Soldiers and civil power: supporting or substituting civil authorities in peace operation during the 1990s
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SECURING AND GOVERNING BAIĐOĂ

The Australians’ Living Laboratory in Somalia

Australian troops arrived in Somalia one month into the operation, just as UNITAF was reaching its peak strength of 38,000 in mid-January 1993. A window of opportunity seemed to present itself as the warlords’ military capacity was temporarily neutralised. By this point, however, the intervention process stalled, as there was no plan on how to proceed. Complex issues such as disarmament and restoration of government and services continued to be outside Washington’s scope, but the United States continued to treat Aideed and Ali Mahdi as legitimate political players. Washington’s ability to provide strategic direction was temporarily paralysed by the handover of government from Bush to Clinton, while Colin Powell and the U.S. military elite—already wary of the new administration’s interventionist foreign policy ambitions—were effectively opposing the possibility of using the U.S. military in anything resembling a “nation building” role. In the meantime, the United Nations provided little direction on the policy level and proved unable to assume operational control of the mission—leaving the U.S.-led force to play the role of reluctant and often ineffective vacuum fillers. Boutros-Ghali continued to seek national reconciliation through the warlords, while his Secretariat failed to raise an adequate civil administrative or civilian police capacity necessary to engage in institution building from the bottom up. In the meantime, the ill-defined parameters of UNITAF’s mission to provide security combined with relative autonomy for the commanders in the field resulted in a wide variety of approaches to the vacuum on the ground. The Australians soon found themselves taking the mission beyond anything attempted by other contingents.

The Legacy of the Marines

On 5 January, after having spent almost a week in Mogadishu, a small reconnaissance team led by Australian Colonel Bill Mellor, headed out to Baidoa. Mellor was the senior national commander at UNITAF headquarters and went to prepare the way for the Australian Battalion Group, which had been assigned to the Bay region on 21 December. The landscape they traversed on the seven hour drive reminded the officers of inland Australian scrub country, “monotonous and flat as a pancake.” It was predominantly open savannah with patches of camel-thorn bushes. The American convoy on which they travelled was, as always, an impressive display of firepower, with the menacing roar of helicopter gunships constantly overhead and escort vehicles “bristled with guns barrels pointed at every direction.” Baidoa at the time was still commonly referred to in the Western press as the “City of Death”, but the responsible Australian policymakers did not mind the high-profile sector. Serving in a merely
supporting role in past peacekeeping operations and in Cambodia, the small professional Australian Army was also eager to be operationally deployed in a proper area of responsibility.¹

The Marines in Baidoa were glad to see the Australians and their eagerness to be relieved showed while briefing their visitors.² The reconnaissance party also met with some fellow Australians in the hard-pressed humanitarian community, in order to add to the incomplete intelligence picture of the region. When battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel David Hurley arrived one week later ahead of his troops, his first impression of the U.S. troops at Baidoa airfield was somewhat of a shock. Having expected the airfield to be a lightly defended base, he instead found the Marines living in a congregation of tents “amidst a military junk yard overrun by hundreds of Somali adults and children, either milling about, scavenging or begging.”³ The next day, while his troops were on a military transportation vessel on the Indian Ocean, news of the first Marine killed by hostile fire reached the “Diggers”, as the Australian troops were commonly referred to since their baptism to fire in the trenches during the First World War. It would sharpen their senses for what would be the first operational deployment for the Australian Army since its withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972.

For Operation Solace, as the Australians had somewhat more modestly called their contribution to Operation Restore Hope, the contingent would be deployed for a set period ending late May. They expected to be transferred from U.S. to UN command in the near future, but Brigadier Zinni told Mellor quite early that he should not expect this to happen before the U.S. Presidential Inauguration or anytime soon thereafter. Although the UN obviously lacked the capacity assume another large scale operation soon, it also lacked a sense of urgency to take control. Viewed from New York, where Boutros-Ghali had only a handful of officers on his military staff, the Americans seemed to be running a smooth military show from Central Command headquarters in Tampa, where General Hoar commanded over five hundred U.S. personnel.⁴ Most UNOSOM staff in Mogadishu had been sent on Christmas leave and despite the Secretary General’s personal interest in Somalia as a testground for his “peace building” ideas, the Secretariat in New York was distracted by other commitments. Although there was no strategy for reconciliation or operations formulated by the United Nations until late March, the assumption by the Australians that they would be working under UN control at some point gave them a different, more long-term perspective on their mission.

Approximately half of the Marine force had been withdrawn from Somalia by mid-February, leaving the 3,500 Marines that remained in southern Mogadishu and the battalion in Bardera frustrated by the constant postponement of their departure date.⁵ Increasingly, the Marines in Mogadishu had to deal with crowd and riot control situations, like U.S. Army and Belgium paratroopers in Kismayu during the February riots. The use of “David versus Goliath-type slings” by Somali youths prompted the use of plexiglas face masks to fit over kevlar helmets. Non-lethal weapons such as cayenne pepper spray were issued, but permission for the use of such non-traditional military methods still had to come from General Johnston himself on a case by case basis. Somali Crowds were quite often stirred up by Aideed’s radio
station broadcasting anti-UNITAF propaganda, but on 3 March General Wilhelm refused to take the risk of alienating Aideed and his supporters by closing down the station. The Marines would continue to patrol around the clock both on foot and in vehicles, which kept the warlords from controlling the streets. However, they stopped most of their footpatrols at night after two Marines were shot in separate incidents in January.

The 930 strong Australian Battalion Group would take charge of the entire Bay province, the region worst affected by warlordism and hunger. The Australian sector had an estimated population of 180,000 and measured approximately 140 by 120 kilometres. The provincial capital Baidoa, 240 kilometres north-west of Mogadishu, contained between fifty and sixty thousand inhabitants, one-third of whom were refugees from the countryside. Baidoa was southern Somalia’s most significant inland town, with the region’s main market at the crossroads between Mogadishu, Bardera, Huddur and Belet Huen. The area was inhabited predominantly by the agricultural Ranhanweyn clan and had substantial arable lands. The Australian contingent centred on Hurley’s infantry battalion, 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR), with an attached cavalry squadron with thirty armoured personnel carriers. Hurley officially took over the Baidoa Humanitarian Relief Sector on 19 January. Mellor would play a dual role of the commander of Australian Forces Somalia, that also included a naval vessel offshore and a small airforce element, and senior representative to

UNITAF headquarters.\textsuperscript{7} Attached to his national headquarters were Michael Kelly in his role of legal advisor and a detachment of six Military Police personnel. The Australian battalion group would initially operate under the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and from March, directly under UNITAF headquarters. The last two weeks of its deployment in May, after the Americans had transferred command, the Australians were officially part of the UN force, UNOSOM II.

Despite their arrival one month after the American entry, there was no clear intelligence picture regarding the situation and threats in the Bay region. Most information had been gathered through informal channels. Hurley spoke via satellite telephone to Phoeby Frasier, the daughter of the former Australian Prime Minister and Lockton Morrissey, a former member of the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SAS). Both were NGO workers in Baidoa. The information that reached the troops and junior officers in Australia was scant, and in early January overall expectations were still based on the TV-images of warlords roaming the countryside in technicals.

Baidoa became the pride of Marine Corps operations in Somalia and Oakley repeatedly called it the "model" for what was being accomplished through \textit{Operation Restore Hope}.\textsuperscript{8} In his enthusiasm to underline the success of the Marines in Baidoa, the Marine Corps field historian Major David Dawson wrote about the situation halfway January:

\begin{quote}
While [the Marine Task Force] was responsible for Baidoa, it had changed from 'The City of Death' into a peaceful rural town. The security provided by the Marines and their coalition partners enabled the relief agencies to deliver thousands of tons of food, enough to fed more than a hundred thousand people. No longer afraid of looters, merchants reopened their stalls in the market places. A nascent police force had begun enforcing the law. Instead of fighting, members of the various clans were holding meetings to resolve their differences. The various councils organized with the help of the [Civil-Military Operations Team] formed the nucleus of a local government. On the morning of 16 January, exactly one month after Task Force Hope had arrived, children went to school in Baidoa for the first time since the civil war began.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

Admittedly, Baidoa had come a long way from where it was one month earlier, when large numbers of bodies were picked up from the streets every day. In early December, regular citizens had cowered in their homes, only going out to scramble for food and water. Refugees living on the outskirts of town struggled for survival in total squalor, while being indiscriminately preyed upon by armed bandits. In the hinterland, many villages were abandoned, huts caved in and the field just outside Baidoa were covered with fresh, shallow graves.\textsuperscript{10} After the arrival of the Marines, the self-appointed "head of airfield security" Hassan Gutaale Abdul, in charge of 132 armed bandits equipped with several technicals, was no longer able to demand two to five thousand dollar for each relief plane landing.\textsuperscript{11}

Although the food crisis would last until mid-March in the countryside, large scale starvation had clearly ended in most places by January. However, if the picture was indeed as
rosy by presented by Dawson, the Australians would only have had to consolidate on the U.S. successes. This was definitely not the case. In fact, the situation in May portrayed by Australian Army field historian Bob Breen, was pretty much that portrayed by Dawson. This was after months of intense, inventive and often violent military operations by the Australian battalion group. Still, Breen was far more sceptical about UNITAF’s overall impact on the Bay region.

