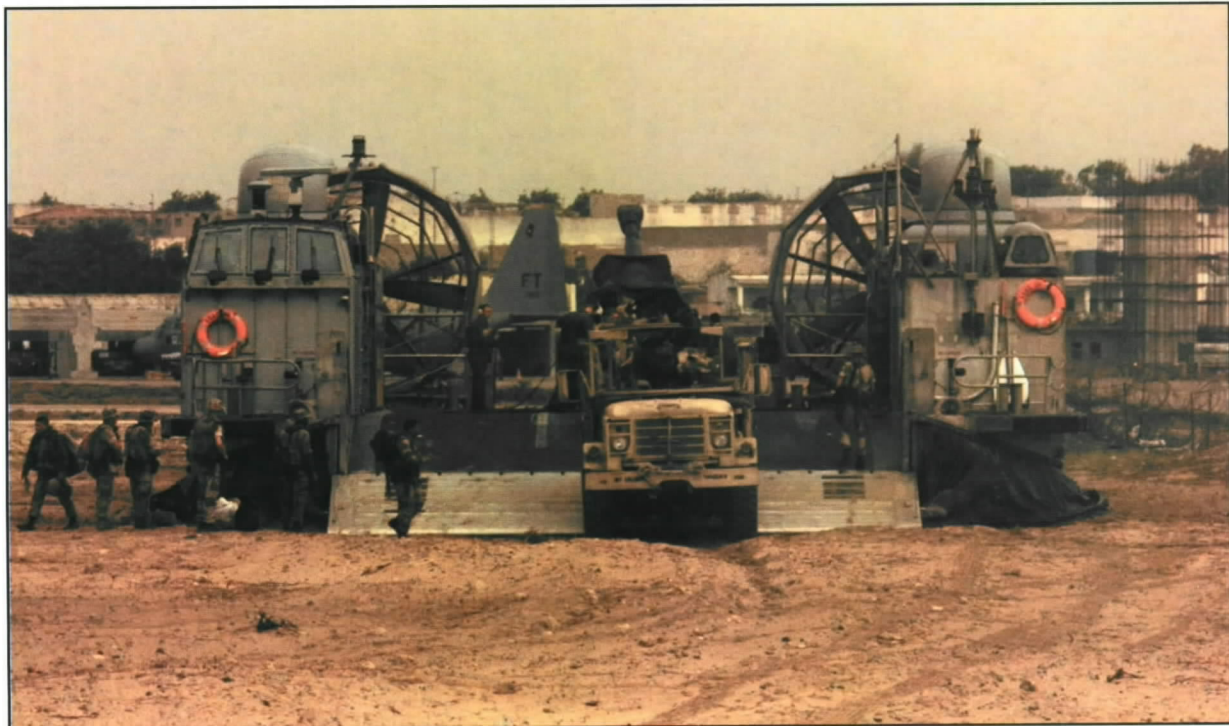
15th MEU, Westpac '92-93

*A Colorado native and the son of a career U.S. Air Force officer, Col Gregory S. Newbold commanded the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, a force in the vanguard of the American commitment.*

time, Amphibious Squadron 5, commanded by Captain Brian Boyce, USN, based on the West Coast of the United States, received a warning order that it also would support the operation. In addition, Captain Boyce would be the chief of staff for Rear Admiral James B. Perkins III, USN,

who would command the maritime prepositioning force. Amphibious Squadron 5 would have the responsibility for maritime prepositioning ship operations and the offload.<sup>91</sup> The condition of the port was still a question for these officers, as was the infrastructure available. The ability to quickly offload, stage, and move equipment and supplies would be critical to the operation, but the capabilities of the port could not be determined until coalition forces were on the ground. In the interim, U.S. Navy Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) teams from the Tripoli ready group conducted beach and port hydrographic and reconnaissance surveys of potential landing sites.

The amphibious group carried the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (15th MEU (SOC)), commanded by Colonel Gregory S. Newbold, which would make the initial landings scheduled for the early morning of the 9th. The MEU had come under the operational control of Central Command on 30 November. In accord with the joint task force order, the MEU “splashed tracks” from the *Juneau* at 0330 to meet an H-Hour of 0500.<sup>92</sup> Every available means of landing was used. The SEALs swam in from offshore and 170 Marines assaulted in 18 “Zodiac” boats to secure the port facility. Amphibious



DVIC DN-ST-93-02668

*A Marine 5-ton truck towing a 155mm M198 howitzer disembarks from an Assault Craft Unit 5 air-cushion landing craft at Mogadishu.*





DVIC DD-SD-00-00670

*At Mogadishu airport, Marines stand guard in a light armored vehicle while cargo is unloaded from a U.S. Air Force C-141B Starlifter aircraft.*

Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment, which arrived by airplane from their base in Djibouti.<sup>98</sup> The company came under American operational control. The Legionnaires would soon be followed by thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines from 22 other countries.

