Soldiers and civil power: supporting or substituting civil authorities in peace operation during the 1990s
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In Cambodia, soldiers had gone beyond any role previously performed in a peace operation. They had extended their activities far into the civilian sphere in order to save the UN mission from imminent failure. Parallel developments were taking place in Somalia, but under very different circumstances and with different results. Between December 1992 and May 1993 a powerful intervention force under United States command was given a much narrower mission to secure the delivery of food aid to a starving population amidst the reigning anarchy in Somalia. Confusion over the mission soon arose as there was no agreement to uphold—and therefore no peace to keep—and most of all because no clear distinction was made between security for humanitarian goods and security for Somali people. The crucial question that emerged was how far a military intervention force should go in assuming the prerogatives of the state and help rebuild it, even if this was not part of the explicitly assigned mission. As will be argued in the next chapter, those contingents interpreting their mandate broadly proved to be most successful. However, whatever positive experiences came from the intervention in Somalia in the first half of 1993 would be overshadowed by the death of eighteen American soldiers in Mogadishu in October 1993, leading to the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the eventual embarrassing evacuation of all UN personnel in March 1995. These events have labelled the Somalia intervention as an outright failure. This triggered a revisionist version of events stimulated by the U.S. government, portraying the first, American led phase of the operation as an overwhelming military success—because it stuck to its narrow humanitarian mission—while passing all the blame for failure to the UN because it chose to do “nation building.” This distorted version of events obscured the ability to see both the missed opportunities and the relative successes during the early phase of the intervention. As a result, the lessons learned from Somalia were often the wrong ones.

Entering the Abyss

On the night of December 9, 1992, heavily armed U.S. Marines landed on the Somali coast near Mogadishu. To their initial bewilderment and eventual outrage they were greeted by TV floodlights on the beach in what became a historic scene. It had been the media’s cameras that had played a crucial role in getting these warriors to this distant corner of the world in the first place. Pictures of starving Somali children had been broadcast around the world throughout the previous months. The Marines were the spearhead of the United Task Force, or UNITAF, a force given what appeared to be a straightforward task of securing the deliv-
ery of relief supplies that failed to reach the hungry Somali population. The pocked and shattered buildings told of the ferocity of the battles waged in the capital by the warring militias.

In the absence of a functioning Somali government there was no formal peace agreement, but the population appeared to accept the presence of the foreign troops. They even applauded them at the Mogadishu airfield as they disarmed some of the marauding gunmen that had terrorized a large part of the population and prevented the food from reaching those in need. As the Marines expanded their control over the city in the next days, they came under incidental fire, ranging from sniping at patrols by bandits to deliberate attacks by militia. Such attacks on the peacekeepers continued in the months to come, but operating under a mandate that allowed “all necessary means” to accomplish their mission, the Marines fired back, even engaging when they felt directly threatened. They tended to rely on a heavy show of force, which mostly proved successful in discouraging the militias from seriously opposing them. On 11 December, two Marine Corps Cobra attack helicopters fired their rockets and destroyed two militia vehicles whose crew members had been unwise to take a shot at them.

By accepting Washington’s offer to send in troops—strictly under U.S. command—the United Nations was confronted with the best and the worst that the United States had to offer. On the one hand, the array of options presented to an international intervention force was expanded by the incredible speed of their deployment, the massive display of firepower, the great U.S. military logistical machinery and overall military professionalism. On the other hand, the United Nations was faced with the narrow view of American military and political leaders of the role of their armed forces. Conditioned by both the negative memory of the Vietnam war and the [more] recent success in the Gulf War, the reigning military and foreign policy inclinations in the United States proved woefully inadequate when confronted with the erratic dynamics caused by the injection of a 38,000 strong military force into a complete power vacuum.

The process of state collapse in Somalia has been explained from different perspectives, emphasizing sources of conflict inherent in Somali society as well as external factors. Domestic explanations emphasized the continuity of the “primordial social-cultural idiosyncrasies” inherent in a society dominated by intense rivalry between large family oriented clans. The Somalis are a culturally, linguistically and religiously similar people, but the country is populated by six large clans and over twenty sub-clans. Somali people tended to identify with their clan rather than the state, especially in times when the state showed weakness. Those emphasizing external intervention, mainly the proponents of the dependency theory, point at the change brought about by foreign intervention as the prime source of political upheaval in modern Somalia. As usual, it was the explosive combination of both that created the conditions for anarchy.

A long legacy of colonial and post-colonial interventions hampered the development of Somalia as a nation-state. Until its independence in 1960 the Italians ruled in the South
and the British in the North. After the unified state of Somalia was created an all too familiar pattern for post-colonial Africa unfolded. In the next nine years parliamentary democracy of sorts stumbled on, until a military coup established the head of the armed forces, General Siad Barre, as president. His Marxist system initially attracted the Soviet Union as an ally, but in the course of the late seventies and early eighties Moscow switched sides. The Soviets teamed up with Barre’s more powerful arch-enemy Ethiopia after its new regime under Mengistu embraced communism, thereby losing traditional U.S. support. After the Somali forces were routed in the 1977-78 war with Mengistu, the state began losing its internal monopoly control over violence and the clans increasingly started to arm themselves against each other.

Geopolitical concerns inspired the United States to step into the void in the early eighties as the prime sponsor of the thoroughly repressive and corrupt government in Mogadishu. A plethora of political and mostly militarized opposition groups emerged over the decade to challenge the reign of Barre, who increasingly fell back on his own Darood-Marehan clan. In order to “divide and rule” the dictator had fed much of the hostility between the clans in this period by distributing weapons he obtained with foreign support. Towards the end of the decade the warlords (warranleh) gained control over the mediators (wadaads), the traditional local clan elders who played a crucial role in administration and conflict resolution. Ever more terrible human rights abuses by the dictator combined with the thaw in the Cold War made Washington withdraw military and financial support. As a result, Barre’s regime crumbled. The civil war in Somalia, unleashed partly by the end to superpower rivalry, was unlike the Cold War relics that dried up in the late eighties and which proved relatively easily to resolve by adapting traditional UN peacekeeping from inter-state wars to internal conflict.

While the world’s attention was firmly focused on events in the Gulf, an alliance of rival clans defeated Barre militarily in January 1991 after a long and bitter civil war. The dictator was disposed when the two largest armed opposition groups under Aideed and Ali Mahdi, under the umbrella of the United Somali Congress (USC) entered Mogadishu. With alliances between clans being merely temporary conveniences in Somali clan-based culture, the factions, which had joined forces for the sole purpose of overthrowing the regime, started to fight amongst themselves over the spoils of victory. Although Aideed’s Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA, hereafter referred to as SNA) bore the brunt of the last offensive before entering Mogadishu, his attention was diverted to pursuing the remnants of Barre’s forces in the South. This allowed forces loyal to Ali Mahdi to capture the presidential palace in 1991. The leader of the USC declared himself interim president in the hope of gaining international recognition. Support only came from the Italian and Egyptian governments, both of whom had backed Barre to the bitter end, making them even more suspect in the eyes of the other factions refusing to recognize Ali Mahdi’s interim rule. It would seriously hamper former Egyptian foreign minister Boutros-Ghali in his attempts to mediate between the warring parties when serving as the UN Secretary General.
Ali Mahdi’s militia, based on his Abghal sub-clan, found a formidable opponent in Aideed’s Somali National Alliance (SNA) that centred on the Habir Gedir sub-clan. Ali Mahdi had five to six thousand troops at his disposal, while Aideed controlled an estimated five to ten thousand militia that were better equipped with former Somali Army weapons. Some fifteen hundred of his troops were in control of most of the capital, while Ali Mahdi’s USC had its power base in the northern part of the city. Confident of his ability to position himself as the dominant leader in Somalia, Aideed clearly had most to lose from outside intervention. He opposed UN intervention because he feared it would ratify his opponents questionable election in a UN sponsored conference in Djibouti in 1991.

The civil war broke down roughly along clan lines. However, while no warlord could have maintained power without crucial support from his own clan, the source of conflict has often been oversimplified. It has often been attributed entirely to traditional feuds and rivalry caused by genealogical affiliations or problem with authority inherent in a largely nomadic society, that made up fifty percent of the population. One Somali proverb encapsulated this schismatic view of Somali society: “Me and my clan against the world; Me and my brother against my clan; Me against my brother.” The saying was endlessly reproduced throughout the 1990s to emphasize the tribal roots of the conflict and often used to underline the hopelessness of solving Somalia’s problems through outside intervention. The same theories were used on both sides of the Atlantic by those opposing forceful intervention in the Balkans, arguing that Yugoslavia was being torn apart by age old feuds between ethnic groups, rather than a political power struggle by elites in the aftermath of the disappearance of the old communist order. As in Yugoslavia, Somali elites chose to mercilessly exploit clan or ethnic affiliation to further their own interest. The war was first and foremost a power-struggle for control over the state, in which the warlords manipulated the clan structure in order to recruit the force necessary to seize territory and resources.

Social scientist David Laitin posits an explanation for clan warfare to spiral out of control in 1991 and 1992. The normal prize after a coup in Africa, he argued, was control over the state apparatus and the subsequent access to state wealth. What caused the costly war of attrition, Laitin argues, was that is was fought over the declining resources made available to coup winners after the end of the Cold War. The Somali state had lived on foreign aid handouts from its inception until its implosion. After this support was withheld, the meagre national resources, already diminished by the militarization of the state, proved insufficient for a new leader to establish control and redistribute the state wealth amongst his former allies or rivals in order to negotiate a peace.

As if the political landscape was not complicated enough for the contesting clans and intervening forces, much of the fighting took place between members of the same clan. Although from different sub-clans, Ali Mahdi and Aideed were both from the Hawiyeh clan and were fighting for control over Mogadishu. They formed ad hoc alliances with members of other clans and sub-clans based on the level of rewards these expected to receive by joining. Before American forces arrived in Kismayu Omar Jess, the leader of the faction in the
South closely aligned to Aideed, killed some one hundred elders within his own subclan in order to tighten his grip on society in his struggle for control over southern Somalia. His long-time rival was Mohammed Siad Heris, alias “Morgan”, the former dictator’s son-in-law. Morgan was in control of one thousand well-organized troops from the former state army. What further blurred the picture was the warlords’ frequent failure to effectively control their own subordinates or affiliated groups, while gangs of unaffiliated armed bandits also terrorized the weakest in Somali society.

The prolonged civil war caused the already faltering state, civil society and thus basic services to collapse and Somalia to sink into what has often been called a “Hobbesian anarchy.” The army, the administration and the regular Somali police force, the latter being one of the few institutions not founded on a clan basis, had all melted away. Meanwhile, traditional modes of mediation by elders completely failed amidst the chaos. The Somali people suffered the horrible brutality of living “without law or institutions to regulate relations among groups or to protect the most vulnerable from the most vicious.” Somalia became the archetype of what in the 1990s commonly became referred to as “the failed state.”

At the outset of the international intervention the underlying dynamics of the civil war in southern Somalia were not sufficiently recognized. The drought that had plagued East Africa for most of the previous decade had been particularly severe in Somalia, increasing competition for access to wells and crops. Much of the incomprehensible warfare in the South was a struggle for productive farmland, or rather, a land grab by clan-based nomadic groups, primarily the two Hawiye militias. The nomadic clans, traditionally cattle herders and with a strong warrior cult, regarded themselves as more noble than the farmers and tended to see themselves as the “real Somalis.” Their victims were primarily the southern agricultural peoples in the Lower Shabelle, Lower Juba and Bay regions. These so called “minority groups” were the largely unarmed Ranhanweyn, numbering over a million people centred on the Bay region, and the smaller African Negroid Bantu and Benadir tribes. The victimized, non-belligerent parties in Somalia were also the most productive, mostly in agriculture. The breakdown of political order brought about a total disruption of agricultural production and in 1991 and 1992, and displaced the farmers to relief centres in Mogadishu, provincial cities and Kenya. In two years of civil war hundreds of thousands Somalis were driven from their homes and perished from malnutrition. Millions were threatened by disease and violence.