During the first night spent at the airfield base in Baidoa, the constant crackle of gunfire in the city caused quite some excitement amongst the Diggers. With bandits eager to spend their money gained from theft and extortion, Baidoa was still thriving with drugs, arms trade and prostitution and especially at night it was a dangerous place. Lockton Morrisey from CARE Australia had become used to receiving death threats on an almost daily basis, but the former commando told the Australian reconnaissance party ten days earlier that he was now seriously afraid of being gunned down like the Irish UNICEF doctor in Kismayu. In a very tense briefing he portrayed the Marines as not particularly cooperative with the relief organisations and heavy-handed with the locals. Also Major Dick Stanhope, who would lead the Australian Civil-Military Operations Team (CMOT), asserted that the Marines were “extremely hesitant to assist the NGOs” in Baidoa. They refused to provide close physical protection for the approximately one hundred strong expatriate staff that occupied compounds and warehouses concentrated along “NGO Road.” The argument used in Mogadishu, that the relief organisations’ high degree of dispersal did not allow protection, was not valid in Baidoa. Instead, the Marines had concentrated on escorting convoys and confiscating weapons. Then, on 15 January, a Swiss relief worker was killed by a shot in the back of the head in a nearby village. Two days later, just before the Australians took over, three armed gunmen robbed the Médecins Sans Frontières compound of a large quantity of cash. The humanitarian community had become thoroughly disillusioned with Marines and sent a letter to UNITAF headquarters stating that they would all leave Baidoa if one more worker was killed or wounded by bandits or militia. The failure to protect the relief organisations in the epicentre of the famine would mean a serious blow to UNITAF’s prestige.

It is difficult to assess the level of acceptance of the Marines by the local population. The improved security obviously pleased the majority of the population. During a visit to a village, Hurley witnessed how the people were very pleased to see the Americans, “some even clapped as we drove past.” Nevertheless, an Australian platoon commander who joined the Marines that first night on a patrol was struck by “the hatred in Somali eyes as the Marines drove past them.” Obviously, there were those who gained and those who lost from their presence. He would soon find out that those people he encountered in the streets during a night patrol, were—not coincidentally—the ones least fearful of being mugged, raped or shot and the least pleased to see UNITAF. His overall first impression was that the Marines saw their mission as getting a job done rather than helping the population, and concluded that the Somalis felt this. The “Hammerheads”, the Marine battalion that had taken over from Newbold’s Marines around New Year had in their own parlance “kicked Somali but”, but had
become frustrated and bored when quick and measurable success proved elusive.\textsuperscript{17} In their searches for bandits and weapons, the Marines came down heavily on the people and property, "busting" houses and handling all suspect males roughly. Just before handing over to the Australians, they "took down" Buurhakababa and other villages. However, Newbold and his successor adhered to the "carrot and stick" method and always made sure to combine weapons sweeps with food delivery. In Baidoa more had been done in terms of civic action than by Marine units elsewhere—which meant going beyond his commander's intent. Marines and engineers had started clearing some of the streets of wrecks and debris and delivered food, clothes and medical supplies to orphanages.\textsuperscript{18}

With the support of Colonel Hellmer's CMOT, the three local committees had been set up. The security committee met on a daily basis, the elders' committee assembled every other day and the relief committee three times per week.\textsuperscript{19} U.S. officials in Mogadishu described these local representative bodies in Baidoa as the best example of the ad hoc policy they helped establish in the provinces. Cooperation and representation was said to function better than for instance in Bardera and Kismayu, where the stronger faction leaders were still intimidating local representatives.\textsuperscript{20} However, it is unlikely to have represented anything like the "nucleus of a local government." Hurley was not that impressed when he wrote in January: "The Marines have done a lot of good work in making their presence felt, but have not set up too many lasting community development committees. We will take that on."\textsuperscript{21} The Baidoan Security Council, which Hellmer regarded a "thoroughly good cross-section" of the local community, was in fact dominated by SLA representatives who used it to further their own interest. The NGOs were not at all pleased to see that the Marines included bandit elements of the SLA in the relief committee, elements they knew were only recently involved in looting their shipments. Most of the NGOs boycotted the meetings.\textsuperscript{22} Oakley and other U.S. commentators emphasizing early UNITAF success tended to present the councils of elders as the traditional and therefore ideal pastoral representatives of the Somali people. It soon became clear, however, that the instructions to embrace the traditional elders and work around the warlords were rather simplistic. The elders themselves were often highly politicised and at times affiliated to USC-SNA or other factions. They were mostly viciously corrupt, siphoning off food aid into the local markets, and sharing much of the blame for the abundant food aid not reaching the truly needy—mostly refugees and others outside the local clan system.

In Dawson's account, a local police force was up and running in Baidoa during the first two weeks of 1993. His assumption that a police reconstruction could be successful in merely two weeks after the conception of the idea, caused another American analyst to use this version of events as an example that it "does not take a long time to make a difference."\textsuperscript{23} In the Australians' account they started the effort to select a police force from scratch on 4 February. They found that it would take months before the initiative showed any promise of helping them in the short term, let alone become effective as an autonomous force in the long run.\textsuperscript{24}
Just as the Australians arrived in Somalia, militia and bandits were finding ways of resuming their criminal activities by moving around UNITAF as they became aware of the limitations set on the actions of the foreign soldiers. The Marines had removed the overt military style security threat by confiscating technicals and some of the heavier militia arms and had conducted largely ineffective arms sweeps in Baidoa and some villages. Most important, Newbold had barred the public display of weapons and thereby set an example that would be followed by the overly cautious UNITAF headquarters elsewhere in Somalia. It would be up to the Australians to start dealing with the underlying threats posed by bandits who—outside the view of the Marines—continued to rule Baidoa and the countryside at the point of a gun. They would also find out that they could hardly ignore the fundamental political problems posed by the minority rule of Aideed’s local associates over the predominantly Rahanwayn Baidoan population. Although he had no clear idea of the political complexities he would face, the day his first men went on patrol in Baidoa Hurley wrote in a letter to his wife that his most difficult task would be “dealing with the political aspects—the chief and elders, clan factions and the relief agencies. All very convoluted and sensitive at the moment.” He modestly added: “Hopefully we will make the right decisions.”

**Urban Security Operations**

Conspicuously absent from the Marines’ official account of their deployment in Baidoa were the area’s two main thugs, Gutaale and his associate Hussein Barre Warsame. Both were affiliated with Aideed and acted as the local branch and armed element of his USC-SNA, called the Somali Liberation Army (SLA). Their Duduble sub-clan was allied to the Habir Gedir and dominated Baidoa without any real challenge to their authority. Like other smaller local warlords, they paid tribute to Aideed or other major militia leaders. Major Kelly later investigated both and described Warsame as second in command to Gutaale and his “chief weapon in the regime of intimidation and terror.” Breen describes a somewhat more lose affiliation:

“Warsame organised banditry, political murders and looting while Gutaale’s criminal associates extorted money and probably did their share of looting as well. These two villains were both Aideed supporters and agreed to keep out of each other’s way while they conducted their respective criminal activities.”