As the coalition forces moved into Mogadishu they encountered a city that had felt the ravages of two years of civil war and anarchy. There was no electricity, no running water, and no functioning sanitation system. Law enforcement was nonexistent because there were no police or judicial system. Public buildings had been looted and destroyed and most private homes were severely damaged; virtually every structure was missing its roof and had broken walls, doors, and windows. The commerce of the city was at a standstill. Schools were closed and gangs of youths roamed the streets. Crowded refugee camps seemingly filled every parcel of open land, and new graves were encountered everywhere. The sound of gunfire could be heard throughout the city.

There had been no opposition to the landings or the subsequent movement of forces into the American Embassy compound. However, on this

first day, the operation's first shooting incident took place. A vehicle containing nine Somalis ran a checkpoint manned by French Legionnaires, who opened fire at the fleeing automobile, killing two and wounding seven.<sup>99</sup> This incident was unfortunate but within the rules of engagement. By running the roadblock, the Somalis had posed a threat to members of the coalition, and the Legionnaires had to react. Soon, sniper fire was added to the troops' list of concerns, especially around the port area. While not causing casualties, the desultory fire was an annoyance and an indication of what was to come.

General Johnston flew into Mogadishu on 10 December. The combined joint task force established itself inside the American Embassy compound, with the main headquarters in the chancery building. With the arrival of coalition forces, the joint task force became a combined joint task force. Later, the title would change officially to Unified Task Force Somalia (UNITAF). In a symbolic and emotional gesture for the Marines, the flag raised over the compound was one that had once flown over the Marine barracks in Beirut. The embassy compound itself was a shambles.



Photo courtesy of the Italian Armed Forces

*A typical street in the Italian sector of Mogadishu crowded with pedestrians, vehicles, and market stalls.*

The buildings had literally been stripped to the bare walls; even the paving tiles had been pried up and carried away. The floors of the chancery were buried in trash and debris a foot deep. Bodies were found in some areas of the grounds. The staff quickly went to work cleaning out work areas and living spaces to establish a camp.

### *Logistical Buildup*

In the critical early days, all logistical support for the growing coalition forces came from what the 15th MEU was able to provide through its service support group, what the allies could bring themselves, and from the maritime prepositioning force shipping. The offload of these important vessels was critical. The *Lummus* had arrived the previous day and was ready to begin its offload, which was scheduled to last for four days. But first, the port area itself needed considerable attention. There was no infrastructure, not even wires left on the light poles. Everything had to be

recreated while mountains of filth and trash needed to be cleaned out. To make room for the arrival and assembly area needed for the prepositioning force shipping to offload its equipment, old warehouses had to be bulldozed. Eventually, 54 acres were cleared for this purpose. The U.S. Navy support element brought in extra materials when it arrived, and new barracks, galleys, and heads were built over time. While the offload of the *Lummus* continued, on a selective basis, the first priority was for engineer equipment and materials. Combat support vehicles and weapons like tanks and artillery were left on board.<sup>100</sup>

It was long and frustrating work. A maritime prepositioning force squadron contains enough equipment and supplies for a Marine brigade of 16,000 men. To accomplish the job smoothly and efficiently there are several distinct units that must participate. The first of these is the offload preparation party; a small group of Marines who come on board the ship while it is underway to prepare the equipment for its eventual offload and



Photo courtesy of the Italian Armed Forces

*The ravages of the civil war were evident in this neighborhood in the Italian sector of Mogadishu. Many of the buildings had no roofs and all were severely damaged.*

use. The next is the survey, liaison and reconnaissance party, which flies into the designated port to prepare it for the imminent operation. The next is a U.S. Navy unit, the Navy support element that undertakes the operation of the offload of equipment and its movement through the arrival and assembly area. Finally, the unit that will use the gear must arrive on time to move offloaded equipment and supplies out of the port to make room for what is coming off next. A miss in the sequence can mean congestion and delays. Also, during normal operations, the entire ship will be offloaded, but Restore Hope was not an ordinary operation.

Every commander must balance many requirements, making the best use of limited resources. In this case, the conflict faced by the commander was to strike the proper balance between combat forces and logisticians, which had to compete for limited space on aircraft. So, in placing the priority for building up the force of fighters quickly, the support troops had to wait. This in turn caused

additional delays at the already burdened port. The offloading of ships took longer than projected because unneeded equipment had to be moved repeatedly or back-loaded onto the ships.