In the course of 1992 the attention of the western world, solidly focused on the Balkans, was slowly drawn to the unfolding human catastrophe in the Horn of Africa. What has been called a famine of “biblical proportions” would never have occurred if the available relief goods had reached the needy. However, humanitarian aid was preyed upon by a mixture of the warring factions and unaffiliated bandits. The militia leaders used food to pay their fighters and buy weapons that allowed them to extend their control and subsequently their access to wealth. The young men who were drawn to the warlords, most of whom had been simple herdsmen, lived better lives than ever before. Food aid was the primary source
of income and replaced Soviet and U.S. financial support to the former government to keep the system afloat. It became the main basis of power and General Aideed proved most successful in siphoning off his share of the loot. He was firmly in control of most of Mogadishu after conquering much of the city from the south in the course of 1991, including strategic locations such as the port and airfield, through which the bulk of food aid arrived. In this environment humanitarian organisations, the UN organisations, the International Red Cross and dozens of NGOs, had an ever harder time getting the food out to the most needy, who were located mostly in the hinterland. Khalil Dale, a British Red Cross worker recalled:

I’ve been to Afghanistan, two or three times. I’ve been to Sudan, I’ve been to a lot of war zones and famine camps and cholera camps. But I’ve never ever seen anything like Somalia was at that time. And it was certainly the most frightening place for me, it was the most insecure, unpredictable. You just didn’t know what was going to happen next.14

In order to protect themselves from looters, aid organisations were compelled to hire local armed guards, who were more than often affiliated with the armed militia. They accounted for the funds expended for this purpose as “technical support”, and so gave rise to the name “technicals” for the jeeps and pickup trucks mounted with heavy machine guns driven by the gunmen. Much of the military capacity and organisation of the militias and bandits was centred on these armed vehicles. They were also referred to as “Mad Maxes” by western troops, as the technicals roaming the barren landscape reminded young soldiers of vehicles used by bandits in the post-nuclear anarchic society portrayed the popular Mad Max movie trilogy from 1980s.15

While saving lives and performing courageous work, the aid organisations had become part of the problem in Somalia. Reliable sources say that the ICRC alone employed between fifteen and twenty thousand armed guards and it was diverting one third of its worldwide budget to Somalia.16 The relief agencies indirectly fuelled the appetite for arms, while simultaneously becoming hostage of their own guards, who started demanding exorbitant wages for their services. Apart from direct payments for security, the humanitarian aid organisations provided the warlords with substantial funds for transportation, housing and food-storage.17 Aid organisations indirectly helped to finance the militias and arguably prolonged the civil war.

In mid-1992 a ceasefire was negotiated and the Security Council authorised the deployment of a small peacekeeping force to supervise it and help protect food stores from looters. Operating under Chapter Six of the UN Charter the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was provided with very limited self-defence Rules of Engagement that proved woefully inadequate after the ceasefire rapidly broke down. The force consisting of less than five hundred Pakistani troops and some observers bunker down at the airport and spent most of their energy defending themselves from attackers. After Aideed obstructed the UN operations, nations that had indicated their willingness to contribute troops withheld their units. Meanwhile, the media attention given to the plight of the Somalis caused interna-
tional pressure to rise rapidly. Boutros Ghali accused the Security Council of “fighting a rich man’s war” in Yugoslavia while not lifting a finger to Somalia. By November 1992 CNN was broadcasting starving Somalis for a few minutes every hour of the day.\(^\text{18}\)

The Limits of U.S. Military Intervention

It was against this background that president Bush initiated the intervention in Somali. He had just lost the 1992 election to Bill Clinton who, riding the “wave of optimism surrounding the future role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era” had vigorously criticised him for failing to intervene in either Bosnia or Somalia.\(^\text{19}\) Bush had indeed done nothing to transform his vague vision of the New World Order into policy. Although Clinton had won the White House on a domestic agenda, he gave early indications of what was to turn into his new foreign policy “assertive multilateralism.” The parting President was eager to leave office on a high note, so when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, recommended that a mission led by the United States under UN auspices could make a difference in Somalia, Bush gave the go ahead for an intervention that would fundamentally alter the practise and perception of peace operations.\(^\text{20}\) Surprisingly, the recommendation to intervene thus came from the military—not from the State Department—which “was absolutely dumbfounded when the military made the offer.”\(^\text{21}\)

On 25 November 1992, the Bush Administration informed Boutros-Ghali of the willingness to lead in organising and commanding an international intervention. On 3 December the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution declaring the situation “intolerable” and authorizing a U.S.-led force to use “all necessary means, to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia” and prepare the way for a UN-led force.\(^\text{22}\) It did not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the political, institutional and economic order in Somalia, or what the Americans commonly referred to as “nation building.” It was widely known, however, that Boutros-Ghali sought to include “peace building”, the UN term referring to the establishment of civil institutions and structures enhancing a society’s capacity to deal with conflicts peacefully. Although no formal deadline was set for the commitment, it was hoped within the White House that the force would be out by 20 January 1993, just before the Clinton’s presidential inauguration. This would have allowed for a mere six week time span for military operations. When Bush made his “Thanksgiving decision” to intervene in Somalia militarily, he was advised of the impossibility to have the troops out that soon and military planning was more realistically based on at least three months deployment.\(^\text{23}\) However, the message that the Americans wanted out as soon as possible was loud and clear—and certainly not lost to the Somali warlords.

The intervention, designated *Operation Restore Hope* by the U.S. Government, was authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which meant that consent and agreement of the parties to the conflict was not necessary and that in principle force could be used to accomplish the mission—not merely self-defence as was the case in consent-based Chapter VI operations. Compared to the UN mission in Cambodia, Bosnia or the UN follow-on force
in Somalia, UNITAF was blessed with a homogeneous staff and “Unity of Command.” As the Force Commander of UNITAF, U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General Johnston would lead 38,000 troops centred on 24,000 American forces. While almost half of the American troops were U.S. Army, the operation was clearly dominated by the Marine Corps. The Force Commander reported straight up to his fellow Marine Corps General Joseph Hoar, Commander in Chief at Central Command, one of four regional strategic headquarters whose theatre included the Horn of Africa. On the tactical level, with the exception of the Moroccan sector, all sectors were controlled by American forces or their close allies with whom they had a long working relationship. On the military side of the spectrum, many of the ingredients for success were present.

On 5 December the President’s Special Envoy, Ambassador Robert B. Oakley arrived in Mogadishu ahead of the troops. Oakley, who had served as the ambassador to Somalia between 1983 and 1984, would lead the United States Liaison Office, the diplomatic presence in Somalia. The former ambassador basically performed the role of a Special Representative as did Akashi in Cambodia. The Chapter VII mandate and the military power of the forces he indirectly controlled allowed him to take a far more forceful posture towards the local parties, but his role was intended to be much smaller, in line with the mission’s narrow security objectives. There was no parallel civilian mission to oversee. He and his small State Department staff were to provide political advice to the military forces, establish political relations with Somali leaders and liaise with the humanitarian community and the remainder of UNOSOM. No formal guidelines were given for the relationship between Oakley and Johnston, but they would establish a close working relationship and seldom disagreed on the scope of the mission. The Ambassador was liked by the military. In the eyes of one officer, the imposing and straightforward Southerner compared favourably to the State Department’s other “immaculately suited, yuppie-preppie types named Kent or Chip or Buffy who had majored in condescension at some Ivy League school.” Oakley’s office at the Cocono compound, belonging to an oil company, was located at a mile from UNITAF headquarter and down the street from Aideed’s residence. Johnston’s staff was located in the U.S. Embassy compound, which had been thoroughly gutted after it had been evacuated in January 1991 after the marauding militias took over the capital.

In the two days before the Marines landed, Oakley met separately with the two dominant factional leaders in Mogadishu in order to prepare a smooth landing for the Marines. He assured Aideed and Ali Mahdi that the forces arriving in Somalia had no intention of interfering in Somali politics or in disarming the factions. The intervention had the sole purpose of ending the famine, and the foreign troops would only fight if attacked. In return, the warlords agreed not to resist the intervention force. On 9 December, just before the troops arrived, an Air Force C-130 aircraft dropped many millions of leaflets over Mogadishu in what was part of what the American military called “Psychological Operations.” The message read that UNITAF had come to help, but repeated for a broader audience that
all opposition would be met by force. This pattern would be used throughout the operation as the troops fanned out into the countryside, guaranteeing their arrival was unchallenged.

South Central Somalia was divided into nine Humanitarian Relief Sectors. After Mogadishu and the strategic airport at Bale Dogle, the Marines moved on to the towns of Baidoa and Bardera, where famine had struck hardest. Meanwhile, other contingents started arriving. The French Foreign Legion based in Djibouti soon joined the Marines and helped secure Baidoa before they took control of Oddur near the Ethiopian border. A battalion-group from the Canadian Airborne Regiment occupied Belet Huen and a Belgium Parachute battalion together with a U.S. Army task force from the 10th Mountain Division soon took control of Kismayu after the Marines secured the airport. In January the Australians would take over control over Baidoa. Between December 9 and the end of the year all geographic objectives were secured for the purpose of humanitarian relief.
Providing security to relief operations was obviously a success and the effects were showing by late December and early January. There was consensus worldwide that the U.S. led intervention enabled the relief organisation to deliver much needed supplies much more effectively and many thousands of lives were saved. However, escorting convoys and feeding the people was not a strategy for solving Somalia’s problems, it was merely a task. According the official U.S. Army After Action Report of the Somalia mission, the Bush administration recognized that lasting peace in Somalia could only be achieved by disarming the warlords, reconciliation and assisting in the restoration of law and order and societal infrastructure. However, these goals exceeded the President’s intent for U.S. participation in the intervention.

Rapidly handing over to a UN peace building mission was considered the “exit strategy” for U.S. forces. This was unlikely to materialize in the proposed time span, given the world organisation’s extremely inefficient planning process and the dramatic shortage of troops. By the middle of 1993 the UN had 80,000 peacekeeping personnel deployed in seventeen different missions, consuming a budget that totalled nearly three billion dollars. The United Nations follow-up force, United Nations Operations in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) hoped to be able to assume responsibility in the second half of January. More realistic estimates held that it would take three months time, but UNOSOM was barely ready to do so when command was transferred on 4 May 1993, with only 16,000 UN troops on the ground.

The limits to the American plan were dictated by a combination of political naiveté and certain inhibitions that pervaded American military culture. Bush jumped into the power vacuum in Somalia with stated intention of not affecting Somalia politically. In his television address on 4 December he had said: “To the people of Somalia I promise this: We do not plan to dictate political outcomes. We respect your sovereignty and independence. [...] We come to your country for one reason only, to enable the starving to be fed.” The assumption that a large military force could be apolitical in an intervention, hand out the food and retreat “without at least attempting to deal with the primary source of hunger—which was political, not meteorological or logistical” appears to have been genuine. Although such naiveté was widespread in the early 1990s, it was somewhat surprising for the pool of skilled and conservative foreign policymakers in the Bush administration who had only recently intervened militarily in Panama, the Gulf and Northern Iraq. The underestimation of the mission’s implications can also be traced back to government’s recent success in Northern Iraq. The assignment in Somalia reminded General Hoar and his staff at Central Command of Operation Provide Comfort, when in the aftermath of the Gulf War a major humanitarian success was achieved in only a couple of months. However, returning hundreds of thousands of refugees to a Kurdish U.S. protectorate outside the reach of Saddam Hussein was a highly political goal. It was partly driven by geopolitical concerns that were lacking in Somalia—arguably to the disadvantage of the Somalis.

The strict limitations set on UNITAF’s goals were primarily dictated by the fundamental preoccupations, frustrations and fears of the U.S. military that were intricately linked
to Vietnam. The “Vietnam syndrome” had only recently, but still only partially, been vindicated by the preponderant military victory in the war against Iraq. This success had given Colin Powell an almost heroic status amongst U.S. military personnel.

Powell’s plan for the Somali intervention was based on a doctrine that carried his own name. What by the late 1990s was commonly known as the Powell Doctrine was in fact the Powell Corollary to the Weinberger Doctrine of 1984, formally known as the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. According to Powell the doctrine was drawn up in the direct aftermath of the suicide bombing that resulted in the killing of 241 servicemen in Beirut in October 1983. At the time he served as National Security Advisor alongside Secretary of Defence Casper Weinberger. It was first and foremost designed to avoid “another Vietnam”, or as Powell once put it, “half-hearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand or support.” The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine held that military force should only be used if there was a clear risk to U.S. national security; that the objective should be unambiguous; that the force used should be overwhelming; and that the operation must have strong public support and a clear exit strategy. It became a Holy Scripture to a generation of military leaders that, like Powell, had served in Southeast Asia and had been severely scarred by this humiliating experience.

Powell agreed to the operation because he recognised that public and political pressure on the administration to intervene in Bosnia and Somalia was rising. Of the two he regarded Somalia as the easier option. By taking the initiative, he sought to dictate the conditions under which the armed forces were used. His opposition to U.S. military involvement in the ethnic conflict in Bosnia in the early days of the Clinton presidency brought the General into a head-on collision with Madeleine Albright. In her capacity of the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and as a strong advocate of using force to end ethnic slaughter, she once stared at Powell and asked: “What’s the point in having this superb military you are always talking about if we can’t use it?” In his memoirs, Powell wrote about the incident: “I thought I would have an aneurysm. American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board.”

The confrontation between Powell and Albright was an early manifestation of the growing tendency within the U.S. military elite to prescribe and circumscribe what wars it would fight and not fight. The mainstream view of the purpose of the armed forces was only to “fight and win America’s wars.” These were perceived to be a form of symmetric warfare prepared for against the Soviet Union and finally fought against a less formidable opponent in the Iraqi desert. In the years following the Gulf War, the U.S. armed forces would grudgingly and half-heartedly make the operational shift from preparing solely for all out conventional warfare, to the murky and rapidly evolving concept of peace operations. As if Beirut, Panama and Northern Iraq and a host of other “small wars” in the more distant past had not occurred, the U.S. armed forces tended to regard anything other than their preferred line of business as an aberration.
In the case of Somalia, the threat to national security was clearly lacking from the list of Powell’s preconditions, but if he could not dictate where the military would be employed, then at least he would determine how. Parallel to the Doctrine’s advocacy of overwhelming force and limited and rigid objectives as the U.S. administration’s main policy guideline on military intervention, a powerful new term entered the American military lexicon during the early 1990s. “Mission creep” became a code-word phrase used to describe the incremental expansion of tasks beyond the parameters set by the originally assigned mission. The term was often used, highly influential in approaches to military operations, but ill-defined. There existed no common definition or understanding of what “mission creep” was. It failed to distinguish between venturing beyond the parameters set by a mandate, broadening the interpretation of an often vaguely defined mission, or a conscious policy decision to alter or expand the mission. Generally, it was used in conjunction with the need to avoid “nation building”, another poorly defined notion, which from an ideal in the Kennedy era had become a term laden with negative emotive impact in the aftermath of Vietnam. Those continuously raising the flags on “mission creep” assumed that a large military presence in itself would not affect the operational environment—and demand the mission to be adapted to new challenges and threats. Somalia proved them wrong.