Although hampered in their criminal activities, neither Gutaale nor Warsame had been seriously marginalised during the Marines’ five weeks presence. After the Australians took over from the Marines, they presented themselves and the SLA as the legitimate political leadership for the Bay region. There were other urban gang leaders like Salat Mohammad Ibrahim. “Ganey”, as he was also known, was a much-feared politically unaffiliated rival of SNA-SLA in charge of a small group of gunmen. After rapidly drawing up an intelligence picture of the local political patterns, the Australians decided “not to concede any political
legitimacy in terms of political authority" to Aideed's associates. The Australians did not recognise the security and relief committees set up by the Marines. An alternative framework was established that incorporated what Kelly called "the responsible elements of the community."30

Apart from the local warlords, the Australian faced two types of deliberate threats. First, there were the mostly unidentified nomadic bandits who terrorised the countryside or entered the city "to rob, rape and loot." Some of those came from Mogadishu or Kismayu-Bardera. The second potential threat came from criminal guards employed by all relief organisations, mostly the less-experienced NGOs. Additionally, there was the ever present danger of the abundance of guns owned by Somalis defending their private homes and businesses, who could easily mistake a patrol for criminals at night.31

Back in Australia, the battalion commander and his staff had formulated four simultaneous tasks based on the scarce information available at the time. The first was the straightforward task to protect the battalion's base. Second was the far more daunting task of creating a secure environment in Baidoa for the conduct of humanitarian operations by the aid agencies. The Australians anticipated providing close protection to the NGOs, but obviously had not considered the details and complexities involved. The third task was the protection of humanitarian aid convoys. This was a relatively easy task, but also here they expected to work closely with the relief organisations in organising the controlled hand-out of humanitarian goods. The Australians had seen chaotic scenes and expected having to handle crowd control situations. The fourth task would be patrolling the countryside, or "patrolling in depth." The four rifle-companies were planned to rotate through these tasks in nine day cycles. One rifle platoon mounted on a truck was assigned as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Troops allocated to the support company often wanted to leave the monotonous life at the base and volunteered for basic infantry work, almost acting as a fifth rifle company later in the deployment. The variety of tasks, while disrupting operations, was intended to motivate the troops and prevent them from becoming bored and stale performing static guard duties at Baidoa airfield.32

During the first days of patrolling Major Bob Worswicks, one of the company commanders, saw how his Diggers were very keen on dominating the town. Initially, patrols would be limited to three hours, as they had to acclimatise to temperatures of forty degrees Celsius in webbing and flack-jacket. The large majority of patrols were conducted on foot, which seemed to be appreciated by the locals.33 During their first patrols the Australians were confronted with the adaptability of the children, who until recently had combined "gifty! gifty!" with "Americans number one" and singing "Jingle Bells." Now, they had rapidly learned to say "G'day mate" and "Australians number one!" Although the majority of the populace seemed to welcome them, or at least accepted their presence, they were often being stared at with a degree of hostility—something for which their small "Soldiers Handbook" had prepared them.34 Like the Marines, Australian patrols were initially constantly needed, and the troops had their mettle tested by young males spitting and throwing stones. This led to
several scuffles, with soldiers wrestling the men to the ground in the few cases when they were caught. Mostly, they just had to swallow the insults, which gave rise to talk of the need to be more assertive.35

Nevertheless, an Australian private saw security in the city improve, “because we absolutely saturated Baidoa with patrols.” He was convinced that “[n]othing could go on in that city without us knowing about it.”36 Worswicks noticed how his section sized patrols would compete against each other, keeping score back at the base of the amount of patrols conducted and the number of weapons confiscated—even about the number of shots fired at them. His men would often catch only three or four hours sleep between patrols and his troops worked a seven day week throughout their deployment. He proudly wrote in his diary that they were true testimony of “the ANZAC legend”, referring to their grandfather’s and great grandfather’s role in the two World Wars as part of the Australia New Zealand Army Corps. It was there during the Gallipoli Campaign and later in the jungles of Papua New Guinea that the Australians had established a reputation for an urge to dominate no-man’s land and for vigorous jungle patrolling. The Australians were proud of their “patrolling ethos” and the intensity of their patrolling regime in the Bay region was remarked upon by General Johnston and other visiting American officers. However, the extremely high tempo of operations soon started to take its toll on the soldiers and by late January there were fears that they could not keep up the pace of operations.37

An effective, but exhausting method of patrolling in built-up areas was the “brick method” used by the British Army in Northern-Ireland. Half platoon patrols were broken down to three groups of four or five men, know as a “brick”, that would patrol along roughly
parallel axes while maintaining constant communications. This allowed them to cover a large area at once and in a short period of time, giving the highest degree of deterrence by their presence while simultaneously offering the largest chance of catching bandits as the bricks could respond to each other’s calls for support. These methods were picked up during the extensive contacts between the Australian and British military. Like most of their American counterparts, the Australians had not received specialised training in urban patrolling or house searches.

Base security turned out to be an arduous task. The concertina wire fences put in by the engineers created a barrier, but it required constant patrolling and the ten observation posts needed constant manning. The mostly unarmed infiltrators were well aware of the restrictive ROEs and not easily intimidated by warning shots. Hurley soon found out that frustration over the faltering detention policy was the biggest source of “attitude problems” amongst his troops. Soldiers worked hard and put their life on the line to capture infiltrators as well as bandits while on patrol, but in most cases suspects had to be released. The commander tried to “nip it in the bud” before it became really serious by giving a stern warning that anyone found physically abusing Somali citizens would be sent home to Australia in disgrace. Once a semblance of a local police force was established after February, infiltrators had to be transferred to their custody. However, this would mostly end up by them being released within twenty-four hours.

By early February, after a temporary amelioration of the security situation, violence in Baidoa was again on the rise despite the intense patrolling regime. At the local market a woman was shot dead and her son wounded in the leg during a simple argument. Several other incidents of violence and intimidation were reported. There were regular security problems emerging as bandits extorted money and intimidated women lined up at the Bay project, a NGO-funded pump site at the edge of town. There were also frequent reports of young women being raped at that location. An Australian patrol would regularly drive off bandits who took over the pump-site, leading to a scramble of the women for free water, but the bandits—who often simply hid their arms under their robes and dispersed amongst the crowds—would return as soon as the Australians left. In all such security operations it proved very hard to create an element of surprise as they were closely watched by a network of “Somali cockatoos”, often children, who would report their movements. That same week a bus and a truck were ambushed in separate incidents, causing over twenty casualties, and six nurses from CARE-Australia were detained by bandits in a rural village and only released after being intimidated.

Some of the violence continued to be directed against the Australians. “The local people are generally friendly and don’t appear concerned about our patrol”, Captain Andrew Somerville wrote in his diary on 3 February. But it was “uncomfortable and hot patrolling in webbing and a flak jacket, wondering if a bandit is going to pop up and shoot at you.” Especially at night, Baidoa was still “a crazy and violent place.” Two weeks later, a scout was saved by his flak jacket when a young man in the streets stabbed him with a knife and slipped
back into the crowd. A row over an abandoned sea container in the streets was used by a local bandit leader’s men to stir up resentment against the Australians, leading to a nasty crowd and riot control situation where the Diggers had stones and even a hand-grenade thrown at them. Luckily, the grenade bounced into a ditch before exploding. There continued to be incidents with rock throwing youths, and the company commanders had to actively discourage what became know as “adjusting Somali attitudes”, that was initially allowed by some patrol commanders and their junior non-commissioned officers. It proved hard to convince the young soldiers that, when challenged by other young men, physical retaliation often proved counterproductive.

There was still considerable confusion regarding UNITAF’s weapons policy and battalion headquarters’ interpretation thereof. The Australian Government had previously expressed support for Boutros Ghali’s broader disarmament proposals, but provided no specific instruction to its troops regarding a weapons policy. The prime source of confusion continued to be the armed guards hired by the NGOs. Distinguishing bandits was hard enough as its was. “The only way of identifying them in a crowd”, a platoon commander found, “was if they were pointed out by the Somalis, or if they were armed.” In the absence of an effective weapons registration system for NGO guards, a weapons-card was introduced and distributed, which facilitated Hurley’s new directive to confiscate every single unregistered fire-arm. There were however limitations to Hurley’s arms policy. As the supply of arms was endless in this part of Africa, he decided not to try to close down the local arms market, instead concentrating his efforts on reducing demand.

The Diggers liked the order to confiscate all unregistered weapons. The number of weapons taken was considered the most obvious measure of their effectiveness. However, two problems would continue to haunt the troops. The NGO guards, using their licensed weapons, were often engaged in banditry at night, while ordinary households and shopkeepers obviously clung to their weapons to protect their life and property. The rules were therefore applied with some flexibility. When operating in small villages in the countryside especially, patrol commanders would at times decide to leave the weapons with their owners. However, nowhere was the disarmament effort more vigorous than in the Bay region. In all, the Australians confiscated over nine hundred weapons, mostly small arms but also some heavier weapons. This was a substantial share of the grand total seized by UNITAF in southern Somalia, which was somewhere between four and five thousand by May.