### *Force Buildup*

Concurrent with the logistical buildup was the arrival of the forces. The airport quickly became a scene of considerable activity as more aircraft arrived, bringing in more of the UNITAF headquarters and elements of Marine Forces Somalia (MarFor). Once again, the conditions in Somalia caused problems for planners and operators. The limited capacity of the Mogadishu airport meant a strict schedule had to be maintained for arriving and departing aircraft. This in turn affected the scheduling of aerial refueling and the use of the intermediate staging bases the Air Mobility Command had set up in Egypt and Yemen. Aircraft could only be called from the staging bases once there was a clear time slot at Mogadishu. Those



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*This view of the U.S. Embassy compound in Mogadishu shows the chancery building in the center surrounded by its own wall. Another wall, in the background, enclosed the rest of the compound. By late December 1992, the area to the top of the picture was filled with tents, mess halls, and other facilities for the UNITAF staff.*



DVIC DD-ST-00-00801

*This aerial view of the port of Mogadishu shows three cargo ships and a number of large, medium, and small vessels moored to the docks. The port played an important role during the relief effort.*

aircraft then had to hurriedly unload passengers and cargo and depart quickly.<sup>101</sup> In spite of complicated and hectic scheduling, the buildup of coalition personnel continued at a rapid pace.

On 7 December, Major General Charles E. Wilhelm, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, assumed MarFor commander duties. On 10 December, he flew out of Camp Pendleton with a small battle staff and arrived at Mogadishu the next day.<sup>102</sup> MarFor would provide the basic structure around which the task force would be built. As other forces, American or coalition, arrived in the theater, they would initially be placed under the operational control of MarFor.

The largest American force after the Marines was the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), which would form Army Forces Somalia. Because of the manner in which such an Army division deploys, its movement actually had begun on 7 December, when the first of seven trainloads of equipment departed Fort Drum, New York, for the port of Bayonne, New Jersey. Over the next 10 days, 450 railcars were used to move

more than 1,500 pieces of the division's equipment to the military ocean terminal at Bayonne.<sup>103</sup> There they were loaded on board ships for the long journey to the Horn of Africa. The soldiers were preparing for their deployment at the same time. Classes were held on the country's history, culture, terrain, and problems soldiers could expect. Needed equipment was brought in to fill recognized shortages, some of it from the division's "round-out" brigade, the 27th Brigade, New York Army National Guard. The division helicopters were readied for use in the deserts of Somalia with the addition of particle separators and global positioning system equipment. Desert camouflage utilities (known as battle dress uniforms or "BDUs" to the Army) were procured and issued.<sup>104</sup> Troops were sent to the ranges to fire and battle-sight their weapons, ironically often firing in the snows of a New York winter as they prepared for movement to equatorial Africa.

The division was originally expected to start its deployment on 19 December. However, on 10 December, a decision was made by UNITAF that



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*Among the maritime prepositioning ships to dock at Mogadishu was the Algol class vehicle cargo ship, USNS Altair. Onboard cranes unload the ship's cargo of military supplies and vehicles.*

Army Forces Somalia should begin its deployment much sooner. When General Wilhelm arrived in the theater, he immediately assumed operational control of the 15th MEU (SOC) and the French forces and focused efforts on securing the port, the airfield, and the embassy compound. With the arrival of 1st Marine Division's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, MarFor was able to broaden the coalition's control to areas outside Mogadishu. This began at Bale Dogle, which UNITAF had recognized early in its planning as an important location from which to extend the force into the interior of the country. The 15th MEU (SOC)'s Battalion Landing Team, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, supported by elements of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164, was given the mission, which it planned and accomplished within 48 hours. The Marines seized the airfield in a heliborne assault prior to the arrival of Army forces.<sup>105</sup>

The first U.S. Army unit to deploy was Company A, 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry. The soldiers and the battalion's tactical command post loaded on board three Lockheed C-141 Starlifter

troop transport aircraft on 11 December for a direct flight into the airfield at Bale Dogle, now held by the newly arrived Marines. The soldiers arrived within 24 hours and went immediately from deployment to employment as they relieved the Marines who had secured the airfield.<sup>106</sup> \* The Army assumed full control for Bale Dogle airfield on 15 December.

These early successes led to criticism of UNITAF by several members of the media. Journalists openly questioned why UNITAF was not pushing more quickly and aggressively into the interior, especially to the town of Baidoa, described as "The City of Death," where the impact of famine and suffering were at their worst. General Johnston, however, would not be pressured into hasty action. The responsibility for the accomplishment of the mission and the safety of the members of the coalition force was his

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\* Due to time zone differences, the soldiers actually arrived on 13 December.



alone, and he knew UNITAF was quickly building in strength and would soon expand into the other planned relief sectors. He wanted this to be done in an orderly manner, without spreading the available forces too thinly over the ground. He addressed the issue in a television interview, explaining his reasons and laying the matter to rest.<sup>107</sup>

Meanwhile, the country began to show the coalition soldiers all the facets of its character. Marines, sailors, and soldiers were generally greeted with smiles and waves from the Somalis they encountered on the streets, but there were some who seemed determined to test the resolve of UNITAF. Sniping became a routine part of daily existence; seldom more than simple harassment, it still provided an edge to the life and work of the task force. Sniping was especially a problem at the port, which was overlooked by an old prison the gunmen used to cover their activities. Marines quickly secured the prison area and ended the problem in the immediate location. But throughout UNITAF's time in Somalia, sniping at convoys or into the various compounds would remain a daily occurrence.