Waltzing with Warlords
As soon as the Marines had hit the beaches in December 1992 they were confronted by ambiguities caused by the narrow interpretation given to “creating a secure environment.” Colonel Gregory Newbold, the commander of the first Marine detachment in Somalia, instructed his troops to confiscate every weapon they saw around the airfield they had secured. He was convinced that the most effective way to end the violence was remove the weapons and every weapon taken by his Marines earned them a standing ovation from the crowd that had gathered. French legionnaires, assuming the systematic confiscation of weapons was UNITAF policy, even started taking small arms they found in vehicles. However, when General Johnston arrived in Mogadishu to assume command he ordered Marines and French legionnaires to stop confiscating all visible weapons. He reminded his forces that they were not actually there to disarm the Somalis, but were told to take only technicals and “crew-served weapons”, which are defined as any weapons system that requires more than one individual to operate, such as machine guns, mortars, tanks and artillery pieces. As long as they made no hostile gestures, Somalis were allowed to retain their AK-47’s and other small arms.

At this point it became apparent that no clear distinction had been made between security for the delivery of humanitarian goods and security for Somali people. U.S. political and military leaders, although in control of the largest and most muscular “peacekeeping” force in history, initially chose to disarm only when the action “directly assisted in the restoration of humanitarian relief.” This meant that initially only heavy weapons were removed from the immediate vicinity of the areas where UNITAF operated—not confiscated or de-
stroyned—while the militias’ arms caches were left alone. Technicals were stored at designated sites, but continued to belong to their previous owners. Paradoxically, most Somali’s—including the faction leaders themselves—seem to have expected to be disarmed, as witnessed by the dramatic drop in the price of an AK-47 just prior to the arrival of UNITAF.

The strict limitations on disarmament signalled the factions to simply hide their battlewagons and other heavy equipment in urban areas or move them into the countryside. Combined with massive U.S. firepower and the obvious eagerness of American forces to leave Somalia quickly, this initially led to a policy of “respectful coexistence” between UNITAF and militia leaders. On the ground this translated as “don’t bother us in getting the food out and we won’t bother you.” From the very beginning of the troubled U.S.-UN cooperative effort, Boutros-Ghali wanted the Americans to give a much broader interpretation to “creating a secure environment” and follow through with a comprehensive disarmament program. He knew that a follow-on force under his direction would not have the same military capacities and feared that Somalia would plunge back into anarchy unless the clan armies were disarmed. On Christmas Day he harshly criticized Bush’s minimalist policy. It was an early sign of the animosity between the U.S. government and the Secretary General that would spiral in the years to come.

UNITAF “Psychological Operations” leaflets were dropped by the millions across southern Somalia. The message read that UNITAF had come to help, but that all opposition would be met by force.
The conflict over structural disarmament touched on the very heart of the mission and was entwined with the crucial matter of with whom UNITAF was going to work—and therefore empower. The policy that assured the safe arrival of the troops as negotiated by Oakley, had a dangerous long term side effect. The United States did not seriously attempt to establish a transitional political authority, but by reaching an agreement with the two high-profile faction leaders the Americans gave them unwarranted legitimacy and further raised their political profile in Somalia and internationally. All Somali faction leaders were keen on promoting the impression that they were receiving foreign, especially U.S. backing and especially Aideed was always sure to have his camera’s present when he met with American dignitaries. UNITAF’s initial superficial and short-term success in stabilising the security situation therefore depended primarily on what critics of this policy have referred to as “waltzing with warlords.”

According to David Laitin, Oakley presented an “unconvincing strategic calculus” for his actions in retrospect. The Ambassador argued that accommodating the warlords was a first step to seriously involving civil society in the reconstruction of the country. For the moment, this option was chosen as there were realistic fears that the warlords, faced with the possibility of losing the military capacity on which their power was based, would resist forcefully and cause significant UNITAF and Somali casualties. The Ambassador’s initial decision to accommodate the warlords was the result of orders from Washington to get food as quickly as possible to the starving population in the countryside, and not to get involved in reconstituting Somali society.

While many commentators agree that Oakley sided too closely with the warlords, it was undeniable that the quick opening-up of the routes for humanitarian aid saved many lives. The initial military plan foresaw the creation of rudimentary security to most of Mogadishu and a large build-up of troops before moving out into the hinterland. It anticipated the possible resistance of at least one of the factions. Impatient aid agencies, whose complaints were widely covered in the media, demanded that the Marines moved inland more quickly. “The delay in sending troops to Baidoa, where up to one hundred bodies are being picked up from the streets every day, is criminal” said Russ Kerr, the vice-president of the NGO World Vision.

Gun battles between the clans were raging in the streets and aid workers, many of whom were receiving death threats, were unable to perform their job in what the media had dubbed “The City of Death.”

When “Task Force Hope”, consisting of seven hundred Marines and 142 French Legionnaires under Colonel Newbold, finally arrived on 16 December they received a liberators’ welcome. Oakley, and what an Army major called “the State Department and CIA emissaries” had visited local leaders the preceding day and impressed upon them not to resist. The troops, who made it a habit to have aid organisation bring relief supplies on the day of their arrival, were met by cheering and waving crowds and a banner saying “We Are Happy For The Intervention” (sic) suspended across the street. This was what a humanitarian in
tervention was supposed to look like, and the massive numbers of reporters at the scene made sure the world saw it.

In early January, U.S. Army major Martin Stanton had a similar joyful experience when he escorted a food convoy to Quorleey, a village in the fertile Lower Shabelle Valley seventy kilometres west of Mogadishu. On the way he and his colleagues were surprised to see how “cornfields and banana plantations abounded as far as the eye could see”, but when the convoy reached Quorleey, his vehicles were swarmed by a massive crowd of cheering, jumping and hungry people. It was a reminder of the true causes of the famine. The spectacle reminded Stanton of a Rama of the Jungle movie. “We were the first UNITAF soldiers these people had seen, and they were coming out to see their ‘benefactors.’” The Major remembered that day as a “strange but happy mission”, and actually one of the few times during his deployment when he thought “we actually might have helped a few people.” More of these scenes would unfold elsewhere as the Marines escorted food trucks to some of the villages worst hit by the famine in the coming days and weeks, but it was probably at this point when most spectators in the western world switched their TV-sets to another channel. Most Americans would only tune back in ten months later, when the bodies of their dead soldiers were being dragged down the streets of Mogadishu by an angry Somali mob, making them wonder what could possibly have gone so wrong.

While the Western public was rapidly losing interest in Somalia after the initial humanitarian success, this was only the beginning of an exhausting and often frustrating experience for the troops on the ground. Just hours after their arrival in Baidoa, the Marines and their French colleagues started patrolling the city day and night. They also set up checkpoints in and around the city and confiscated every openly displayed weapon they encountered. Newbold’s weapons policy was far more restrictive than that in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the country, and soon helped curb banditry and extortion. In Baidoa, the security the troops provided to the people soon proved far more important than the food they helped deliver. The locals “repeatedly emphasized that Americans will be respected as long as they appear strong and unafraid.” Newbold continued to translate this in displays of overwhelming force. Days after their arrival American and French patrols received sniper fire from a compound belonging to one of Aideed’s allies in the region. The Colonel surrounded the site with a heavy force, ordered them to come out. The thirty gunmen that emerged were disarmed and sent off and six confiscated technicals were dragged behind U.S. armoured vehicles for an overall enthusiastic population to see. Meanwhile and uneasy peace had descended over Mogadishu by late December. Boutros-Ghali initiated a preparatory meeting for a peace conference to be held between fourteen political factions in Addis Ababa early January. In order to find a third way between appeasing the faction leaders and disarming them forcefully, the UN helped broker an accord that would lead to voluntary disarmament and national reconciliation and prepare a framework for the formation of a Somali government. On 29 December there were signs of recon-
ciliation when Aideed and Ali Mahdi embraced in front of thousands of Somalis and the reporters’ cameras on Mogadishu’s “green line” that divided their zones of influence. The carefully orchestrated peace rally was meant to reassure President Bush during his New Year visit to Somalia. However, while the President spent the night of New Years onboard one of the many U.S. military vessels off-shore, Aideed called UNITAF headquarters to claim he was under heavy mortar fire. An analysis of the shell craters showed that it had in fact been Aideed who was firing at his enemies, but was trying to manipulate the events to his advantage.  

In Oakley’s recollection, Mogadishu was calm after ten days, with no shootings and no arms being carried in the streets. Although the situation in the capital had indeed hugely improved, Mogadishu seemed all but peaceful to the Australian officers from the advance party tasked to prepare the way for the Australian troops that were to take over Baidoa in mid January. They still had to get adjusted to the nightly “crack and thumb” of rounds hitting the U.S. embassy compound building where they were staying and where UNITAF headquarters was located. Sniper fire continued to harass U.S. troops and convoys. Around Christmas the commanders were actually short of troops to implement plans for increased security in the streets. Towards New Year the Marines stepped up their patrols in Mogadishu and Johnston introduced a more aggressive arms control program aimed at confiscating all visible weapons in the streets, a policy copied from the apparently successful methods used by Newbold’s Marines in Baidoa.

In conjunction with this new “no visible weapons policy” on the street, UNITAF embarked on a more serious endeavour to control the warlords and their arms caches. Oakley and UNITAF’s operations officers Brigadier Anthony Zinni, one of the rising stars within the U.S. military establishment, had gotten Aideed and Ali Mahdi to place a portion of their arsenals in designated weapons storage sites by late December. Expecting to gain from cooperation, Ali Mahdi seemed in overall compliance and would continue to be in the coming months. Soon, however, the refusal of Aideed’s forces to allow Marine patrols to enter his sites to verify his compliance with the agreement, combined with an increasing number of attacks and even ambushes on U.S. troops by the warlord’s militia from such compounds, caused an escalation of violence. On the evening of 6 January Johnston decided to answer these provocations and ordered his troops to confiscate, with force if necessary, the weapons in two storage sites after Oakley had revoked the weapons permissions earlier given. The commander of the Marine Division in Somalia, Major General Charles Wilhelm, knew he was probably “stirring up a hornet’s nest,” but regarded this necessary to “clean this city up.” On a political level, Oakley considered the timing of the operation to be opportune, because Aideed, after continuously appearing with U.S. military and State Department personnel in front of his own media’s cameras, “had convinced the Somali people that he was the hero of the United States.” Early the next morning, after their demands were apparently ignored, Marines supported by tanks and rocket firing Cobra attack helicopters raided Aideed’s armoury, reportedly killing thirty gunmen. The following week the Marines conducted large
scale raids on two arms markets, one in Aideed’s and one in Ali Mahdi’s area. They found some arms and substantial amounts of ordinance, but the best equipment was apparently removed as the word of the operation had preceded the Marines.60

On the one hand, UNITAF was getting tougher with Aideed, but on the other hand the Bush administration openly displayed its eagerness to withdraw. Only two days before raiding the warlord’s arms warehouse, Johnston had publicly announced a plan for the hand-over of command to UNOSOM II on 20 January, the day before Clinton’s inauguration. The Force Commander was under considerable political pressure to turn over the mission as soon as possible, even though at Central Command in Florida it was widely believed at the time that the factions would simply await the departure of the bulk of UNITAF and subsequently return to the status quo.61 While there was little confidence in political reconciliation or success for the UN force, American troops were planned to be progressively withdrawn over the following two to three months.

Then, on 11 January there appeared to be a breakthrough when fourteen clan leaders reached an agreement in Addis Ababa. They agreed to a cease-fire and a voluntary disarmament program to be monitored by the intervention force. These efforts were seriously undermined by a quarrel between UNITAF and the UN over the responsibility for the eventual disarmament and cantonment plan. Again, Boutros-Ghali wanted to hold the powerful U.S.-led force in Somalia as long as possible and hoped it would assume responsibility for the disarmament process that would probably take a year or more to execute. The UN refused to accept responsibility for the process at this point. The pledges for disarmament and demobilisation would be repeated in March during a follow-up conference in Ethiopia, but led to no tangible result.

In mid-January the security situation in Mogadishu temporarily improved. According to the Marines, the weapons sweeps and an intensified patrolling regime, did the job, but an uneasy and ill-defined peace persisted between UNITAF and the warlords. In fact, “respectful coexistence” was rapidly unravelling between January and March. Large scale confrontations were postponed primarily because those who expected to gain from a continuation of the armed struggle for power—most of all Aideed and those affiliated with him—were waiting for the Americans to leave. For the time being, most security problems appeared to be coming from “bandits”, the generic term used for unidentified thugs and thieves. Nevertheless, Aideed’s radio-station started to incite violence towards the intervening forces. Occasional clashes between the intervention force and militia elements persisted through January and February.