It soon became clear that without accurate intelligence, weapons searches or any other type of proactive, and often provocative security operations were unlikely to be effective. The job was very different from conventional tactical intelligence gathering through patrol reports, satellite imagery and radio intercepts. The Australian specialised intelligence gathering capacity would eventually be large for a battalion, especially when compared to the Dutch Marines in Cambodia. Unlike the UN Secretariat, which regarded it as conflicting with a peace-keeper’s neutral stance, the Americans put no limitations on intelligence operations. Initially, two non-commissioned officers from the Australian Intelligence Corps, Brandon Thomson
and Wayne Douglas, were assigned to support the battalion's regular intelligence section. The most trusted interpreter working for the Marines helped select an additional three local interpreters who apart from translating, were able to keep their eyes and ears open while moving freely within the Baidoa community. Part of the intelligence mission was to keep track of sentiment towards the Australians and identify potential threats, but most of the efforts were directed towards identifying the nature of bandit and militia activity, finding weapons caches and charting criminal organisations. Intelligence personnel would also play a crucial role in drawing up a reliable picture of political affiliations—mainly to undermine the SLA’s efforts to maintain control of Baidoa.

Apart from using interpreters and their local networks, there were several ways of gathering information. After the first two days of intense patrolling in January Thomson and Douglas advised the infantrymen, probably after hearing the former Marine translator, that if they looked less stern and tense, but slightly more relaxed, more information was likely to flow towards them. The daily stream of stories, tip-offs and complaints—although often unreliable—helped complete the intelligence picture if properly analysed. After the Australians had demonstrated their willingness to confront local criminals and bandit groups and act on reliable tips, more Somali citizens came forward with relevant information. Thomson and Douglas often ventured into town or into the countryside. Collecting information from locals was often dangerous, so they were always escorted by at least two soldiers. These were mostly troops from support units who were keen to get away from their work as clerks, cooks or mechanics at the airfield. Hurley also allowed pairs of snipers to set up secret observation posts inside or on the outskirts of town. Using thermal imagers, they were able to maintain surveillance in an area of interest at night.

After the battalion staff acknowledged the timeliness of accurate intelligence for this particular operation in the second half of January, six additional specialised counter intelligence personnel were called for and sent from Australia. This allowed them to operate in three two-man “CI Teams” with an interpreter each. A number of the counterintelligence personnel had experience and skills acquired while serving in the SAS or Military Police. Although the battalion staff initially treated the “outsiders” with some suspicion in the very beginning, they were quickly appreciated. Cooperation with American intelligence personnel from UNITAF headquarters proved useful, but little of their information helped to build up a picture of Baidoan society and the threats to security. Ninety percent of all intelligence in support of operations came from their own efforts. The overall environment was favourable for human intelligence gathering. The security situation was such that the Australians could go anywhere to gather information and “[t]here was no local government to bind our collection efforts in a bundle of bureaucratic red tape.” Most of the conditions were created by their general style of operations and interpretation of the mission. The population was eventually quite talkative and the humanitarian community turned out to be anxious to assist in improving their own and overall security.
American forces had originally deployed only with technical intelligence support, such as signal intelligence and imagery gatherers. These turned out to be of little use in Somalia’s low-tech environment, so in January they brought in human intelligence teams. While the Australian Army had retained a handful of such specialised personnel, the comparably sized Canadian Army had allowed their expertise in this area to run so low that they had no deployable capability. The Australians had included the initial two intelligence officers “almost as an afterthought.” The teams had to learn a lot on the job. Although specialised in human intelligence gathering, they were not trained to operate in an urban environment like Baidoa where building a picture of the threat to life and property was almost like undercover work by police investigators.

In late January, the number of violent incidents between UNITAF and gunmen rose with the unravelling of the state of “respectful coexistence” throughout Somalia. The gunmen in Baidoa became bolder and during February the Australians were involved in a series of firefight. Usually, a bandit discovered by a patrol would shoot off a burst of rounds in the general direction of the Diggers and flee. In all, eleven serious confrontations ensued until May. When a night patrol was attacked on a night in February the Australians all adopted firing positions and returned fire. As he was pinned down in an alleyway the corporal in charge decided to regain the initiative by firing a light anti-tank weapon to suppress the heavy fire coming from a building. The projectile went high into the building, causing the roof to collapse on the four gunmen inside, allegedly Islamic fundamentalists working under the guise of the Islamic Relief Agency. They survived without serious injuries, but were detained and sent off to Mogadishu main prison. In all such contacts, the young corporals in charge of their sections lauded their training, since the well-practised drills allowed simultaneous quick thinking, which avoided major casualties. However, luck certainly contributed in that there were no deadly casualties due to hostile fire. Corporal Bill Perkins’ section came under fire at approximately the same crossroads later in the mission. One of the two scouts Perkins had sent across the road “heard an AK-47 being cocked and saw the bandit.” Perkins added, “He knew his life was in danger and he initiated the contact. At the same time one of my other soldiers on the other side of the road was wounded—this was all happening in a split second and we were under heavy fire. I decided to withdraw the section and later on we found out the second scout, who had initiated the contact, had four rounds hit him—two in the night-vision goggles around his neck, one into his rifle and one into his trouser leg. So he was a pretty lucky boy.”

Like most units deployed in Somalia, the First Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, was first and foremost trained for aggressive combat operations. Nevertheless, it came relatively well prepared to cope with rapidly changing levels of violence and the discriminate use of force in Somalia. As will be further explored, the battalion had been specifically training for low-level operations in Northern Australia in the two years prior to their deployment. Moreover, Hurley recalled how,
Much to the chagrin of many soldiers in 1 RAR, in 1992 the year's training priority was Services Protected Evacuation [of Australian citizens in cases of internal conflict and the breakdown of law and order]. Particular emphasis was given to reducing levels of aggression and to developing the appropriate attitude towards Australian and host nation nationals. Operations under strict Rules of Engagement and Orders for Opening Fire were practised in many imaginative scenarios [that involved manning vehicle check points and crowd and riot control]. Had we known what was to occur in early 1993, perhaps our application would have been greater. The long hours in helmet and flack jacket paid dividends, however, in the streets of Baidoa and in its surrounding villages.60

When the unit was alerted for deployment to Somalia, its troops were put through refresher training on the rules for opening fire. Also here, they acted out scenarios that helped them deal with different levels of threat, lethal or non-lethal, and the discriminate and proportional use of force. When a patrol bumped into a robbery that left two shop owners with gunshot wounds, they gave chase after two armed gunmen, charging through houses and leaping over backyard fences. When one of the gunmen fired a hurried burst of rounds, they could only respond with warning shots in the air with civilians still milling around. Before the exchange of gunfire they had been cheering the Australians on “like a crowd at a football game”, but now the people were dispersing in all directions. One of the bandits dropped his rifle and a sergeant continued the chase. However, Breen writes, “[r]ealising that the running bandit was increasing his lead against the Australians, who were wearing patrol webbing and flak jackets, Douglas decided to close the distance with a 5.56 mm bullet. Thoroughly exhausted, he dropped and took aim. However, because the bandit was unarmed and running away, the ROE did not allow Douglas to shoot. He lowered his rifle and watched the bandit make his escape.”61

Although the Australians continued to operate with the ROEs, there were cases that bordered on abetting an imminent threat, that allowed them to engage. One night in February a four-man sniper team with night-vision goggles stealthily crept up to bandits manning the Bay Project water point. When one came close enough to challenge one of the men to put down his weapons, one of the snipers reported, “the man turned, ran to his left raising his weapon to his shoulder. I initiated with two automatic bursts, killing the man.”62 After the five major fire fights during February the level of reported violence dropped significantly in the city.63 Clearly, confrontations were not the sole cause for this temporary success, but the decisive and controlled response contributed to their overall acceptance as the word got around quickly in Baidoa.