The first direct attacks on UNITAF members also took place during these early days. In two separate incidents on 12 December three aircraft of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164, one Bell UH-1N Huey and two Bell AH-1W Super Cobras, were fired upon. The UH-1N Huey received damage to its rotors. In the second incident, the attack helicopters returned fire with 20mm guns and missiles (the attack helicopters carried tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided, or TOW, missiles), destroying two "technicals" and damaging one American-made M113 armored personnel carrier.<sup>108</sup> Such immediate, overwhelming, and deadly response was precisely what General Johnston set in his commander's guidance as the best antidote for aggression by the factions or bandits.

Just as American forces were proceeding to Somalia, so were the military contingents of several coalition partners. One of the first of these forces to begin moving were the Canadians, who had received their own warning order to participate in the U.S.-led operation on 4 December. Originally, they had prepared to deploy their force as a part of United Nations Operation Somalia and



DVIC DD-SD-00-00805

*The cargo from a U.S. Air Force C-5 Galaxy aircraft is unloaded on the flight line at Mogadishu airport while a Marine UH-1N Huey helicopter flies overhead. Beyond the main runway is the Indian Ocean shoreline.*



DVIC DA-SC-94-00321

*An M998 high-mobility multipurpose, wheeled vehicle (humvee) is loaded onto an Air Mobility Command C-141B Starlifter at Griffis Air Force Base, New York, as equipment of the 10th Mountain Division is readied for shipment to Somalia.*

had sent the auxiliary oil replenishment ship HMCS *Preserver* (510) to Somalia. Under the Canadian forces' Operation Deliverance, the ship arrived at Mogadishu on 12 December. The advance headquarters of the Canadian Joint Forces Somalia landed at Mogadishu on 13 December and embarked on board the ship. Their contribution to the forces on the ground was to be a Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group, the advance party of which arrived by U.S. Air Force Lockheed C-5 Galaxy aircraft at Bale Dogle on 14 December.<sup>109</sup>

The Italian contingent also began to arrive at about this time. Their force was initially composed of two elements: two battalions of the Folgore Airborne Brigade, a famed parachute unit; and the San Marco Battalion, a naval infantry unit. The Italian forces were also supported from the sea by the Italian Navy's 24th Naval Group, which carried heavy equipment and supplies. The first elements of the brigade, a small special forces reconnaissance element of 23 men

led by Major Gennaro Fusco, left Italy on 11 December. They arrived in Mogadishu on 13 December and reoccupied the Italian Embassy on 16 December.<sup>110</sup> The brigade would arrive in full force by 24 December. On the 23d, the San Marco Battalion arrived in Somali waters with the naval group. Brigadier General Bruno Loi arrived on 20 December and took command of the Folgore Brigade in what the Italian forces called Operation Ibis.

Thousands of miles to the south, on 15 December, the Prime Minister of Australia, The Right Honorable Paul John Keating, announced that his nation would contribute forces as well. The Australian participation would be called Operation Solace and their force would be formed around a battalion group. The battalion selected was 1st Battalion, 1st Royal Australian Regiment, stationed in Townsville. This unit was the alert battalion of the Australian Ready Deployment Force. The contingent of 930 soldiers included engineer and administrative support elements, as

well as armored personnel carriers. The battalion's artillery battery commander and forward observers would act as liaison and provide civil affairs capabilities. The Australian reconnaissance party departed on 21 December and arrived in Mogadishu the next day.<sup>111</sup>

Another of the United States' traditional allies was preparing to send an important contribution to the coalition. The Turkish army created a special task force built around an existing mechanized infantry company, 1st Company, 1st Battalion, 28th Mechanized Brigade, stationed in Ankara. The company was strengthened with a quartermaster platoon, a transportation platoon, a signal section, a medical section, and an engineer section. In all, the reinforced company numbered 300 soldiers. The advance party left Ankara and arrived in Mogadishu on 19 December. The remainder of the Turkish force proceeded by rail to the port of Mersin beginning on 17 December. There, they boarded three Turkish Navy ships that sailed on the 17th and brought them directly to Mogadishu on 2 January 1993.<sup>112</sup>