There were a number of reasons for Aideed and other warlords to increase their opposition towards UNITAF. First of all, the international force began pushing into the countryside in order to “pacify” the provinces in January. Although not all contingents pursued this with equal vigour, by moving into the interior the force started to disrupt the hide-outs in which the factions and bandits had stashed their weapons or to which they had withdrawn. The second reason for the unravelling of the uneasy peace was UNITAF’s increased weap-
ons searches, with sweeps in Mogadishu and into provincial towns such as Afgoye, Jowhar, Baidoa and Kismayu. This was done, however, at a point when the limits of what UNITAF actually could and would do were becoming more obvious to the warlords and bandits. The intervention force initially overwhelmed and intimidated the Somalis. This situation was best exploited by the French in Oddur and the Marines in Baidoa. However, this momentum seemed to be lost. The weapons policy was still half-hearted and complex in most places. Although the “Four No’s—no technicals, no roadblocks, no visible weapons and no banditry—were praised in U.S. military evaluations for their “admirable simplicity”, the latter two were far from simple to apply. Major Stanton, from what he witnessed on the tactical level in his sector around the coastal city Marka, would have preferred large scale disarmament, even though he recognised this would have taken months and possibly a year. This, in his opinion,

would have firmly established the international intervention forces (U.S.-led transitioning to UN-led) as the ultimate (albeit temporary) authority in Somalia. As it was, we didn’t confiscate their weapons, but set out a series of confusing restrictions on the major groups. For example, you may not have a ‘technical’ unless it’s parked here in this collection yard, or you cannot be showing any visible weapons. This conveyed to the Somalis that we were afraid of (or at least concerned about) their power.

At the time, many considered Boutros-Ghali’s ideas of total disarmament over-ambitious. To make their case, sceptics such as Oakley referred to the unlikeliness of clearing all illegal arms out of Washington D.C. or New York. Although ridding Somalia of all its small arms would have been impossible, few doubted that reducing the factions’ ability to resume their large scale war of attrition was a prerequisite for any long term success. More important in the short term, was an effective weapons policy in the streets. As the Dutch Marines had discovered by refusing to go strictly by the book in Cambodia, controlling small arms on the streets had the positive effect of enhancing the intervention force’s authority and credibility in the eyes of the local population. Banditry instead of faction-warfare was the biggest immediate threat to their lives. In all, no more than 4,621 rifles were confiscated by UNITAF nationwide between 10 December and 3 April 1993. Of those arms, 710 had to be returned to guards hired by the relief organisation. This was a meagre harvest for a force numbering 38,000 troops and probably even somewhat below the ratio of weapons confiscated by the Marine battalion in Cambodia outside their UN mandate.

A third fundamental problem facing UNITAF in its relationship towards the warlords was its relationship with the population. There was a danger of losing popular support of those who welcomed the troops, as well as failing to win the “hearts and minds” of the Somalis who were more apprehensive about the outside military presence. The warlords capitalized on any form of resentment amongst the population in order to oppose the intervention force by using and manipulating civilians to cause incidents that embarrassed UNITAF. This was revealed in February when large scale riots broke out in Kismayo and Mogadishu.
Obviously, the posture and attitude of the troops on the ground towards the people they had come to help was critical, but their patience and restraint was being thoroughly tested. Being in Somalia certainly did not earn them the gratitude many soldiers had expected before setting out on their humanitarian mission. Young GI's had a hard time identifying with anything they witnessed around them. It was obvious that there were many “bad guys” around, but it was still hard to pick them out of an urban crowd or even in a rural village. When able to identify them, they were often frustrated with the limitations set on their ability to engage. Meanwhile the “good guys” were not unconditionally pleased with the foreigners’ actions and presence. African American troops—many of whom had been especially keen on helping the Somalis—were taken aback when the Arabic population looked down on them, feeling infinitely superior to black persons with their predominantly West-African features.67

Many of the foreign troops were surprised when they failed to witness the pitiful scenes of starvation they had seen on their television screens earlier. Although there was clearly deprivation, the real famine had taken place in the interior, where a minority of the soldiers operated. Some units deliberately rotated troops through the countryside to make them aware of the purpose of their presence. Meanwhile, relations between the U.S. Marines and the relief workers in the southern part of Mogadishu steadily deteriorated.58 The killing of relief workers by armed Somalis in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa in January and February contributed to a more strained relationship between UNITAF and the humanitarian community.69 These attacks were triggered by the NGOs laying off some of their unreliable, but extremely expensive guards, who often were regarded as redundant now that UNITAF provided security for relief convoys. However, the Marines in Mogadishu were reluctant to provide close protection to the relief workers in their compounds, arguing that they were overstretched already. Most of the other contingents were more forthcoming and developed better relations.70 Some of the resentment could also be traced back to a fundamental culture-clash between the “warriors” and the “humanitarians.”

With children stealing anything they could grab from military vehicles and compounds, with troops often being “needled” by male teenagers throwing stones and spitting at patrols while there was always the risk of bandits or militia taking pot shots at the soldiers, many lost their patience and some their restraint. In order to keep people away from their vehicles in Mogadishu many Marines started carrying tent stakes or baseball bats, also knows as “Somali-be-good sticks.”71 Crowd and riot control situations, either around food distribution points or in response to politically motivated rallies, were amongst the most depressing for all international forces in Somalia. Most Western troops lacked any form of training for such public security duties and U.S. forces were initially prohibited from using non-lethal weapons such as cayenne pepper spray. This forced them to do riot control the “old-fashioned way”, with rifle buts and bayonets.72

In the course of December and early January General Wilhelm saw his Marines as well as soldiers “lose their discipline and, he thought, their humanity. The anarchy in the
place was like a relentless sun beating down on their sunburned foreheads day after day. Somali crowds pushed the troops to their limits. The Americans reacted harshly, shouting back and brandishing their weapons. They hated everything about Somalia." After a month in the country General Wilhelm called for a “thirty-day attitude adjustment.” The order was reiterated to “smile and wave” to Somalis and he conveyed to the troops that “if you can’t still wave at kids, or are trying to hit people, [you] are losing the bubble [...] It doesn’t make a damn bit of difference how many weapons we confiscate if we lose the allegiance and support of the ninety-five percent of really good people [...] This country doesn’t need a bunch of new oppressors wearing brown uniforms.

Three weeks later a Marine sergeant driving a humvee on the streets of Mogadishu saw a young Somali boy reach into his moving vehicle and snatch his expensive sunglasses. The Marine leaned out the window and discharged his M-79 grenade launcher, loaded with a canister of buckshot over and behind his right shoulder. Fragments from the canister wounded two Somali boys, one of whom was standing nearby sipping grapefruit juice. A panel of officers and enlisted men, after hearing numerous witnesses and examining the evidence, determined that the Marine had used excessive force. On 14 February, an Army platoon was conducting a weapons sweep through a village. As often, only a few small arms and some ammunition were found, but no armed Somalis. Then suddenly two Somali men ran away and some of the troops gave chase, firing warning shots into the air and yelling at them to stop. One soldier pursued one of the men into a bushy area away from the buildings and, after shouting “there he is,” fired what he said was “a warning shot in the dirt” in order to convince the Somali to stop running away. After examining ballistics and medical evidence and hearing testimony from a colleague who heard the soldier admit to killing the man, a court-martial panel convicted him of “negligent homicide.” However, the convening authority later set aside the conviction. Aside from the question of his criminal innocence or guilt, the panel found that the warning shots fired in and around the village were excessive under the circumstances. His platoon leader, Lieutenant Brian Mangus, later argued that the Rules of Engagement were vague and that he had received no in-depth briefing: “I’m sure if I don’t understand the Rules of Engagement my soldiers don’t either.”

Australian Major Michael Kelly, who often saw the Marines work in Mogadishu, argued that the U.S. Marine Corps possessed “the power and credibility that often obviates the need to resort to that power through intimidation.” The Marines tended to be somewhat indiscriminate in their reliance on their intimidating posture. Although he had worked in anarchic Somalia in the previous months, for the British International Red Cross worker Khalil Dale described his first encounter with the Marines as still somewhat of a shock:

They stopped us [at a road block], pointed their guns at us, and I remember one of them shouting to me, ‘Hey, mother fucker, get your arse over here’ – very aggressive, rude, and I was just amazed, I thought well surely they can tell the difference between a European Red Cross worker and a local Somali militia, but obviously it wasn’t so.... [I]t was fairly obvious
to me and my colleagues that they hadn't been briefed and they certainly had no cultural briefing. 77

He had better experiences with the Belgian forces in Kismayo, who also built a good rapport with the local people. 78 However, while the Marines may have lacked the subtlety for this type of operation and Belgian Paratroopers—with their wide African experience—were somewhat more culturally aware and diplomatic in their approach to civilians, the Belgians, like the Canadians and the Italians, were involved in some serious incidents of undisciplinary fire and even torture of young Somalis. Most of these excesses were related to infiltrations in compounds and other forms of theft. They caused serious embarrassment for UNITAF and their respective governments. The torture and murder of a sixteen-year-old Somali prisoner by a Canadian corporal even triggered the disbandment of the entire Canadian Airborne Regiment several years later. These and the earlier described excesses gave rise to the notion of the “strategic corporal.” In peace operations, the tactical, operational and strategic levels were drawn ever closer together, causing a single unwise tactical move by a corporal or soldier on patrol to instantly change the character of an entire operation and, when broadcast by the ever-present media pool, possibly affect strategic considerations. 79

Although some of the incidents involving American troops were broadly reported in the press, in relation to the number of U.S. forces on the ground, they had an overall good disciplinary record. Two Somalis were killed because of excessive force by U.S. troops between December 1992 and May 1993. 80 There are abundant examples of soldiers and Marines showing admirable restraint, given that the Rules of Engagement were very lenient on self-protection—mostly giving the soldiers the benefit of the doubt. Many U.S. combat troops regarded their treatment of Somalis better than for instance Belgians and Italians, and especially Nigerians and Tunesians. One soldier said, “we treated the Somalis better than any other nation and they treated us worse.” 81 Resentment against U.S. forces, the Marines in Mogadishu in particular, were caused by their mode of operations, rather than by excesses.

The highly complex and unpredictable environment in which troops were injected exacerbated certain traits in U.S. military culture, and particularly in Marine culture. Even more so than the Army, the Marines—a highly professional force trained as shock-troops—saw themselves primarily as a combat force and tended to treat all other tasks but “to fight and win America’s wars”, with a certain disdain. The “jarheads”, as the Marines called themselves, proudly carry their unit’s nicknames such as “Hammerheads” and “Suicide Charley” Company. 82 Marine culture, with its extreme emphasis on discipline and the need to break down the individual civilian in order to rebuild him as a Marine, created good warriors, but often soldiers that lacked the ability to interpret rules flexibly. This was considered not particularly desirable in all-out conventional warfare waged by large combat units that had shown their military effectiveness in the recent war against the Iraqi army by relying on their devastating firepower, technology and discipline.
The effects of this cultivated warrior ethos were exacerbated by an excessive American focus on force protection. The preoccupation with avoiding casualties arose after the Vietnam War, but was strengthened in the wake of the suicide bombing in Beirut. It would eventually lead to a “no casualty” edict from the White House after the operation in Somalia had gone awry. During the nineties, force protection became a mission in itself, listed above all other goals and prevailing to the level where some considered it to be an endstate.  

Gérard Prunier, a French commentator witnessed how the “overequipped, security-conscious, and psychologically tense U.S. forces” inspired fear, while also being perceived as fearful in their flack jackets and helmets. They created and a distance between themselves and the population by relying on mounted patrols and heavy displays of force. Their large convoys were often protected by helicopters, whose rotor-wash had a devastating effect on the cardboard roofs of Somali houses when hovering low over built-up areas. Although ignoring the diversity of approach and performance between different American units, as will be described in the following chapter, the overall tenor of Prunier’s account was confirmed by most of the military coalition partners and international relief workers.

He contrasted the “human tanks”, as Somalis jokingly called them, with the French troops who seemed more at ease with their environment, always wearing berets or desert-hats and flack jackets only when certain to go into combat. They tended to be more friendly and open to verbal contact, but ready to instantly switch to a fighting mode. The French, one third of whose 2,100 troops in Somalia had served in nearby Djibouti, often wore the native futah, a wide, dress-like garment well adapted to the hot weather when off-duty. Officers tended to mingle with the population and relief workers when “off-duty”, and earned a reputation for excellent human intelligence gathering. At the same time they engaged in long and intense patrolling, sometimes marching for days on end, and cleared much of Oddur of its arms. According to a French newspaper, the French troops destroyed eight hundred to one thousand kilo’s of weapons and ordinance a day in late December and much of January. Much of it had been confiscated during the very first days after their arrival on December 25, when they rapidly applied their own disarmament policy before the local militia became aware of the limited UNITAF rules. The American Force Commander agreed to look the other way if they would not boast about it. The French were generally regarded as highly successful, but their sector was known to be relatively tranquil upon their arrival while they had relatively large force at their disposal.