Two Schools of Thought

From their arrival, the Australians took a broad view of the secure environment they were supposed to create. They fully accepted that their mission was to provide security for the Somali population and not merely safeguard the delivery of food aid. However, this still allowed for a wide range of interpretations. Two basic interpretations of the mission were
current amongst the Australians. On one hand were those who wanted to emphasise deter-
rence through the widest and most visible armed presence while focussing on community
relations in order to diffuse tension in the city. This school of thought was in line with the
methods of traditional peacekeeping missions, although the aim—maintaining law and or-
der—was much broader. On the other hand there were also those who felt that the mission
meant operating closer to a combat role, using infantry to aggressively pursue and eliminate
bandits and their criminal organisations. Most members of the Australian battalion group were
initially on the “fight ‘em and fight ‘em” end of the spectrum, that bore some resemblance to
the “search and destroy” tactics adhered to by American troops while fighting the insurgency
in Vietnam. This attitude was based on expectations raised back in Australia, when officers
and men anticipated facing a substantial armed threat posed by warlords and their small ar-
 mies equipped with technicals and some medium weapons systems. Not unlike many Ameri-
can troops in Somalia, the potential confrontations were actually anticipated with a certain
eagerness.  

Sixty years after the pull-out from Vietnam, a new generation of Australian soldiers was eager to find out if they had what it took to operate “under fire.”

Some of the company commanders advocated more raids on houses in search of arms-
caches, and wanted to seek confrontations with bandit groups. When two companies were
assigned to the city simultaneously, competitiveness as well as coordination problems in-
creased. Major Anthony Blumer’s company pursued a series of aggressive searches of build-
ing, sometimes using sledge hammers to quickly enter houses like the Marines had done
before him. His troops tended to aggressively question any Somali male that acted suspi-
ciously. Some of the searches proved successful. Reacting on a tip by the newly-appointed
police chief, Colonel Aden Nuur, his troops found two 20mm anti-aircraft guns, a heavy
machine gun and several AK-47’s, ammunition and documents in a compound housing a
hotel and brothel. Such raids left behind angry local criminals or militia leaders. A few raids,
however, turned into slightly embarrassing scenes with broken doors and angry suspected
bandits, their families, or completely innocent civilians—and no weapons found. The Austra-
lian engineers who had to fix things regarded this as one their more unenviable tasks, as it
also included trying to appease the civilians whose property was damaged. Measured against
the number of arms seized and bandits arrested, Blumer’s company was successful. He was
eager to react to any intelligence from the counter intelligence teams and not concerned about
aggravating those loyal to Aideed. He and many of the junior leaders found it hard to accept
the limitations set on their actions and ability to engage the “enemy”, and made pleas for
increased assertiveness.

Hurley and his operations officer Major John Caligary faced a dilemma that bore little
resemblance to the choices faced in full-scale combat aimed at destroying and identifiable
enemy. They knew that the troops could be more aggressive, but at the risk of stirring up and
unsettling the city rather than stabilising and diffusing tension. A tactical approach leaning
predominantly on deterrence by presence was safer and more in line with the overall mandate,
but meant that the battalion was likely to lose the initiative to the bandits. The dilemma was
hardly “classic” in the history of peace operations, since the options for different approaches in Somalia were far more marked than in more traditional UN operations. Traditional peacekeeping was all about deterrence through presence, with hardly any possibility for proactive measures. Even the Dutch battalion commanders in Cambodia, who were lauded for their assertiveness, were largely restricted to deterrence and dependent on consent of the warring parties. In Somalia the vaguely defined security mission combined with the mandate to use “all necessary means”, and therefore loose Rules of Engagement, left a wide array of possible tactical responses to the commander. Hurley felt he was “free to undertake offensive operations rather than remain reactive and static.”68

Maintaining sufficient pressure for deterrence without escalating the level of violence was related to a fundamental theme in military command philosophy. The commander could play it safe by reigning in his company and platoon leaders, prescribing in his orders the methods and means to execute their tasks. This entailed the risk of micromanagement and left subordinates to demand permission for anything not specifically defined in orders, with a likely loss of initiative and effectiveness. The commander could also define the mission, specify his intent and give his subordinate commanders full responsibility to act within the framework of these intentions. This allowed them to fully use their ingenuity to take the actions and enforce measures they considered necessary, as Blumer would have preferred. From these two warfighting command philosophies know as Befehlstaktik and Auftragstaktik, “command by order” and “directive command”, the latter—better known as “mission command”—had become en vogue in within Western military establishments in the last decades of the Cold War.69 In a treatise on British counterinsurgency experience at West Point in 1971, U.S. Army Major J.W. Woodmansee suggested to cadets of the U.S. Military Academy that while fighting the war in Vietnam, the American military had stuck too closely to a centralised and order-driven command system. He said that although ingenuity was a hallmark of the American soldiers, “a system of decentralized execution and mission-type orders is essential to benefit from this national characteristic.”70

The U.S. military emphasized the virtues of mission command in their doctrinal development during the 1980s, when German command philosophy from the Second World War became a prime example in the development of the concept of “Air-Land Battle”, aimed at resisting the numerically superior Warsaw Pact armies. However, even in training for manoeuvre warfare on the German plains, mission command proved hard for the American military to fully put into practise. Perhaps the overall reluctance in mainstream American culture to delegate authority—related to a “zero-deficiency culture” within the military—hindered command theory from being put into practice.71 However, all armed forces struggled to work with mission-type orders that seemed to clash with the changing nature of military operations at the close of the Twentieth Century. Modern warfare on a high-tech battlefield, but particularly peace operations with their legal constraints and extreme emphasis on avoiding military and civilian casualties constantly raised the question of what level of violence was justified to accomplish a goal. Governments committing troops and the officers com-
manding them increasingly watched over the shoulders of the “strategic corporal” since any technical mistake could undermine the legitimacy of the entire intervention force.

The Australian Army traditionally delegated a large degree of authority to junior commanders. However, the commander’s choice for a relative high degree of directive control was partly forced upon him by another dominant trend in military operations short of war during the 1990s. Hurley became consumed by tasks in the political and administrative sphere—essentially Civil Affairs tasks. The shortage of time to command his battalion compelled him to leave much of the decision making to his company commanders and their subordinates. This caused some differences in approach within the Australian Battalion Group, but the overall effects would be off-set by their rotation through the sector.  

Hurley was frustrated by the lack of time he was able to spend with his troops. He had not been given helicopters, which kept him from visiting and guiding his troops as they increasingly fanned out into the countryside. Reaching the far edges of his sector would have taken merely twenty minutes by helicopter, but instead he was forced to take a four hour ride on a Land Rover. Major Caligary witnessed how Hurley was at times not entirely happy with the “lonely life of command.” It was the same isolated position Dukers had prepared Cammaert for when transferring command three months earlier in Cambodia. After an hour long conversation with his commander Caligary wrote:

We all have peers to laugh and talk frankly to but he has no one. I think he appreciates being able to speak honestly to someone now and then. By the time he left I had a better grasp of the complicated politics [pertaining to our mission].

Since no single tactic held the promise of success, Hurley opted for a mix of both schools of thought. Convinced by some of the arguments put forward by Blumer, he allowed the company commanders to increase their pressure on local criminals and nomadic bandits. More house searches were allowed, including the use of three explosive detection dogs, all as long as the company commanders reacted on reliable information. Simultaneously Hurley decided to increase the battalion’s presence in the city by having his troops occupy several NGO compounds along the “NGO-Road” in the city. This redeployment served two purposes. It provided close protection to the relief workers, who were still anxious after the murder of their Swiss colleague. As more guards were laid off, there was an increasing number of armed robberies and the Australians offered to hold their money in a safe at their base. They had already established a direct radio link via the non-military Motorola system that allowed the NGOs to call for protection from nearby patrols or possibly the Quick Reaction Force—something the Marines had failed to do. On top of static security, the redeployment enabled the company to react more swiftly to reports of criminal activity elsewhere, adding to stealth and deterrence. By March, one full company was dispersed over ten NGO compounds supported by six armoured personnel carriers. Contacts between the Diggers and the relief workers were overall good, but living so close together at times created small problems such
as soldiers swearing and deliberately leaving an explicit porn magazine in the toilets of the friendly Irish nurses at the Catholic Relief Centre.\textsuperscript{76}

In the course of February, Australian operations had been increasingly assertive. The combination of captured, wounded and killed bandits and more raids on buildings had certainly angered individual bandits and the criminal networks supporting Aideed. Moreover, the lay-offs of guards by NGOs continued to add to the tension between the gunmen and all foreigners, both humanitarian and military. For the moment the Australians seemed to have taken away the initiative from the criminal elements. It was not yet clear, however, whether they had attained the right level of deterrence or if they had stirred up a hornet’s nest, potentially resulting in violent retaliation and more strained relations with the local community.\textsuperscript{77} Hurley had taken a calculated risk, but was bracing himself.