By mid-December many other forces, large and small, were also proceeding to join UNITAF. Several of these came from the Middle East and Africa. They included a reinforced motorized rifle company from Kuwait, an all-volunteer unit that began arriving on 14 December.<sup>113</sup> The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sent elements of its 5th Royal Saudi Land Forces Airborne Battalion, reinforced with medical, engineer, and maintenance platoons. Numbering up to 669 soldiers, the first Saudis entered Mogadishu on 19 December, with their forces fully in Somalia by the end of the month.<sup>114</sup> For the first time in its history, Botswana sent soldiers to serve outside its borders. Out of an army totaling only 5,500, Botswana sent 300 soldiers in a composite company.<sup>115</sup> Several other countries, such as Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Zimbabwe, all sent liaison officers and small advance contingents in preparation for larger contributions to be made late in December or in January. To add to the strength of the air forces, the German Air Force continued to



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*Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, New York, unload their packs after boarding a C-141B cargo aircraft, which will take them to Bale Dogle, Somalia.*

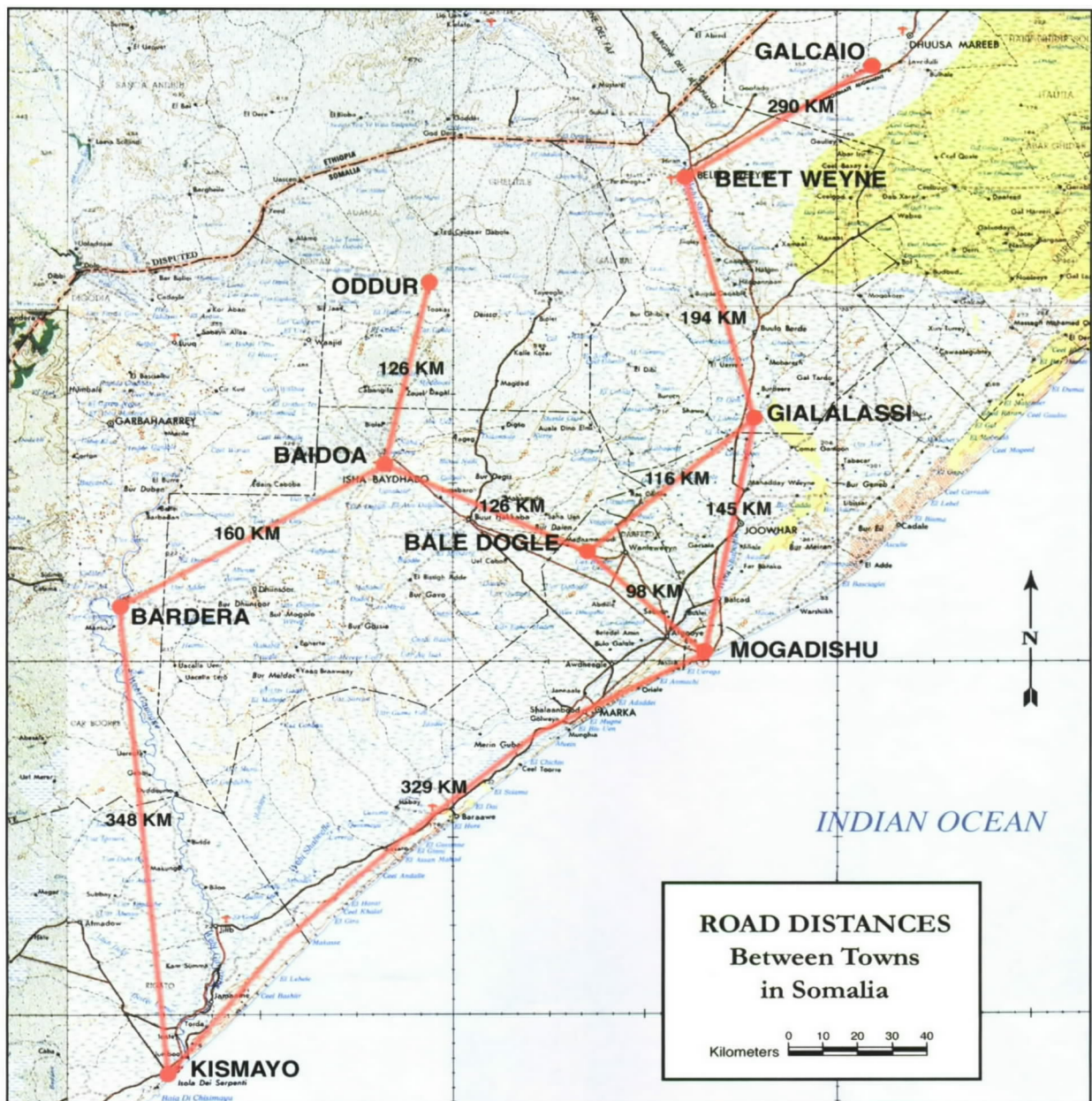
provide three C-160 Transall cargo aircraft that had been flying relief supplies out of Mombasa, Kenya, as part of Operation Provide Relief. The British Royal Air Force did the same with two C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, which it also had been using in Provide Relief. The Royal New Zealand Air Force sent three Andover transport aircraft from its Number 42 Squadron to fly transport within the theater.