Kelly argued that the role of the Marines might have been limited to securing points of entry and “the territory to be occupied and establish credibility.” A different type of force would then be needed for the next phase of operations. The problem was that the replacement of one type of unit with the other proved impossible, since throughout the 1990s high-quality and sufficiently equipped troops were in short supply. Soldiers were going to have to be everything at once, performing the role of the combatant, “beat cop” and humanitarian worker and constantly adjusting to the changing environment and a wide variety of players in the field. In order to capture the complexities of a new type of operation, Marine
Corp General Charles Krulak, developed the influential notion of the "Three Block War" in the aftermath of the intervention in Somalia. He described how,

[i]n one moment in time, our service members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees - providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart - conducting peacekeeping operations. Finally, they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle. All on the same day, all within three city blocks. It will be what we call the three block war.  

Strong resistance to this new reality persisted within the U.S. armed forces that tended to rely heavily on specialized forces for all other functions than conventional combat. Such opposition, although present in all Western military establishments, was clearly stronger throughout the U.S. military ranks than amongst Europeans, Canadians and Australians. Nevertheless, these were the sort of skills and flexibility also promoted by UNITAF's operations officer and Marine Corps Brigadier Anthony Zinni, as he rapidly rose through the ranks to become Commander at Central Command towards the end of Clinton’s presidency.

As if not enough distance was created between U.S. troops and the local population, “winning the hearts and minds” of the Somalis was further complicated by the severe restriction set on civic action. Despite the inclinations of U.S. military personnel to provide direct aid to the population, medical units were initially even barred from providing basic public health services such as inoculations. Officers on the tactical level were angered by the strict limitations set on the use of U.S. medical and logistical means by Central Command, and UNITAF headquarters’ failure to press for the necessary approval with the State Department. Colonel Frederick Lorenz, UNITAF’s senior legal advisor, was given the unpleasant task of reigning in the tendencies to engage in civic action, which was limited to unofficial, voluntary work. Knowing that fears of “mission creep” reigned supreme amongst U.S. military and political leadership, and “force protection” had become their prime concern, the engineers justified their efforts to repair and improve 1800 kilometres of roads as crucial for the security of the troops, rather than support to the humanitarian work done by the NGOs. “If the roads are so potholed that you can’t drive down the road,” Lorenz conveyed to Washington and Tampa, “it makes you vulnerable to banditry.”

In fact, attacks on relief convoys had already decreased dramatically despite continued inter-clan and factional conflict in the interior. Unhampered by looting, most of the food was getting through to those in need and the death rate in Somalia was reportedly down to one third of what it had been prior to December. However, banditry against civilians seemed to be increasing with criminals and militia redirecting their efforts towards “soft targets.”

As had become apparent in Cambodia, there was no substitute for a lack of safety and order when it came to winning over the people, but the mandate regarding public security was all but clear.
Benevolent “Mission Creep”

The broadly worded mandate confronted the troops on the ground with the public security dilemma of whether and how to enforce the law—and if so, what law to enforce. UNITAF did not officially accept responsibility for internal security, or public security in Somalia, but there was a lot of ambivalence in the language used to describe “a secure environment.” In his address to the nation Bush directly addressed the thugs that were ruling Somalia at the point of the gun when he said:

Let me be very clear: our mission is humanitarian, but we will not tolerate armed gangs ripping off their own people, condemning them to death by starvation. General Hoar and his troops have the authority to take whatever military action is necessary to safeguard the lives of our troops and the lives of Somalia’s people [...] the outlaw elements in Somalia must understand this is serious business.90

The President’s tough talk did not correspond with the instructions to the troops patrolling Somalia’s violent and unpredictable streets. In the first days of the intervention the dilemma was illustrated when the media described how a Somali woman was being attacked in the streets of Mogadishu while hesitant Marines and legionnaires looked on.91 Causing UNITAF substantial embarrassment, this incident raised the very basic question of whether the intervention force was there to prevent “Somali-on-Somali violence.” It proved to be a perennial problem in the future of peace operations, but was not solved in Somalia and would not be solved in the years to come. Fifty kilometres south of Mogadishu, in Marka and the Shabelle Valley, Major Stanton considered his American battalion “the only law west of the Pecos.” While this was translated primarily in an active program to suppress bandit activity in the city and countryside, the troops he sent out on patrols would only intervene in “violent scenes of Somalis beating up Somalis” if it looked like someone might get killed. “Otherwise the smartest thing was to let them fight it out.”92 A Marine officer in the more turbulent capital, however, did not regard it his duty at all to stop Somali-on-Somali violence in the neighbourhood he was supposed to control.93 There is a common misunderstanding that UNITAF’s Rules of Engagement forbade any interference with Somali-on-Somali violence.94

The Rules of Engagement have been called “one of the bright spots” of the mission in Somalia and to some extent, they were.95 In the official Marine Corps history of the mission, field historian Captain Dawson argued that the Rules of Engagement, those printed on the pocket sized card issued to all troops, were sound and clear in the head of each Marine as he hit the beaches. A Marine could “shoot anyone who posed a threat” and did not have to wait to be shot at first.96 However, the reason why Lieutenant Brian Mangus, Stanton, and many troops on the ground challenged the clarity of the rules was exactly this preoccupation within the Rules of Engagement—especially the condensed version they carried in their breast pocket—with opening fire for self-protection. While the Rules of Engagement were initially
occupied with possible hostile action directed against the force, engagement revolved around a far broader set of issues. A reoccurring problem concerning Rules of Engagement was that while simplicity was the key, since their applications fell to eighteen year olds rather than lawyers, they revolved around complicated matters at the heart of the mission.\footnote{97}

First, as mentioned above, there was the proper use of force, or "orders for opening fire" (OOF). It can be argued that these were a huge improvement over the restrictions set on for instance UNTAC soldiers operating under a peacekeeping mandate that allowed them to fire only when attacked—although even these rules could be broadly interpreted as the Dutch and French had shown.\footnote{98} Moreover, although not widely publicised, deadly force could be used in Somalia against "armed elements, mobs and rioters" threatening "human life." Second, there was the question of the use of force in relation to the confiscation of weapons. Dawson praised the confiscation of crew-served weapons as another example of the clarity of the rules before landing. Without prior clarification, however, the commanders were authorised to use "all necessary force" to seize technicals. This left it up to the commander to determine whether to shoot such a vehicle on sight. Johnston decided to have his subordinates challenge and approach technicals, only to use all necessary force if these weapons were not voluntarily surrendered.\footnote{99} It did not take long for other shortcomings of UNITAF's weapons policy to surface—as witnessed by the confusion and rapid evolution, and widely different interpretation of the rules in that field.

Third, there was the problem of the apprehension or arrest of Somalis and the subsequent handling of these detainees by military forces. Colonel Jack Klimp told his Marines early January that one of their tasks was to "slam dunk" criminal elements in Mogadishu. Inadvertently, the aptness of his metaphor was striking. After a successful dunk, the ball would merely fall through the basket after which the opponents would come charge back at the Marines. Only to this game there was no final whistle and other than the Marines, the bandits were there to stay unless the rules were fundamentally changed.\footnote{100} Public security in general, and "arrest" and detention by UNITAF troops in particular, proved one of the most thorny problems throughout the operation. Woven through all three issues was the notion that the minimum amount of force should be applied whenever possible.

The detention of Somalis had been anticipated by U.S. military legal staff and was described in the Rules of Engagement, but it was largely ignored by the higher echelons and therefore poorly thought through.\footnote{101} Moreover, all these rules were written with self-protection, disarmament of crew-served weapons and the delivery of relief goods as their foundation. Since the troops had no formal policing role, the act of arrest was usually left out of the procedures. The Rules of Engagement on the pocket-sized card described how the detention of civilians was allowed "for security reasons or in self defence." However, on top of self-defensive motives, the comprehensive version of UNITAF Rules of Engagement clearly authorized the detention of civilians interfering with the accomplishment of the mission. This brought the issue back to the fundamental question over whether the mission was to take "whatever military action" to safeguard the lives of Somali people as Bush in his
capacity of the Supreme Commander of the United States armed forces had said—or simply protect the delivery of food. There were two clauses in the Rules of Engagement that seemed to take away any doubt. One said that an armed individual or crew committing a criminal act short of threatening UNITAF was to be detained by U.S. forces by applying the minimum amount of force. Another one allowed the detention of persons who committed a criminal act “in areas under control of U.S. forces.” Definitions of criminal acts and areas under UNITAF control were not provided and there was no specific reference to public safety. Nevertheless, there were ample legal grounds to intervene in Somali-on-Somali violence. It was all up to the commander, whose interpretation of the rules was determined by the strategic guidance he received from his superiors. Since the goal of the intervention was unclear and evolving, public security involuntarily became a part of the mission.

Once detained, new problems obviously arose. With the absence of a functioning local police force or justice system, the options to soldiers witnessing a crime in progress were very limited. They either had to ignore violence or theft, or intervene and be confronted with the absence of a follow-up procedure. When an American patrol came across a gang-rape being committed in broad daylight, soldiers intervened and held the offenders captive on the spot, only to be confronted with the extreme embarrassment of having to let them go. The Rules of Engagement said that detainees were to be handed over to U.S. Military Police (MP) and afforded the same right and treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva and The Hague Conventions. But Military Police officers were in very short supply. Early plans for the deployment of three MP battalions were changed and U.S. forces were initially only allocated three MP companies.

Like UNITAF’s disarmament policy, detainee policy would evolve. In spite of the military leadership’s resistance to “mission creep”, it was recognised that at least a minimal level of law enforcement would have to be allowed so commanders and their legal advisors made the rules up as they went along. The U.S. military’s legal advisors, Staff Judge Advocates (SJAs), played an important role in adjusting and reinterpretating the Rules en Engagement, walking the streets of Mogadishu and securing the “feedback loop” from the grassroots level through UNITAF headquarters up to Central Command. On 24 December it was reconfirmed that the detention of civilians was allowed “under exceptional circumstances.” Detention by UNITAF was limited to those suspected of “crimes of a serious nature”, in cases where “the failure to detain would be an embarrassment to the U.S.” This meant soldiers could act when they witnessed a murder, torture or inhumane treatment, rape, and assault resulting in serious injuries. Although not specified in the instructions, catching an offender in the act remained the sole basis for detention. There would generally be no investigations into tip-offs or other indications of crimes.

With Military Police officers in desperately short supply and a lack of prison facilities, in most cases a Somali caught committing a crime either against UNITAF or the local population would be held for a couple of hours and then released. The futility of apprehending Somalis became apparent and was a source of much frustration for the troops who risked
their lives pursuing and capturing criminals. By 9 February Johnston established a formal detainee policy. Detainees could be held on a local military contingent’s facility for a maximum of forty-eight hours. If there was sufficient evidence a detainee was to be moved to the UNITAF detention facility at Mogadishu University. There he could be held up to seventy-two hours for a probable cause hearing. The probable cause determination was made by either the UNITAF Chief of Staff or the Operations Officer in consultation with the UNITAF Staff Judge Advocate, Colonel Lorenz.¹⁰⁶

Within the first two months UNITAF’s mission thus had expanded or had “creeped” substantially, but this is where the Force Commander drew the line for the use of military assets to fill in the law and order vacuum. Although the matter of military tribunals had been raised prior to deployment by Judge Advocates, this was done only in the context of detainees who had threatened the force or the relief effort. This matter was also ignored by higher echelons.¹⁰⁷ The lack of any follow-on legal procedure for those Somalis against whom probable cause was made out continued to plague the troops on the ground. In some cases such frustration manifested itself in harsh treatment and even summary justice, incidents that could alienate the local population. No solution to the follow-up procedures in criminal cases was possible until some form of local police organisations and court system was resurrected.

According to the Australian contingent’s legal advisor, Major Michael Kelly, the source of UNITAF’s lingering problems surrounding the public security vacuum was the lack of a sound legal framework for the operation. The absence of civil government and functioning institutions prevented Somali civil law from being applied. The absence of a host nation state also precluded a treaty to regulate UNITAF’s assumption of certain sovereign rights for an interim period. This form of pacific or non-belligerent occupation was applied in Cambodia and would be the framework during peace operations in Haiti, in the Balkans after 1995 and in East-Timor in 1999. Kelly argued that in the absence of a government in Somalia, the laws of occupation as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the one “Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War” could and should have been used as a legal basis and guideline. Kelly considered the idea after he arrived in Mogadishu early January and would influence the Australian commanders’ approach toward the law and order vacuum in Baidoa.

Kelly’s American colleagues, responding to the limits set on Operation Restore Hope by their political and military superiors, had come to a different legal interpretation. Johnston’s principle legal advisor, Colonel Lorenz, and Central Command legal advisor Colonel Walt Huffman did discuss the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but the Americans determined that UN Security Council Resolution 794 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—authorising “all necessary means” to provide security for the delivery of relief supplies—provided adequate legitimacy. They and U.S. political and military leaders argued that, since there had been no international armed conflict over Somalia, and they were not an invading force displacing a local government, the laws of occupation as set forth the Fourth Geneva Convention did not apply. They were clearly apprehensive about the legal require-
ments on the “occupation force” to provide for the civilian population as laid down in the Geneva Convention. On 1 December, a week prior to the intervention Lorenz had advised his commander:

Although we do not seek to enter as an occupation force, recent experience in Iraq demonstrates that [when] we establish control over an area with no government infrastructure, we may be held to occupation force standards. Under international law an occupying force is responsible for the public welfare, to include safety, sanitation and a whole host of other requirements. We have to make every effort to limit our responsibility in these areas, to ensure we act within our capabilities, and be sure that the primary mission is still accomplished.