Initially, one Australian company was assigned to the countryside to follow up the Marines’ first sweeps of some of the villages in the Bay region. Its first action concentrated on Buurhakaba, a small town along the main route to Mogadishu seventy kilometres South of Baidoa. The Marines estimated that half its population consisted of bandits and their families. A thoroughly corrupt clan leader allied to Aideed dominated the relief committee and therefore the distribution of relief goods, which caused those affiliated to other groups to be passed over. Against the advice of Australian counterintelligence Sergeant Thomson and much to Blumer’s dismay, American helicopters had dropped leaflets and used loud speakers to announce the impending security sweep on 22 January.\textsuperscript{78} The Australians were trained in executing cordon and search operations and lesson one was the element of surprise. Blumer’s troops had been quite keyed-up to find arms caches and catch armed bandits off-guard, but not surprisingly, the bandits as well as the dominant clan leader had left and arms were taken or hidden. As a result many of those left behind turned out to be friendly and even cheered the Diggers on as they secured the village in a rather tense combat-mode. Like Blumer, his American colleague Major Stanton was puzzled when he led a large scale, over two company nightly sweep into Afgoi in the Shabelle Valley one week later, only to find out that the highly complicated nightly airmobile operation had been announced by Psychological Operations personnel the previous day. It was typical for what he called UNITAF’s usual “schizophrenic”, preponderant but simultaneously risk-averse policy.

The Australians took more risks, but found it hard to achieve surprise during cordon and searches in the flat countryside, especially when noisy and dust-generating M-113 armoured personnel carriers were used in support.\textsuperscript{79} The “bush-telegraph” also worked well in Somalia and was often quicker than the Diggers. Generally, when entering a village during January and February the population turned out to be evasive and mostly reluctant to provide information on bandit activity. Much of the information provided had to be taken with a grain of salt, as villagers often directed the Australians to another village, where many “bad men” were likely to be found. Major Doug Fraser later acknowledged his and others’ initial naivety, as he was manipulated into performing a series of searches following information on rival clans, or inaccurate or false reports by local village elders leading to exhausting wild goose
chases. The uncovering of large underground stores filled with relief food controlled by some village elders and the plump, well-fed people living next to starving refugees brought home to the Australian the nature of the corrupt society they had come to help. It angered many of them, but on average they did not lose sight of the ratio of victims to perpetrators, which proved harder in urban Mogadishu. It reinforced their cooperation with the relief workers to help organise the orderly distribution process, even if this meant involvement in crowd control. The cooperative military-humanitarian effort increased the leverage of both soldiers and relief workers with the elders in the negotiation process.

These initial operations—including a few airmobile operations using U.S. helicopters and often supported by armoured vehicles—were mainly successful in asserting an Australian presence by shows of force, demonstrating their mobility and firepower. But the emphasis rapidly shifted to smaller scale operations in depth. Due to the size of the sector, companies were deployed over vast distances. Long-range platoon sized patrols for intelligence gathering could take up to a week. A young lieutenant was sent on a nine day patrol South of Baidoa, in order to conduct what he called “offensive operations” to uncover bandit activity by patrolling by day and night, both mounted and on foot and conducting a number of small scale cordons and searches. Platoons often operated individually, staying out in the field and living in the villages in order to deter bandit activity, while its sections were deployed as far as thirty kilometres from platoon headquarters. The aim was predominantly to keep the bandits off balance and to gather information on their activities.

Some of Hurley’s subordinates were frustrated that they had little to show for their efforts, as they were inclined to measure success by the number of bandits captured and arms seized. Hurley was overall more pleased with the results. Knowing that his troops could not stay behind in every village, he hoped to follow up these operations by placing police stations in each town once the new plans for an internal security force materialised. The effectiveness of cordon and searches increased after a second company was committed to the countryside after security in Baidoa and at the airfield had improved. More stealthy approaches while laying a cordon also enhanced the effectiveness of their searches. Infantry would creep up and lay a nightly cordon around a village known to be terrorised by a bandit gang or thoroughly dominated by criminals and their families, from which bandit groups were known to carry out raids on Baidoa, other villages or travellers and merchants. They would leave one side open for the armoured vehicles to make their noisy approach in the morning, driving fleeing armed bandits into the blocking positions. All such actions would be similar to what one British officer in Malaya had called “flogging the jungle without information by large numbers of troops” if it was not for the Australians’ extreme emphasis on intelligence gathering before any action. They would first send specialised intelligence teams to the villages to draw up a picture of bandit groups structures and their relations to the community.

In March the big challenge was to reduce the number of ambushes on the main road to Mogadishu. Reports of robberies, killings and sexual assault were on the rise as bandits increasingly looked for easy prey. In addition to regular security operations along the roads at
least one platoon was committed to nightly "mobile counter-ambush patrols." These heavily armed and rather unconventional patrols used modified six-wheeled Land Rovers equipped with infra red headlight. The driver and the machine gunner in the cupola wore night vision goggles, which allowed the eight men crew to follow potential targets for ambushes with their headlight turned off. When a so-called "night rider patrol" caught the high-way robbers red handed, or found them lying in ambush at the side of the road, the Rules of Engagement allowed them to attack in order to "protect life", after verbally challenging them to throw down their weapons. 83 Another method that stretched the Rules of Engagement to their limits were "white light" ambushes. Using armoured vehicles placed on likely routes for bandit groups on pitch-dark nights, a patrol would flood them with light and challenge them to lay down their weapons in Somali. Although Hurley allowed some of these innovative methods—much to the pleasure of his men—he continued to emphasise deterrence through presence, maximum dispersal, and the need to keep the bandits off balance.

The increased level of tension feared by Hurley never materialised in the remaining three months of the Australian occupation of the Bay region. Instead community relations steadily improved. Although the antipathy against the American troops in Somalia has often been exaggerated and generalised on the basis of the tense and complicated situation in Mogadishu, it is safe to say that U.S. and Australian troops created a very different level of resentment. Relations between UNITAF and the Somalis in Baidoa were still tense when the Australians arrived in January. Although young males also tested the Australians and the overall population was initially evasive, popular support for the troops visibly increased. Some of it can be attributed to civic action projects, such as rebuilding schools and playgrounds, support to the town's water supply, the provision of basic medical services and help in restarting local agricultural activity. 84 Most of it was due to the Australians' substantial contribution to personal safety and their overall posture towards the Somalis.

Although many of the Australian troops at times longed for more conventional infantry work, public security was not treated as a task that fell to them by default. 85 Extreme reluctance to accept the "policing role" was the norm amongst most U.S. Marine and Army personnel, if accepted at all. Hurley concentrated his efforts on protecting citizens from being robbed, extorted, raped or murdered. The Australian version of the Rules of Engagement followed that of the Americans, but made a few modifications, giving all Australian military personnel "a general humanitarian duty to prevent the commission of serious crimes (such as murder and rape)." Although crimes against property were not included in this duty, the repression of a criminal act necessary to establish a "secure environment for humanitarian relief operations" was allowed and broadly interpreted. 86

Apart from a preventive public security role based on deterrence by presence, the Australian commander allowed his troops to react to incidents. They were not quite as apprehensive about intervening when they came across Somali-on-Somali violence during patrols, even if these were smaller scale brawls. They also reacted to crimes that took place outside their view, such as crimes reported to a patrol or roadblock, if there was any chance of appre-
hending the offenders. In February a patrol commander was approached by a Somali man who claimed his wife and teenage daughter had just been abducted by criminals. Two sections from the Quick Reaction Force went to search down a creek line and quickly spotted the two women being led away by armed bandits. After being called to halt and drop his weapons in Somali one of the bandit immediately fired at one of the sections, after which the group retreated to a deserted house by the creek. The other section reacted immediately and decisively, with a few men storming the building while the other covered them. The swiftness of the action totally caught the four bandits by surprise. They surrendered and were detained, after which the family was reunited. By April information on the whereabouts of gangs of armed men streamed in. This allowed “Charley Company”, whose order of the day was to “chase and detain bandits”, to do their job with much increased efficiency. The company detained eight bandits in just two days, adding to a total of over seventy arrested bandits and factions members. Nevertheless, there were clearly limits to the public security role Hurley was willing and able to perform. Apart from refusing to close down the arms market, he declined to take on drug dealings and prostitution. “The Mafia style empire within the town remained in place,” Kelly acknowledged, “as it could be maintained covertly without the need to openly roam the town armed.”