*Into the Interior*

The arrival of all these forces, and the promise of others to come shortly, gave General Johnston

the strength and flexibility to push into the interior. Bale Dogle, strongly occupied by coalition troops, would be the springboard for the next step into Baidoa.

With the French forces already under the operational control of MarFor, UNITAF and MarFor planners decided to prepare a combined operation to secure the city. Task Force Hope was formed from the French 2d Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment, and elements of the French Special Operations Command and the 13th Foreign Legion Demi-Brigade, and 15th MEU.<sup>116</sup> The task force left Mogadishu on 15 December and secured the airfield the next day through a com-





DVIC DN-ST-93-01388

*The day after American Marines and French soldiers secured Baidoa, Marines of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit provide security for a convoy bringing food to the "City of Death."*

bined ground and heliborne movement. There was no opposition. Relief convoys, escorted by coalition forces, began bringing supplies to Baidoa that afternoon.<sup>117</sup>

The Marines and French soldiers immediately established security posts and started patrols of the city. The presence of a large number of armed men was quickly noted and was a source of some concern. On 18 December, Somalis fired from inside one of their compounds upon members of Task Force Hope. The area was quickly surrounded and entered and all arms were confiscated.<sup>118</sup> The incident highlighted a need, both inside the relief sectors and throughout the area of operations, for a policy concerning weapons control.

The rapid success of the Baidoa operation brought the first phase of Operation Restore Hope to a close. It also provided the basic framework by which all other operations to secure objectives would be organized and executed. The push to the

remaining humanitarian relief sectors would involve the U.S. Marines or Army in a series of joint and combined operations with coalition partners. Wherever possible, these operations would use the forces of the coalition nations that had volunteered to assume responsibility for the particular sectors.

The system by which these operations were ordered and controlled became fairly standard and reflected how UNITAF functioned. A series of daily fragmentary orders were issued, or more frequently if necessary. The orders listed objectives to be taken, forces to be employed, and dates for accomplishment of the missions. Coordinating instructions were provided as necessary and noted any support that was required along with specific force assignments. Each day, the next fragmentary orders would contain more information, adjust dates if necessary, and note the commanding general's additional orders or guidance. UNITAF headquarters operations section thus became a scene of continuous work as liaison officers from various U.S. units and coalition forces attended planning meetings within the future operations cell, run by Colonel Peter A. Dotto. All the while, ongoing operations were monitored in the current operations cell under Colonel James B. Egan.

Another critical part of each operation was to prepare the local population for the arrival of UNITAF forces. This task fell to Ambassador Robert B. Oakley, who had been appointed by President George H. W. Bush because of his experience in Africa as Special Envoy to Somalia. Ambassador Oakley assisted the military in understanding the Somali people and cultural nuances. He also provided insight into the tangle that was Somali politics.<sup>119</sup> For each operation, Oakley would travel to the particular city in advance of military forces to meet with the local elders and leaders. He would explain in detail what was about to happen to reduce the risk of confrontation. The following day, aircraft would drop leaflets over the city that repeated the peaceful intentions of the coalition members and its humanitarian purpose. They also would warn the people not to interfere with UNITAF forces or operations. In this manner, the coalition forces would find a soft landing at each objective.<sup>120</sup>

### *Securing the Relief Sectors*

With Fragmentary Order 7, UNITAF began planning to take the next objective: Kismayo. The



DVIC DD-SD-00-01031

American Special Envoy to Somalia, Ambassador Robert B. Oakley, speaks to a group of Somalis. Behind him is U.S. Army BGen Lawson W. Magruder III, commander of Task Force Kismayo.

Belgian forces' 1st Parachute Battalion had arrived in Mogadishu on 13 December. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Marc Jacqmin, the paratroopers would have responsibility for securing the Kismayo relief sector, then controlling it along with elements of the Army's 10th Mountain Division. Kismayo lies approximately 200 miles south of Mogadishu, on the coast just below the equator. It is the site of Somalia's second largest port, after Mogadishu, and it had been an important base for the Somali Navy. An airfield of appropriate size for military cargo aircraft was only a few miles outside the city. Holding this area would provide another port for the receipt and onward transport of relief supplies. The Belgian forces were placed under the operational control of MarFor for this operation. Because of its location on the coast, an amphibious operation was chosen to secure the city and its facilities. Captain John Peterson, commander of the *Tripoli* amphibious group, was designated as the commander of the amphibious task force and Lieutenant Colonel Jacqmin as the commander of the landing force. The landing force was composed of Company G, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, from the 15th MEU (SOC), and two platoons of

Belgian paratroopers. The amphibious task force itself consisted of the *Juneau* and the *Rushmore* from the United States Navy, and the French ship FS *Dupleix*, an antisubmarine warfare guided missile destroyer. Captain Peterson transferred his flag to the *Juneau*, U.S. Navy SEALs embarked on the *Dupleix* to perform pre-landing reconnaissance and surveillance of the beach and the Marines and Belgian paratroopers embarked on board the American ships.<sup>121</sup>