For a number of other valid reasons, the most obvious being public relations, it clearly made more sense for the Bush administration to hand out the food under the guise of UN “peacekeeping” than by invoking the image of military occupation. For reasons of legitimacy, this was unnecessary, and the practical implications were dreaded. Moreover, it was expected that any reference to occupation would have a stifling effect on international contributions to UNITAF and its UN successor.

Kelly convincingly argued in the aftermath of the operation that even in the absence of a state of war or armed resistance, UNITAF’s presence satisfied all the criteria for the laws of occupation to apply. He regarded the failure to take the law of occupation as a guideline for operations in Somalia a missed opportunity first and foremost, because its practical use in dealing with the public security vacuum. It provided for the temporary administration of justice and guidelines for dealing with and local law, including departing from it when necessary. It also gave guidelines for the reconstruction of a judicial capability where there was no local capability. Moreover, he countered U.S. fears of being overwhelmed by obligations towards the civilian population by pointing at an important caveat in international law. According to Kelly, an occupation force was only obliged to meet the needs of the population in the field of health, sustenance and welfare. It only had to provide for the population to the extent of its spare capabilities and precedence could always be given to operational demands.

Primarily as a result of the exclusion of any form of “nation building”, a conscious decisions was made at Central Command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff prior to deployment in Somalia, not to deploy major Civil Affairs assets in Somalia. Early plans, based on recent experiences in Kuwait and Northern Iraq, where one thousand Civil Affairs and three hundred specialist had been deployed respectively, had called for the inclusion of a downsized Civil Affairs brigade of an estimated two to three hundred personnel in the force structure. In Kuwait these specialists had helped reconstruct government services, while in Kurdish Iraq they were deployed primarily as an interface with the humanitarian organisations. Sizable Civil Affairs units as well as a larger Military Police detachment were “carefully removed” from the force package.
Regardless of how the mission in Somalia was interpreted, the large humanitarian components would have required a large civil-military interface. However, there was an additional reason for the objections within the senior-command level within the U.S. military to injecting these specialist forces. Almost the entire five thousand strong Civil Affairs capacity consisted of U.S. Army Reserves. The only active-duty unit was the 212-strong 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. According to Ann Wright, an American diplomat, both the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs at State Department and the Special Operations Division at the Pentagon, "tried desperately" to convince the Joint Chiefs of Staff to activate these reserves.\textsuperscript{114} Apparently the senior military leadership was well aware that the President would not consider calling up the reserves—a move that was traditionally politically sensitive.\textsuperscript{115}

In the end, only a maximum of thirty-six Civil Affairs personnel from the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion were deployed in Somalia.\textsuperscript{116} Six, four-man tactical teams joined the Marine and army battalions in the provinces. The rest, augmented by regular military personnel and civilian personnel from USAID’s Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), manned the Civil-Military Operations Centre (CMOC) at UNITAF headquarters. Requests for additional Civil Affairs personnel were denied. The CMOC, a concept developed in northern Iraq to coordinate military and humanitarian efforts, was headed U.S. Marine Corps Colonel Kevin Kennedy, who reported straight to Zinni. Kennedy, who was experienced in working with relief organisations and familiar in the region, treated relief organisations as the CMOC’s "customers."\textsuperscript{117} He performed very well in cooperation with and support of Dr. Phillip Johnston who ran the UN Humanitarian Operation Centre that was eventually co-located with the CMOC. Through this novel UN coordinating mechanism, Johnston was given the challenging task of coordinating all humanitarian operations, executed by a wide range of aid organisations that traditionally cherished their independence. According to Johnston, Kennedy took over much of the coordination within the HOC when illness forced him to leave Somalia and did much to streamline the organisation. Although the degree of coordination varied from one sector to the other, depending on the strategy and attitude of the local commander, relations between the military force and the humanitarian community were reasonably good. Kennedy argued that the poor relations between the Marines and relief organisation in southern Mogadishu were the exception, rather than the rule in Somalia.

The success of the CMOC concept in Northern Iraq and Somalia, with its predominantly humanitarian focus, caused Civil Affairs, and its reemerging NATO equivalent, Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), to be approached predominantly as a tool dealing with the military-humanitarian interface. In practise, more than in theory, both Civil Affairs and CIMIC would also concentrate on civic action—humanitarian projects of an ostensibly non-political nature that contributed to the well being of the local population as well as enhancing the profile and acceptance of the military force. For the future development of both concepts this narrow view tended to obscure the traditional roles played by Civil Affairs personnel in
running a military government in occupied territory and reconstructing or supporting local administrative capabilities.

It remains speculative to what extent the reluctance to include a robust Civil Affairs and Military Police capacity hampered UNITAF in its ability to seize and exploit the opportunities that were emerging in the field. Faced with chaos and anarchy before them, tactical commanders were forced to fill the administrative and public security vacuum haphazardly. This was usually done by the commanders, ad-hoc Civil Military Operations Teams (CMOT), MPs and legal advisors. On the motives for taking on additional tasks, Stanton said that “it was instinctive to try to impose order, to re-establish services and some kind of authority” in the coastal town Marka. His motivation did not differ much from that of the Dutch Marines in Cambodia, who were simultaneously crossing the boundaries of their mandate halfway across the globe. Commanders wanted the results of their strenuous efforts to create some security to somehow stick, instead of being merely cosmetic. Compared to Cambodia, where some form of local government and UN civil administrative capacity were present, the tactical commanders in Somalia faced an even broader challenge in the civilian sphere. With their security mission even more poorly defined local military commanders constantly felt the pull of the power vacuum. It was at this point that “mission creep” was frequently coined by those eager to stick to the narrowly defined parameters of the humanitarian mission. The term “mission creep” also found its way to America’s coalition partners in Somalia, although they were overall less apprehensive about the assumption of additional responsibilities.

As noted before, Oakley has been often criticized for his fixation on the battle for turf in Mogadishu and his “top down” approach that seemed to legitimise the status of the warlords on a national level. In defiance of such critique he argued in his postmortems that he stimulated a reverse “bottom-up” development at the provincial level. During his visits to the provinces ahead of the troops, he first explained the objectives of the force and told the local warlords not to oppose UNITAF—or face the risk of being annihilated. The Ambassador also set a pattern by meeting with other local leaders, “a broad cross-section of the local population” in order to convey that the Marines were coming to “help Somalia save itself” and not to impose any particular settlement. He or one of his deputies leading the advance team of “CIA and State Department types”, as one military officer described them, stimulated the local communities to come forward with some kind of representative body. The selection of this group, usually consisting of fifteen to twenty persons including clan-elders, religious figures, political leaders and women, would be left to the communities themselves:

We said: you decide. You can pick your representatives any way you want. You can do it on the basis of local custom, clan custom that is, you can do it on a religious basis, you can pick straws, role dice ... just give us something to work with.
Although the intentions of these meetings were likely to have been limited and in support of the humanitarian effort, Oakley claimed in 1996 that his objective had been to “lay the groundwork for the revival of local political institutions.” On another occasion, however, he also acknowledged that “we were not thinking far ahead. We were not thinking about rebuilding the country or what the power structures should be.”

If there was any political guidance for the local UNITAF commanders in the course of December and January, it was to restore the authority of the clan elders and preferably avoid cooperation with the local warlords. Oakley’s State Department officials were in desperately short supply and mostly appeared only at the initial meetings directly following the arrival of units in their sectors. Much of the politically sensitive decisions on who to work with—and thus strengthen—had to be made by the commanders on the ground. The battalion commanders clearly had received no training or instructions for this role. Having to rely on gut feelings, political tact and improvisation in absence of a prescribed political-military strategy and advice in the field, some were more successful than others. They were always at risk of empowering certain undesirable local leaders by legitimising their position.

Two six person Army Civil Affairs teams supported the Marines in Baidoa and one was deployed with Colonel Bedard’s Marines in Bardera. Their preparation and initial focus was initially narrow. Colonel Werner Hellmer, a Marine Corps lawyer, was in charge of the Civil-Military Operations Team to which the scarce Civil Affairs assets were allocated in this area. His primary concern was coordinating the humanitarian effort with the relief agencies and—rather surprisingly for a civil-military operations officer—initially commented that “dealing with the Somalis was well beyond his charter.” After it became clear that State Department support in working with the locals was extremely limited, Bedard accepted that he and his men “were stuck with it.” Although many commanders improvised well, this tendency within the U.S. armed forces to initially treat anything outside combat or security operations with a certain disdain is likely to have been a greater obstacle to their ability to fill the vacuum than the lack of sufficient numbers of Civil Affairs personnel.

In Baidoa, the first local leader to approach Colonel Newbold was Omar Elmi, a local militia leader affiliated with Aideed. According to the official, unpublished Marine Corps history of this episode, Elmi delivered his letters of credential and good wishes from Aideed and pointed out the locations of “his rivals” from the Somali National Alliance. The SNA, in fact, was Aideed’s faction, so it remains unclear whether the Marines had a clear picture of the local political situation. However, it struck the Marines that his intentions were hardly honourable. In other provincial towns and villages across Somalia similar “SNA officials” or other militia representatives—usually relatively young men and inevitably wearing sunglasses—approached the tactical commanders. Newbold’s Marines put their faith in the group of local elders that presented themselves next day. Their primary concern, public safety rather than food aid, inspired Newbold to apply his more stringent weapons policy. Later, many other elders approached the Marines and tried to convince them that those claiming to be the elders were not recognised as such by the community.
Both Newbold and Bedard, who used his two-day stop-over in Baidoa as a source of inspiration for his operations when he deployed in Bardera, were aware of the danger of being perceived as picking sides in the ever-present factional strife. Newbold and Hellmer, who were at the time advised by one of Oakley’s State Department representatives, suggested that the different groups try to reach an agreement, after which they came forward with—what Hellmer at that time perceived to be—a “thoroughly good cross-section” of the Baidoan community. Following the policy of non-interference in local politics, Newbold was extremely keen not to impose any solutions, or even “implying that a certain policy was preferred.”

In the month that the Marines were in control of Baidoa their CMOT facilitated the creation of three local committees, dealing with security, relief and the elders. They seemingly failed to appreciate that they were in fact including many of Aideed’s representatives who immediately dominated the security and relief committees. Also in Marka, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel James Sikes and his Civil Affairs officer were determined to ignore “the local SNA officials”, only to accept the authority of the clan elders. It is not clear, however, how they determined who was truly representative of the community.

The most important committee to emerge in Baidoa was the security council, which bore some resemblance to the “Anti Banditry Committee” stimulated by the Dutch Marines in Sisophon, Cambodia. In Baidoa, the elders selected as representatives asked the commander to help create a local police force. This is probably where the story of the reconstruction of the Somali police in the areas under UNITAF control starts. It is not quite clear where the initiative first emerged. Overall, the formation of local police can be considered the most crucial and potentially most successful part in the whole UNITAF phase of the Somalia intervention. Its relative success, although short lived in most places, has caused many to claim the credit. Similar developments occurred in the Canadian, Belgium and French sectors.

The reason for the confusion over where and how the police force re-emerged was that the former Somali police principally came forward on its own initiative. Prior to the fall of Barre’s regime, Somalia’s police force was approximately 15,000 strong. It was separate from the dictator’s security police and widely regarded as one of Somalia’s most stabilizing influences. Its officers were generally respected and other than the military, which had relied primarily on Soviet training, the police forces were Western trained and relatively apolitical. After the warlords took over, the police dissolved for their own safety and often returned to their clans, but usually did not take sides in the civil conflict. The Somali police took much pride in their work and re-emerged all over the country in the wake of the deployment of UNITAF forces. While in Baidoa the council of elders came forward with the initiative, in Mogadishu they emerged on their own and started to perform some very basic community policing in their own neighbourhoods. On 19 December Oakley and General Johnston drove a humvee across Mogadishu and ended up in a massive traffic jam. They were getting increasingly nervous about someone tossing a grenade at their vehicle, when suddenly a former Somali police officer in his old green uniform with a blue beret, got out in the intersec-
tion. He blew his whistle and started waving a baton and to their great surprise all the vehicles obeyed and the traffic jam disappeared.\textsuperscript{131} No less then three thousand police officers would gather on their own and present their services to UNITAF.\textsuperscript{132} The Ambassador and the General then started to ponder the possibility of using this potential asset. It was handed to them on a silver platter—especially when compared to police reconstruction efforts in future peace operations.