The Australians struggled just as hard with the harsh Somali conditions, but looked more at ease in the Somali environment than their American colleagues. Although always in flack jackets, the Australians hardly ever wore helmets. Instead they donned their typical broad rimmed “slouch hats” that protected them well from the relentless sun. They hardly ever wore sunglasses on patrols or at roadblocks, like the Americans, facilitating the all-important eye contact in Somali culture. They did not wear desert fatigues, like the American “chocolate chip” camouflage that tended to stand out in savannah country, but most of all in the more lush areas of the Bay region and the southern river valleys. Their typical light brown and green camouflage patterns were unlike the regular green worn by other contingents and blended in almost perfectly with the vegetation in the Bay region’s scrub country that was not unfamiliar to them. Their futuristic Austrian Steyr rifles with telescopic sights, apart from being deadly accurate in firefights, were short which made them easy to handle in crowds and urban terrain.

An NGO director commented on the Australian that they were not “barrack bound”, while he saw the Marines with whom he had worked as hiding too much behind sandbags on the heavily protected Baidoa airport. They “worked into the community; they got to be friendly with the community; they got to know the community.” To emphasise the objectivity of his account the Australian aid worker held that “even agencies like Médecins Sans Frontières” had said that they “the Australians provided something that had never been seen by military forces in a peacekeeping role.” Hurley’s motto was “Gentle in manner, resolute in deed” and the overall posture was friendly, but not familiar. Although a few Australian soldiers displayed outright racist attitudes towards the Somalis, like soldiers in all western UNITAF contingents, their posture remained overwhelmingly friendly and “consumer ori-
ented”—with the population and the relief organisations being their clients. It was probably partly due to the Australians’ overall good-humoured and laid back attitude prevailing on the surface, combined with a undercurent of fanaticism fuelled by the urge to prove themselves, that made them resilient to setbacks and resistance in Somalia’s unpredictable and volatile environment. Satisfaction grew over time, when the level of violence towards the population and number of contacts continued to drop in March. “By April, the town could almost be described as quiet on most nights.”

The vast majority of American combat troops hated their deployment in Somalia and seriously started to doubt its purpose after the humanitarian crisis was more or less resolved. Even Major Stanton’s overall good-humoured book, “Somalia on Five Dollars a Day”, is highly cynical about his five months in Marka, one of the more successful American occupied sectors. Though quite a few Australian soldiers and junior officers were also disappointed, the source of their disappointments generally differed. When they embarked American and Australian troops had similar expectations about military-style confrontations with the warlords’ militias, and once deployed many preferred more latitude to fight the bandits. Like the Americans, the Australian Army had little peacekeeping experience prior to 1992. Yet, amongst the Diggers there seems to have been little doubt as to the goal of their mission which they generally saw as helping the Somalis rebuild themselves. Although there was some doubt about the attainability of that goal and despite the wear and tear after four months in theatre, overall morale remained high. Sergeant Graham McBeen noticed how most of the Australians regarded the experience in Somalia as “the most rewarding episode in their professional career.” This sort of appreciation was unlikely for Americans troops at the time.

**The Counterinsurgency Reflex**

The divergent response to the challenges faced in Somalia and the difference in appreciation of the mission can be traced back to the overall perception of and approach to the military profession in the United States and Australia. The Vietnam experience left deep marks in both societies, but it did not have the same devastating effect on the Australian military psyche. A possible explanation for Australian operations in Somalia therefore lies in the fact that these military operations—effectively internal security operations—were close in nature to counter-insurgency. After the Second World War, the Australian Army had become proficient at this type of operations, which during the 1980s became known under the generic term low-intensity conflict.

Counterinsurgency operations in Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam provided a continuum of experience for the Australian Army. The Australians had already gained substantial experience in jungle warfare fighting the conventional Japanese Army during the Second World War, but were left to reinvent the wheel fighting an irregular enemy, as the British were lax in passing on their hard-learned knowledge of the previous years. Although the Australians only joined the Malayan campaign in 1955, when the outcome had already been determined, their battalion was used extensively for internal security duties. These were mostly mop-up opera-
tions that entailed countless hours of patrolling and waiting in ambush to produce a few fleeting contacts. This was after all what counterinsurgency for infantrymen on the tactical level was in essence about.

After Malaya gained independence it could not defend itself against incursions by Indonesia, and the British became involved in the border conflict after 1962. Also on Borneo the Australian contribution was belated and limited, but valuable, and included clandestine cross-border raids. Australian doctrinal development remained largely haphazard and the Army continued to borrow from the British. When it joined the American war effort in Vietnam in 1964 the Army’s structure was still based on a traditional British-style tropical warfare divisional organisation. It had a strong tactical emphasis, as it traditionally left the operational and strategic levels of command to the British and Americans. According to the Australian military analyst Michael Evans, the Army left this war in 1972 as experts on counter-revolutionary warfare in tropical conditions in Asia. However, the tactical lessons, first drawn up in three separate pamphlets *The Enemy, Ambush and Counter-Ambush* and *Patrolling and Tracking* between 1964 and 1966, were only compiled in 1972 and received a very limited distribution.

In search of a new purpose and longing for greater autonomy the Australian Defence Force shifted its emphasis to “continental defence” of northern Australia against potential hostile incursions, something it had not done since the Interbellum. However, the Australians would not go down the path of American and continental European military establishments, described in chapter one. After a series of frustrating and distracting counterinsurgency-style experiences in former colonial territories, Australia’s allies found comfort in focussing strictly on large scale symmetric warfare against a clearly identified enemy on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Instead, the Australian divisional commander Major General R.J. Hughes complained in 1974 that after focussing on a recognised threat in the last thirty years, the Army now had to defend the homeland without a nominated potential enemy. From an expeditionary force modelled for tropical warfare, the small Army had to reconfigure and develop military doctrine to face the extraordinarily difficult task of defending the Australian land mass without any guidance on the type of war it would have to fight. It was given ample room and time to interpret this vague strategic guidance, but in the next twenty years personnel shortages, lack of resources and organisational weakness haunted the Australian Defence Force.

In the late seventies and early eighties the Army came up with the “Total Forces Concept” with a dual capability. It aimed at combining both heavy forces for higher-level conflict and light mobile forces for low-level contingencies, for a strategy of defence in depth. Overall, much emphasis was placed on a high degree of dispersion, mobility and endurance. The Australian officer corps fell back on what they knew best, the tactical level of operations, neglecting the operational art which they had left to others in previous wars. By 1987, the new Defence White Paper reiterated the defence of Australia, but with an emphasis on lower-level operations, simply because there was no potential enemy with a military capability for a
major attack in the region. Only in 1988 was all learning material from the Vietnam war formally integrated as a training bulletin called "Infantry Battalion Lessons from Vietnam." Despite the momentous changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Australia clung to continental defence until 1997.99 Michael Evans wrote about the Army’s slow response to strategic change:

"The case of Australian Army doctrine for continental operations is a cautionary tale of how the development of detailed planning for a doctrine of war can become so ingrained in the logic of its authors that it becomes, as was the case with the French Army during the 1930s, an elegant but abstract dogma unrelated to broader political realities."100

While the Australian defence policy between 1987 and 1997 may have been an anachronism, serendipity had it that the continuous emphasis on low-level military operations prepared the Australian Army better than most NATO partners for many of the post-Cold War challenges that were so far removed from conventional armoured manoeuvre warfare. Rather than invoking the image of peacekeeping, as was common amongst other UNITAF contingents, the Australians classified their mission as a low-level operation. According to Hurley, the operational environment and tactical approach that best suited operations in Somalia were similar to the concept of operations propagated in the Defence White Paper.101 Reflecting on several months of operations in Somalia, Warrant Officer Paul Angus said "[w]e have not done a thing here yet that is not low level operations," adding smilingly, "so someone must have looked into the crystal ball, because our training in the last years, since the White Paper of 1987, has been low level operations, and that is exactly what we are doing." He also lauded the Australian Army’s emphasis on individual skills and discipline for operating in a jungle environment, which brought everything back to the soldier instead of relying on an elaborate and high-tech organisation.102 While most armies contributing to Operation Restore Hope started to ponder having to adapt tactics and training to peace operations, Sergeant Graham McBeen concluded that "[o]ne of the big lessons to come out of this deployment is there aren’t too many big lessons to learn. [...] Our training doctrine for low-level conflict is sound."103 As a source of inspiration the Australians often referred to counterinsurgency. Hurley claimed to have approached the operation "as though it was similar to a counterinsurgency operation." Also Kelly held in retrospect that the contingent based its strategy on counterinsurgency, suggesting that they pre-empted this type of operation. Neither elaborated on the degree to which the historical lessons and principles of counterinsurgency were applicable in Somalia and to what extent they influenced their planning and choices once the operation had unfolded.104

As described in chapter two the British, having been the only power to win a clear-cut victory over Communist insurgents, came to be considered experts in counterinsurgency. The assembled wisdom on counterinsurgency operations was unofficially codified by Sir Robert Thompson, who had helped work out the details of the Briggs plan as a civil servant in Malaya. His five basic principles for successful internal security operations were laid down in his
book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, written in 1966 after his disillusionment with his advisory role in South Vietnam. His book put particular emphasis on their application during the Malayan Emergency, where all previous British experience merged, and on their misapplication in Vietnam. While acknowledging the wide divergence in circumstances facing the Americans in Vietnam, most analysts of low-level operations have since reconfirmed and elaborated on his findings.