Because of the presence of two warring factions in the city, a preparatory political and diplomatic maneuver was very important. On 17 December, contact was made with Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess, leader of the Kismayo region's Somali Patriotic Front faction, and Mohamed Said Hirsi, who was known as General Morgan and led an independent faction in the area, setting up an agreement whereby Kismayo would be an open city. Jess and his troops would remain in the city, and Morgan and his followers would move 20 kilometers to the north.<sup>122</sup>

The Belgians already had sound experience in amphibious doctrine and the operation went smoothly. On the morning of 20 December, the

Marines landed in amphibious assault vehicles while the Belgians came ashore in air-cushioned landing craft and helicopters. There was no opposition to the landing and control was passed ashore within a few hours. Captain Peterson and Lieutenant Colonel Jacqmin went immediately to the center of the city, where they met with Colonel Jess, who protested the presence of the colonial Belgians. Lieutenant Colonel Jacqmin quickly quieted Jess's anger and made it clear the coalition forces would not be intimidated.<sup>123</sup> \*

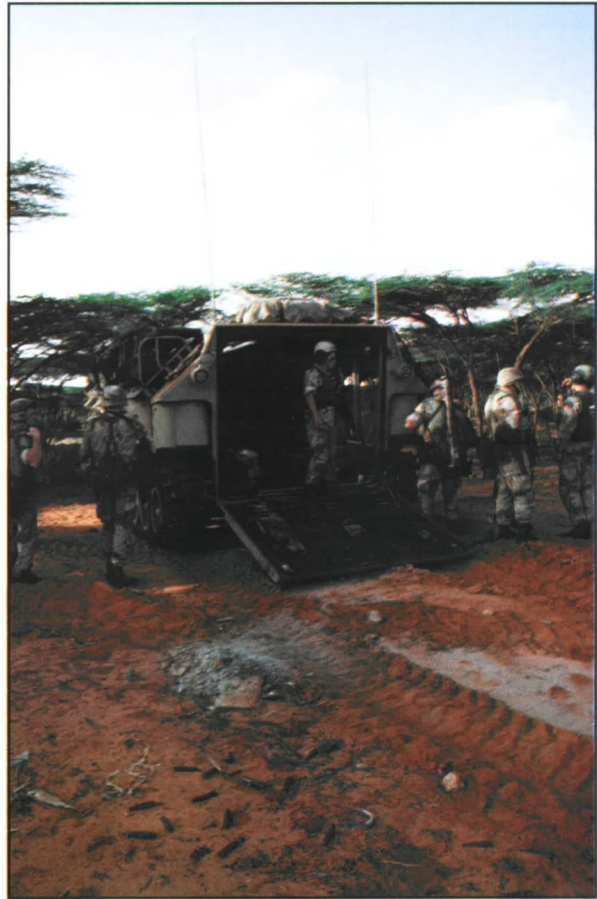
By the end of that first day the overall strength of the Belgian forces in Kismayo consisted of the 11th Company and the Close Reconnaissance Squadron, equipped with Scimitar tracked reconnaissance vehicles. With the arrival of additional Belgian reinforcements, the U.S. Marine company was released from tactical control and withdrew from Kismayo the next day. By 30 December, the Belgians had 550 men in the city.<sup>124</sup>

The successful completion of the Baidoa operation made it possible for UNITAF to quickly plan to secure another city notorious as a scene of suffering and death; Bardera, located about 217 kilometers southwest of Baidoa, at the end of a dry and dusty track. With the arrival of more combat units from the 1st Marine Division (notably the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, followed shortly thereafter by the lead elements of 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, and the headquarters of the 7th Marines) there was enough power on the ground to push on to this important inland city. Colonel Emil R. Bedard, commanding officer of the 7th Marines, departed Mogadishu for Baidoa with his Marines on 22 December; only three and a half days after these units began arriving in theater.<sup>125</sup>

Prior to leaving Mogadishu, the unit meshed with the attachment of amphibious assault and

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\* The issue of colonial troops was one that caused considerable anxiety and sensitivity in the UNITAF staff. Several of the coalition allies once had colonies in Africa. France and Italy once had colonies in Somalia itself. Where possible, use of troops from these nations had to be done with consideration of the feelings of the local populace. For instance, in late December, plans to secure the city of Merka originally called for the use of Italian troops. When the local population protested strongly about the return of the Italians, this operation was given to Army Forces Somalia as well as the Italians. The issue of colonialism also was a handy rallying call for the various factions when they organized protests against the presence or actions of UNITAF.