At this point Oakley came to realise that it would be impossible for the U.S. forces to conclude their mission with any substantial claim of lasting success unless they engaged in some rudimentary institution building. The Ambassador argued in retrospect that he did all that was possible to build up local police within tight restrictions set by both the U.S. and the UN.\textsuperscript{133}

We had a big fight with Washington since the State Department and Pentagon said “No, this is mission creep. You can not do it.” We countered that it wasn’t mission creep; it was force protection. We wanted the Somali police, whom we knew had a good reputation with the Somali people, to be out there on static guard duty guarding the gates. They spoke Somali; we didn’t. They understood the body language; we didn’t. They can deal with crowds in their own way. They don’t have to shoot them or hit them with gun butts, thereby provoking a nasty response. We’d rather let them do the job. We had a long, ongoing fight with Washington.\textsuperscript{134}

On 12 January, the night Oakley’s third request to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft for official approval was declined, the first Marine was killed by hostile fire during a patrol in a dark alley. Washington instantly gave the go-ahead, but he was informed that no material support from the American government would be forthcoming. UNITAF would have to scramble for funds and materials locally.\textsuperscript{135}

General Johnston was initially reluctant to have the military force assume responsibility and oversight of the police force, which he considered outside his mandate, but came around when it became obvious that it would help his troops. He charged Zinni with overseeing the operation. The commander of the UNITAF Military Police, Provost Marshal Lieutenant Colonel Steven Spataro, was put in charge of vetting and equipping the policemen. The prime motive for creating a rudimentary police force was relieving soldiers of the task of patrolling dark alleys, performing static guard duty at facilities and humanitarian aid distribution points and having to control crowd in the cities. Both the White House and Central Command considered anything else “beyond the mission.”\textsuperscript{136} Little policy guidance would be forthcoming from Washington in the coming weeks. The government was in transition and the new Clinton administration was unlikely to engage itself in foreign policy matters at this early stage.

There were other obstacles to the reconstruction of a Somali police force. The State Department, although more receptive to the idea, was worried about violating congressional prohibitions on aiding foreign police forces. The police force was therefore called Auxil-
iary Security Force (ASF). Also the United Nations were not particularly forthcoming at this stage. Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Anan initially refused to engage in institution building activities on the grounds that national institutions had to be established first, before local police forces could be erected. UN humanitarian coordinator Philip Johnston was a staunch supporter of the effort to resurrect the local police ahead of national reconciliation. On his own initiative he backed it with financial and material resources and would propose a "detailed plan to make it a major element of the UN program." It would take until April for the police to be officially paid. In the meantime the World Food Program supported the police force with food rations for police officers and their families.\(^{137}\)

The Bush administration's motives for objecting to more formal American engagement in institution building became obvious as the limited and improvised police reconstruction program got underway. Two crucial problems soon emerged. It would have to be determined to whom the police force would answer and what the police would do after it had apprehended a person. UNITAF refused to shroud itself in the robes of the sovereign and take direct responsibility for the police. In the provinces UNITAF units often adopted the police force, with the local military commander performing more or less the mayor's role. Also in Mogadishu Marine units would co-locate small military outpost with ASF police stations to protect them against militia and bandits and engage in joint patrols. The French, and to a lesser extent the Australians, were seen taking very direct control over the local police forces, with tangible results for their confidence and performance.\(^{138}\)

In Mogadishu, the problem was compounded by the decision to work through the warlords. Again, UNITAF was extremely lucky to have a potentially independent police commander, Brigadier Ahmed Jama, who proved acceptable to both Aideed and Ali Mahdi. However, Jama declined the offer made to him by UNITAF officers to chair the police committee when Oakley allowed the Police Committee to include political representatives from the clan-based factions. These non-police officials were unacceptable to Jama, who wanted no political interference. His fears that the thugs without any proper police background would dominate the committee meetings proved correct in the following months. The factional problems would continue in the capital but nevertheless, by March 1993 there was a three thousand-man police force in Mogadishu. Two thousand officers took to the streets in the rest of Southern Somalia. They were unarmed and underequipped, however, which did not allow them to re-establish their authority as long as UNITAF would not fully disarm the militias.\(^{139}\)

The second problem was what to do with ASF detainees. The haphazard, but rapid and temporarily successful efforts to create a new local police forces created some alternative for the unwelcome task of the foreign troops handling detainees. Most of these could now be transferred, but the intervention force was confronted with the next stumbling block. Spataro warned Zinni in late January that without a judicial system, the police could not effectively function.\(^{140}\) In that case, it would also have to be determined what law applied in Somalia and a prison system would have to be erected. The new Clinton administration was
also all too eager push those problems to UNOSOM. In the meantime, with little backing from Washington or the United Nations, some of these tasks were taken in hand by more visionary officers at UNITAF headquarters and some of the tactical units deployed throughout the country. The inevitability of institution building had become obvious, but concerns over “nation building” contributed to “mission creep”—rather than preventing it. As Major Stanton found out in Marka: “Better had there been a comprehensive plan outlining a long-term strategy for the reestablishment of government in Somalia. This would have made mission creep unnecessary. As it was, UNITAF proceeded further and further into nation building. We had gotten on this bus and now we didn’t have a clue as to where it was going. We just knew we couldn’t get off.”

The very presence of U.S. troops in the power-vacuum of Somalia had created its own momentum. A window of opportunity seemed to present itself in January 1993, when UNITAF reached the peak of its strength with 38,000 troops in theatre. By securing relief operations the intervention had drastically upset the existing predatory order based on weapons and food aid and temporarily undermined the power of the warlords. At this point the American-led force was the sole organised entity capable of exercising authority in the areas it occupied and had, unwillingly, become de facto the state. According to Kelly the force “clearly had the capacity to exert control over this territory and assume the prerogatives of the sovereign and in fact did so in a broad variety of areas.” Officially, however, despite the fact that their was no sovereignty to offend, UNITAF refused to accept responsibility and to replace the existing disorder. The window would not be open for long as the warlords were sensing the limits of the United States’ willingness and the United Nations’ ability to fill the vacuum.

Walter Clarke, the American deputy chief of the diplomatic mission in Somalia and one of Oakley’s later critics, blamed the Ambassador and the Force Commander for wearing narrow political blinders. They refused to accept the “implied authority” in a nation without a government. Clarke is hardly alone in charging Johnston and Oakley with suffering from “political myopia.” While Oakley portrayed police reconstruction as one of their major successes, Martin Ganzglass, an American lawyer who became involved in police and judiciary reconstruction in May, blamed the Ambassador for not paying sufficient attention to the resurrection of local police forces. Others, however, praise the Oakley and Johnston for staying within the parameters of the mission, maintaining the exact scope envisioned by the Bush administration. This raises the question of how much influence the leaders at the operational level could wield over the interpretation of the mission.

The judgement on the missed opportunities in Somalia, and those responsible, can best be assessed in the context of the comparison with those who best exploited the opportunities that arose in the field. Ganzglass based much of his critique on what he had seen the Australians do with minimal means in the Bay region after taking over from the Marines. He lauded them for adopting “the right approach.” In the aftermath of the failed intervention the idea emerged that the Australians had arrived with “a full-fledged civil affairs plan” for
the reconstruction of the police and judiciary in the Bay region. This view was echoed by Clarke and also picked up by Oakley and those defending American actions, or inaction, in the first months of 1993. The idea that the Australians came fully prepared for this specific mission, apparently served as an explanation for the opportunities missed by the Americans in Somalia. This is a myth, however, that obscures the more fundamental sources of their relative success.

2 Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary reminded his troops that they should kill anyone that fired on them. If armed Somalis left the Marines alone, the Marines would “let them live to fight another day.” David A. Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia: With Marine Forces, Somalia During Operation Restore Hope (Unpublished Draft, available at the Marine Corps Research Center Archives) 2-6. U.S. Marine Corps Captain David Dawson wrote his unpublished monograph as an eye witness and on the basis of interview and military documents after serving as a field historian for the U.S. Marine Force Somalia from mid-December until 22 March 1993.
3 Dawson, With The Marines, 3-5; Martin Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day: A Soldier’s Story (Novato 2001) 105. In his lucid and at times cynical account of an U.S. Army battalion in Somalia, Stanton combines personal experiences with a somewhat broader view of the operation between December 1992 and April 1993.
4 The United States stepped in to gain the use of the port of Barbera and create a foothold in the Horn of Africa.
8 There are various version of this proverb circulating. This version is taken from Bob Breen, A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force Somalia (Sydney 1998) 1. The most elaborate version appeared in the United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 55: “Me and Somalia against the world, Me and my Clan against Somalia, Me and my family against my Clan, Me and my brother against my Family, Me against my Brother.” The proverb also re-emerged in the PBS Frontline documentary, “Ambush in Mogadishu” (Posted on PBS Online, September 1998, available online at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews/dale.html)
10 David Laitin, “Somalia: Civil War and International Intervention”; Abdullah A. Mahamoud, State Collapse and Post-Conflict Developments in Africa: The Case fo Somalia, 1960-2001 (Unpublished Dissertation 2002) 3. Abdullah Mahamoud confirmed this by pointing at a combination of the tendency of the political elites to put their private interest before that of the public good and the refusal of ordinary citizens to pay taxes and thus contribute to the state that meant little to them condemned the Somali government to surviving on foreign aid handouts from its inception until its implosion in 1991.
11 Omar Jess’s SPM-SNA militia, operating in the Lower Juba area in southern Somalia, was approximately two thousand strong. Faction affiliations were even more complicated as Jess’s SPM-SNA and Morgan’s faction were two of three splinter groups that comprised the SPM. United States


Khalil Dale in interview with PBS Frontline for the documentary “Ambush in Mogadishu” PBS Frontline documentary, “Ambush in Mogadishu” (Posted on PBS Online, September 1998).

Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 2. Also Dawson mentions that the setting reminded U.S. Marines of the Mad Max movies that were known under the alternative title “Road Warrior” in the United States.


The most devastating account of NGO operations is given by Micheal Maren, who worked in Somalia both as an aid worker for the organisation Feed the Children and a journalist. He claims that in his area of operations, two-thirds of the food was stolen and argues that the fragile local economy was ravaged by food-aid, as it undermined prizes for local farmers. Michael Maren, The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity (New York: Free Press 1997).

Although disputed by some NGOs, the then vice president of World Vision and later USAID director Andrew Natsios and CARE U.S.A. president Philip Johnston were quoted saying that as much as up to eighty percent of all relief supplies was diverted or looted in what euphorically became know as “spontaneous distribution.” See Michael J. Kelly, Peace Operations: Tackling the Military, Legal and Policy Challenges (Canberra 1997) 7-9. Michael Kelly served as an operations legal officer with the Australian contingent as an Army major.


Fishel, Civil – Military Operations in the New World, 190.


United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 61. Kenneth Allard provides the figure of 28,000 Americans from a total of 38,000 troops from 21 coalition countries. This figure includes U.S. Navy and Airforce personnel, 4,000 and 1,000 respectively. In his comprehensive analysis of U.S. operations in Somalia, Allard sums up the successes of Restore Hope, but is also open about the failures. Kenneth Allard, Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned (National Defense University, Washington, D.C. 1995) 17.

Ambassador Oakley’s title was honorific, reflecting his previous service as an United States Ambassador. With no government in Somalia, the American President could not send an ambassador.

Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, 50; Fishel, Civil – Military Operations in the New World, 190.

Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 89.


Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 3-5.
David Laitin, “Somalia: Civil War and International Intervention”, n24. Laitin found out that reliable figures on the numbers of Somalis saved in the initial months are hard to come by. According to Laiton a conservative but reliable estimate by Steven Harsch, based on reasonable statistic evidence, holds between 10,000 and 25,000 lives were saved by the initial U.S.-led intervention and an estimate 100,000 by the international effort as a whole. The unsubstantiated figure of 250,000 was often used, while the staunchest advocated of overall success in the U.S.-led phase of the operations, who also fail to provide any data, argue that half a million people owe their lives to the intervention. Steven Hansch et al., Excess Mortality and the Impact of Health Interventions in the Somalia Humanitarian Emergency (Washington, D.C.: Refugee Policy Group and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 12, 1994) The figure 250,000 is used by Chester Crocker, “Lessons of Somalia”, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 75, No. 3 (1995) 3; Patman, “Beyond the Mogadishu Line”, 62; Michael Mandelbaum even said that 500,000 lives were saved, but also he failed to provide any data. Michael Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social world”, Foreign Affairs Vol. 75, No. 1 (1996) 30.

31 United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 25; The controversy between Bush and Boutros Ghali over UNITAF’s mandate proved that it could be interpreted very broadly, the disputed element being interference with the public order and internal struggle in Somalia. Boutros Ghali stressed these two elements, while the US initially limiting its role to a strictly humanitarian mission. Fishel, Civil – Military Operations in the New World, 191.


34 Fishel, Civil – Military Operations in the New World, 191-193. There were two major differences between the two interventions. First, in northern Iraq there were no relief organisations on the ground prior to the military intervention, while the UN, other IGOs and NGOs were well established in Somalia to provide humanitarian aid as long as security was adequate. Second, in Kurdish northern Iraq there was a government—which was the problems, while the problem in Somalia was the absence of a government.

35 Fishel, Civil – Military Operations in the New World, 190. See also: Shawcross, Deliver Us from Evil, 84-85.


40 The definition for crew-served weapons given in the UNITAF ROE is “any weapons system that requires more than one individual to operate. Crew-served weapons include but are not limited to tanks, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft guns, mortars and machine guns.” They also included technicals.

41 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 2-10; Patman, “Crossing the Mogadishu Line”, 63, 73f21. According to Patman, French Colonel M. Couton confirmed in an interview with that Legionnaires had started confiscating all weapons found in vehicles, since they assumed this was the UNITAF mission. It is possible that Patman refers to Colonel Michel Touron, the Commander DetachmentHarpon Oryx, Force d’Action Rapide, French Army.


43 One such arms storage sites owned by Aideed and discovered by UNITAF in the early days of the operation contained an amount of weaponry and ammunition that would have required two-hundred five-ton trucks to empty. Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-24;

44 In order to avoid confiscation of their larger arms and stocks some warlords moved large columns of vehicles and equipment over the Kenian and Ethiopian border and toward the southern Galgadud province, outside the reach of the intervention force. Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-24.

45 This notion emerges from the United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, which is more critical of the initial phase of the intervention under UNITAF than most U.S. official accounts. The
most likely reason is that it clearly reflected the views of Lieutenant General Thomas M. Montgomery, the commander of the U.S. contribution to UNOSOM II who chaired the Somalia After Action Review Committee. Montgomery seems to have wanted to convey that much of the problems for his force were created by the poor foundation laid by UNITAF.


47 Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, 56-64, 70-1, 78. A more critical account in offered in Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst (eds.), Learning From Somalia (Boulder 1997). Most of the authors contributing to this volume agree that Oakley sided too closely with the warlords.

48 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 3-10; Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 35.

49 Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 37.

50 Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 132. Stanton wrote: “About an hour into the trip we had passed so many crops that I began to feel vaguely silly about bringing a load of relief rice and lentils to this land of plenty. Sean Naylor wondered aloud about this too. Kirk Hashank (who was quicker on the draw that I was) quipped, ‘Hell, I don’t know, Sean, maybe they don’t eat corn.’”

51 Kenneth Allard uses this image in an interview for the PBS Frontline documentary “Ambush in Mogadishu.” PBS Frontline documentary, “Ambush in Mogadishu” (Posted on PBS Online, September 1998).

52 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 4-10.

53 Ibid., 4-4, 7, 13.

54 Ibid., 3-33, 7-2.


56 Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 53-54. Steve McDonald, an Australian officer of the advance party, was overwhelmed by the size of the military operation: “It was like being plonked into the middle of a movie set: CH-53 helicopters went past us ... Tents, Marines, bulldozers, trucks, aircraft of every type. It was big! A dozen ships offshore. The airport was a hive of activity.”

57 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-3, 4. The new policy was initially unpopular with relief workers, who still relied on protection from local guards as the Marines were unable to protect the three hundred different location from which they operated. They were unable to consolidate their activities as they preferred to disperse to reach the Somali population in clinics, warehouses and kitchens. The situation was partially solved when a weapons cards were issued to designated relief workers, who could then vouch for the hired gunman.

58 Oakley, “The Urban Area during Support Missions” (Presentation, 22 March 2000) 325.

59 Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 60; According to Dawson, however, “[t]he Marines found very few casualties on the objective.” Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-22.

60 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-24 to 7-31

61 Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 57. Breen refers to a report by the Australian liaison officer at CENTCOM, Colonel Jock Murray, of a briefing held by General Hoar on 28 December 1992.

62 United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report , 57

63 Allard, Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned, 50. According to Major Stanton, “no technicals” and “no roadblocks” was pretty straightforward and enforçable, but “no visible weapons” and “no banditry” were much harder to enforce. Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 107.

64 “This, combined with our rules of engagement, soon caused a change in attitude of the Somali political factions. Instead of being fearful of UNITAF forces, they looked for ways to circumvent and work around them.” Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 106-107.

65 Oakley, “The Urban Area during Support Missions” (Presentation, 22 March 2000).

66 Kevin M. Kennedy, “The Military and Humanitarian Organisations”, in: Clarke and Herbst, Learning from Somalia, 117n16. For these figures Colonel Kennedy refers to UNITAF briefing for the
Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 April 1993. Of those 4,621 close to nine hundred were confiscated by the Australian forces in the Bay province. For the number of 2,250 small arms and heavy weapons seized by UNITAF in the first ninety days of operations, Patman refers to Lorenz, "Weapons Confiscation Policy During the First Phases of Operation 'Restore Hope'", Small Wars and Insurgencies, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1994) 414-415.

67 Laura Miller and Charles Moskos, "Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Summer 1995). This point is also mentioned in Major Harold E. Bullock, Peace by Committee: Command and Control Issues in Multinational Peace Enforcement Operations (Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama June 1994), 42. In his excellent master's thesis for the School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Bullock compares the United States intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965-66 with the American experience under UNITAF and UNOSOM II in order to analyse the lessons learned and ignored. He focuses of issues involved on command and control, but pays much attention to tactical issues surrounding the problems public order and the use of non-lethal forces. The thesis is partly based on interviews an primary source material.


69 United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 58.


71 Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-31, 32. Also Bullock mentions the use of tent stakes by U.S. troops. Bullock, Peace by Committee, 36-37: "The sticks worked well since the normal tool for internal discipline among Somalis is a large, ornate stick wielded freely by a tribal elder. In situations where a bullet was too much, tent stakes often served well. Tent stakes were also affixed, pointing outward, to vehicles as make-shift spikes to ward of attackers in a style reminiscent of the Road Warrior movie vehicles."

72 Bullock, Peace by Committee, 37. Stanton gives a fascinating account of a riot at a food warehouse in Wanwaylen. He recalled: "I was at the time unfamiliar with the incredible speed at which a relatively peaceful crowd can become a rock-throwing mob." The Botswana troops, with whose performance most Western units were impressed, earned what Stanton called "a reputation for kick-ass riot control." Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 117-118, 154.


77 Interview with Khalid Dale for PBS Frontline documentary, "Ambush in Mogadishu" (Posted on PBS Online, September 1998). Somewhat later in the mission UNOSOM official Patrick Vercammen had similar experiences with U.S. troops in Mogadishu, which he contrasted with the behaviour of Australian troops in Baidoa. Patrick Vercammen in interview with author, Brussels (12 June 2003).

78 Bullock found that the Belgians were overall lauded for "doing an excellent job" in Kismayu, but were accused of "practically ignoring the countryside." Bullock, Peace by Committee, 41.


81 Miller and Moskos, "Humanitarians or Warriors", 8.

82 For a raw portrait of Marine Corps culture in the early 1990s see Anthony Swofford, Jarhead : A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles (New York 2003).

The phrase “three block war”, an influential notion in the U.S. military, was first used in 1995 by General Charles Krulak, the then commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. A Concept for Future Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (Quantico, VA: Main Corps Development Command 1997) III–6.

In order to offset some of the antagonism caused by thorough weapons searches by his Marines in one of the most troublesome areas of Mogadishu, Colonel Newbold initiated a small scale medical and dental civic action program in January,threatening some three hundred patients. Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-38.


After three months of U.S. operations, the Force Commanders assessed “...all area [were] stable or relatively stable.” United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 57.


Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-32.

Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 144.

The officer’s company manner a checkpoint at a road junction between two communities in the capital. Every day children would hurl rocks at the other side and almost always the situation with escalate into a serious firefight when the bigger brother became involved. The unit would never intervene, but take cover instead “to avoid becoming collateral damage.” “The Somalis in this area had little to gain from cooperation with the U.S. forces because their lives were completely dependent on themselves for security.” Lyons, Military Intervention in Identity Group Conflicts, 82. Lyons’ account is based on interview with U.S. Marine Corps personnel.


Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia”, 185; Bullock, Peace by Committee, 35.

Bullock, Peace by Committee, 38; Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 1-27. The comprehensive “History of the Marines” by Jack Murphy was exemplary for the confusion over, when he wrote that the troops “trained specifically for combat as an aggressive, mobile, quick strike force” was “forbidden to exchange fire except when directly attacked.” Jack Murphy, History of the Marines (World Publishing Group, North Dighton 2002) 250.

Allard, Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned, 36. According to Allard ROEs embody two crucial principles from peace operations: restraint and legitimacy. After all, the primary means available to soldiers, the use of force, had to be seen as supporting the ends for which an operation was initiated.

The French and Canadian contingents with their parallel experience in Bosnia and Cambodia were relieved to be given more latitude for the use of force under the American rules of engagement. Bullock, Peace by Committee, 35.


Dawson, The U.S. Marines in Somalia, 7-7. In early January 1993, Dawson writes, “Colonel Klimp told his subordinates that Task Force Mogadishu had three tasks: to gratify the people by feeding them; to gratify the relief agencies by enabling them to feed the people; and to ‘slam dunk’ the criminal elements.”

Bullock, Peace by Committee, 38.

The ROEs for Operation Restore Hope were printed in 1994 as an example in U.S. Army Field Manual 100-23, “Peacekeeping Operations.” The abbreviated version on the ROE-Card as well as the complete document can also be found as an appendix in Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars a Day,

103 Bullock, Peace by Committee, 39.

104 Lieutenant Colonel Christopher L. Baggot, A Leap Into the Dark: Crisis Action Planning for Operation Restore Hope, (Monograph for School of Advanced Military Studies, USACGSC, Fort Leavenworth, 1996) 19. This thesis is available at the NDU Library.

105 Bullock, Peace by Committee, 38.

106 Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-32, 7-33. See also Kelly, Restoring and Maintaining Order, 198.

107 Kelly, Peace Operations, 34.

108 F.M. Lorenz, "Response: The U.S. Perspective of Opertion Restore Hope", in: Oakley, Dziedzic and Goldberg, Policing the New World Disorder, 50.

109 Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-39, 40f/74. In his book, Kelly reproduced the text from this memorandum from Lorenz to General Johnston, which is dated 1 December 1992.

110 W. Hays Parks (Special Assistant to the Judge Advocate General of the Army, Washington, D.C.) “International Humanitarian Law in Multinational Operations: How do Multinational Forces work within Constraints set by Differing Commitments of Individual States?”, Presentation for EAPC Workshop on International Humanitarian Law and Multinational Forces (London, United Kingdom, 20-21 November 2000). W. Hays Parks explained in a footnote (n14) how—although in U.S. operations in Somalia and Haiti it was the U.S. position that neither the 1949 Geneva Civilians Convention nor the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War technically applied—its armed forces followed U.S. military doctrine which conforms with those treaties when establishing and running of a prisoner of war or civilian internee camp.

111 This is the basic argument made in Kelly, Peace Operations, Chapters 3 and 4; For an excerpt of his argument see: Kelly, “Legitimacy and the Public Security Function”, in Robert B. Oakley, Michael J. Dziedzic and Eliot M. Goldberg, Policing the New World Disorder (NDU, Washington D.C. 1998)


114 Ann Wright served as chief of UNOSOM’s Justice Division from May to August 1993. See Kelly, Peace Operations, 7-17.


118 Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 156.

119 Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, 69-71. John Hirsh was Oakley’s deputy in Somalia. “CIA types” are mentioned by Stanton who based on his account on first hand experiences in Bale Dogle and Belet Huen. Stanton, Somalia On Five Dollars A Day, 100.

120 Ambassador Robert B. Oakley in an interview with the author (Washington D.C., 21 October 2003).


122 Interview with Ambassador Robert B. Oakley, 21 October 2003.

123 An Army document dated 24 January 1993 reported that the Civil Affairs staff was only prepared as survey teams before deployment, but ended up doing a good job. Bullock, Peace by Committee, 62. The document used by Bullock was drafted by U.S. Army Lieutenant Moase, “Special Operating Forces—Civil Affairs,” JULLS 12457-88301 (00112), 24 January 1993. Bullock also refers to a U.S. Marine officer wondering why the Marines were continuously sent on “these mission” without Civil Affairs support or proper training.

Dawson was with the Marines at the time and bases his account of situation reports and interviews with Newbold and Hellmer. He mentioned Omar Elmi as the local leader of the Aideed faction in Baidoa. Dawson explains how Elmi “described the locations of Somalia National Alliance (SNA) forces in the area. The SNA, of course, was a rival faction.” The field historian does not address the fact that the SNA was in fact Aideed’s faction, locally called SLA (or SNA-SLA). See Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-2, 8-3, 8-23, 8-25; Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 88-89. Elmi’s name does not appear in Kelly’s, Breen’s or any other account of UNITAF operations in Baidoa.


Stanton, *Somalia On Five Dollars A Day*, 133, 139.

Amongst those claiming to be the first to set up local police forces are the U.S. Army battalion in Marka, Oakley in Mogadish, and the Marines in Baidoa. General Zinni regarded police reconstruction more important than delivering food aid in accomplishing UNITAF’s mission. See Lyons, *Military Intervention in Identity Group Conflicts*, 82.


Interview with Oakley, 21 October 2003.


Oakley, “The Urban Area during Support Missions” (Presentation, 22 March 2000) 332-333.

Ibid.

Ibid.; See also Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 7-35n154, 7-37; Dawson, *The U.S. Marines in Somalia*, 4-11, 12.


Ganzglass, “The Restoration of the Somali Justice System”, 20-37. Karin von Hippel writes that Walter Clarke wrote to her that a mere two Somali prisoners were held in Mogadishu prison at the time the Marines left the city on 4 May 1993. Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, 73.