DVIC DN-ST-93-01396

*Members of Company G, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, exit from a P-7A1 amphibious assault vehicle after arriving to set up a checkpoint in Kismayo.*

light armored vehicles. (The advance elements of both the 3d Amphibious Assault Battalion and the 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion had arrived in Mogadishu on 19 December.) On Christmas Eve, after a long road march choked with dust, the Marines secured the airfield at Bardera. The next day they controlled all access to the city by holding a key bridge and the river crossings over the Jubba, as well as the principal road junctions. Patrols were quickly sent out to provide security for the task force as well as for the people of the city. Coordination was made with the local non-governmental agency to get the relief food shipments moving in. Another early concern was to secure the market area in the center of town so it could again open for business.<sup>126</sup>

The next two operations were originally planned to occur nearly simultaneously using French and Italian forces to take control of the



DVIC DD-SD-00-00987

*An estimated 30,000 Somalis inhabited the town of Bardera. It is one of the most populated towns in the otherwise sparsely populated region of southwest Somalia.*

humanitarian relief sectors that would become their responsibilities. Planning for the operations to Oddur and Gialalassi was ongoing at UNITAF headquarters by 16 December, concurrent with the planning for the Bardera operation.

Oddur lies 260 kilometers northwest of Mogadishu, 110 kilometers north of Baidoa, and close to the Ethiopian border. Its airport contains a 4,000-foot runway capable of handling C-130 aircraft. It was noted in briefings there was a well-organized militia in the area, as well as some old Soviet military equipment.<sup>127</sup> The task force for the operation would consist of elements of the French 5th Combined Arms Overseas Regiment and the 13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion, with logistic support, and Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, which was placed under the tactical control of the commander of the French forces.<sup>128</sup>

UNITAF Fragmentary Order 8, issued on 18 December, called for the French forces to secure Oddur "on or about 24 December." Many of the units to be involved, however, were still arriving. Fragmentary Order 12, issued on the 21st,

rescheduled the date of the operation for Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve, the same day the Marines were moving to Bardera, French forces began their road march to Oddur. They passed that day on the road and arrived in Oddur on 25 December.\* Over the next few days, the remaining French forces in Somalia were brought from Mogadishu to Oddur. From there, they were quickly reassigned to outlying towns: the 13th Demi-Brigade had responsibility for Wajid; the 5th Combined Arms Overseas Regiment for Ceelgasass; and the Legion for El Berde, while the headquarters, cavalry detachment (an aviation unit), and support battalion, were at Oddur. On the 29th, Major General Rene de l'Home, the commander of French forces in Somalia, requested the boundary of the relief sector be moved east to include the town of Tiye gloo. Administratively,

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\* If the road to Bardera was dusty, the road to Oddur was even worse. The fine dust was like red talc in places, exploding underfoot with each step or billowing in clouds behind vehicles. It covered men and machines in a natural camouflage.



the town had always been a part of the Oddur district, and it was therefore proper to include it in that sector. The request was approved at UNITAF. The French forces soon dispersed themselves throughout the relief sector, eventually occupying 21 platoon-sized advance posts from which patrols could be made.<sup>129</sup>

As early as 16 December, Fragmentary Order 7 had tasked the Italian forces to secure Gialalassi. Subsequent orders refined and amplified this initial order. Gialalassi is about 115 kilometers north of Mogadishu, and is situated on the Webi Shebelle. In intelligence briefings, this city was described as being on dry, flat ground, with a small forest to the north. There were two airfields, one of which was C-130 capable. Traveling on the roads was expected to be slow. A United Somali Congress faction under Ali Mahdi Mohamed held the area and had a security force at the airfields with some recoilless rifles. Bandits were reported to be operating along the road.<sup>130</sup> Fragmentary Orders 9 through 14, issued between 19 and 24 December, assigned considerable force to the operation. U.S. Air Force engineers were ordered

to provide support in inspecting and repairing the runway if necessary. Army forces would provide convoy security and establish a forward arming and refueling point at the airfield. MarFor would give helicopter, engineer, and medical evacuation support as necessary. Navy Forces Somalia would provide fixed-wing close air support. With the Italian forces still arriving, the date for the operation was changed from 26 to 27 December.

By the 26th, the Italian forces were assembling at the port. Two companies of the Folgore Brigade, with headquarters, reconnaissance group, and mortar and antiarmor gun sections bivouacked in a warehouse, while motor transport and armored personnel carriers were assembled. A convoy of relief trucks also staged at the port, loading grain that had just arrived on a cargo ship. That same day, a section of U.S. Army vehicles and a platoon of U.S. Army military police mounted in hardened humvees armed with automatic grenade launchers also entered the port and joined up with the Italian forces.

The operation began in the early morning of 27 December. The convoy left the port area and



Photo courtesy of the Italian Armed Forces

*Italian forces enter the town of Gialalassi on their way to secure the nearby airfield. One of the more flexible units of the Italian military, the Folgore Brigade could operate by means of airdrops or as a light infantry brigade.*