Before making the attempt to compare UNITAF’s mode of operations to the counter-insurgency “model”, one has to recognise the most fundamental differences between circumstances and conditions under which UNITAF operated in Somalia. First, there was no coherent enemy to defeat, only security to be established. Second, there was no state to defend. All counterinsurgency theory is based on the assumption that the military is there in support of the civil power, which was a well established colonial administration during the war in Malaya and an unstable and corrupt regime for the Americans in South Vietnam. In Somalia, there was also no international interim administration or other form of civil component to defend or support, only the humanitarian community to protect. The third fundamental element missing from the equation in Somalia was a long-term perspective. Everything about the American intervention was “quick fix.” The history of British counterinsurgency used at West Point in the early seventies taught young cadets that apart from decades of hard learned strategic, operational and tactical knowledge, the most important lesson to be learned from the British was that effective counterinsurgency required patience. This, the author of the treatise admitted, was not an American character trait.

Reflecting on his actions in relation to counterinsurgency in 1994, Hurley referred to two of Thompson’s principles. He started by mentioning the fifth and last in the list, when he referred to the need to “establish a secure base and expand in steps to establish controlled areas.” This was the most straightforward of all principles and also the one most easily translated to a purely military operation. However, what made Thompson’s treatise rise above earlier learning was his ability to move beyond the military aspects of fighting an irregular opponent, and merge civilian and military measures and objectives on all levels—political, strategic, operational and tactical. First, he mentioned the need for a clear political aim, which in the post-colonial setting of the 1960s was “to establish and maintain a free, independent, and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable.” UNITAF’s complete lack of a long term perspective, and the conscious omission of any political and economic goals, made this principle non-applicable.

Second, Thompson emphasized the importance of operating in accordance with the law. He advocated the use force in a highly selective manner, implicitly referring to the concept of the minimum use of force and ruling out any form of collective punishment. The Australians proved proficient in the application of the right balance of force and restraint, which Kelly lauded in his writings. Overall UNITAF adhered to this principle more strictly than Thompson is likely to have envisioned. One should bear in mind that over the previous thirty years, the negative effects of any use of excessive force on community relations and
therefore perceived legitimacy was magnified manifold as communications had improved radically even in the underdeveloped world.

The third, and arguably pivotal principle in the effective execution of a counterinsurgency campaign, was the creation of a comprehensive plan for integrated civil and military operations. Thomas Mockaitis wrote in his treatise of British counterinsurgency that the development of a distinctly British approach between 1919 and 1960 was “a history not of campaigns but of principles as these were applied by soldiers, colonial administrators and police.” The formalised triangular committee system for civil-military cooperation on the district, state and federal level in Malaya, also known as the “war by committee-structure”, was a culmination of this experience. It only became fully effective when placed under the single headed executive leadership of the High Commissioner General Gerald Templer, who had served as the Director of Military Government in the British occupied sector of Germany.107 It was made possible by the extraordinary level of control that Great Britain could exercise as a colonial power over local institutions and therefore over subject peoples. In his second and last concrete reference to counterinsurgency, Hurley readily admitted in 1994 that the absence of a host government—with crucial institutions such as a police force—was the most structural dissimilarity between operations in Somalia and counterinsurgency.108 However, creating an apparatus for civil-military cooperation was part of Hurley’s approach and addressed more broadly than most UNITAF contingents.

“The battle in the populated areas”, Thompson wrote to illustrate his fourth principle, “represents a straight fight between the government and the insurgents for the rural population.” He prescribed giving absolute priority to countering the subversion of the people, rather than killing or capturing guerrillas. Mirror-imaging Mao Tse-Tung’s metaphor of the insurgent being a fish and the water being the populace, the British in Malaya had set out to isolate the insurgents from their population base. The key to the Briggs plan had been the controversial, yet effective forced relocation scheme of almost half a million rural Chinese, combined with an elaborate information campaign aimed at winning over the population to the government’s cause. Providing the population with security against retaliation from the insurgents proved absolutely crucial to winning them over, which in turn was indispensable for human intelligence gathering. Minus its forced resettlement program, this principle was a clearly relevant element for Somalia if “insurgents” were replaced by bandits or militia, but the Australians made no reference to it while comparing their operation to counterinsurgency.

Permeating all Thompson’s principles was his emphasis on fighting the cause of an insurgency instead of merely eradicating the symptoms. Translated to Somalia, this was the fundamental flaw of the intervention as the cause for anarchy and starvation was the absence of a functioning government infrastructure, not the food shortage UNITAF was addressing. Another binding element in Thompson’s thesis was the time honoured maxim of “winning the hearts and minds”, which was inherent in at least three of his leading principles: the overall political goal, the minimum use of force and countering the subversion of the population. Combined, these two dominant themes in the approach to fighting an insurgency merged in
the establishment of “the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the local population and acceptance of its capacity to coerce where necessary.”

The Australians have applied many of these principles not as a plan, but as a reflex. Hurley referred to counterinsurgency in retrospect not because he consciously applied its theoretical principles as has been vaguely suggested, but because many of them were unmistakably applicable and part of his military cultural background. Moreover, many of the ideas and methods prescribed on the “purely” military side of the spectrum were and are engrained in Australian military tradition. The Australian’s strong tactical emphasis, the need for flexibility and latitude given to junior leaders to achieve their objectives, a decentralised command system, dispersed and small scale patrols penetrating the countryside, counter-ambushes, the futility of big sweeps, the importance of winning the hearts and minds in relation to the all important human intelligence gathering effort—all these tactics and techniques were better applied by the Australians than most other contingents because low-intensity conflict was considered the norm, not an aberration in a soldier’s profession.

The Military Governor of Baidoa

The refusal of U.S. diplomatic and military leadership to accept what some have called “the implied authority in the absence of the state” in Somalia, fuels the question to what extent the intervention force had become the de facto government. The comparison to counterinsurgency also gives rise to the question if, in the absence of the pivotal element in counterinsurgency theory—a colonial administration or host nation state—UNITAF came to perform this role by default. Templer’s success in Malaya had been partly due to his dual role of the High Commissioner and the military commander and was, according to Mockaitis, “the last of the pro-consuls.” Johnston and Oakley did not accept this authority on the operational level in Mogadishu, and the United Nations failed to come forward with an adequate interim administrative structure. Tactical commanders had to cope with the effects of their refusal. Talking to Kelly on 13 February, Hurley “mused about being the ‘governor’ of Baidoa, with his staff officers being the ‘ministers’, and lamented the inadequate preparation his politics course at the Royal Military College Duntroon had given him for the situation he now faced.” In retrospect Hurley admitted that he was in essence the “military governor” of the Bay region.

The different levels of success between Mogadishu and Baidoa have in retrospect been ascribed to “a full-fledged civil affairs plan” or a “well-defined game plan”, with which the Australians—unlike the Americans—allegedly arrived in Somalia. The tendency by some American commentators to ascribe the Australian approach to the power vacuum to a preconceived plan apparently originates in Kelly’s writings on this episode. Kelly suggested the existence of an Australian “civil affairs strategy” for the reconstruction of local institutions in his argument that the laws of occupation applied in southern Somalia and that UNITAF should have based its approach on its provisions in order to address the power vacuum. However, he only advised Hurley of his legal assessment during their meeting on 13 February, one month after his arrival in Somalia and a time when he was already involved in rudi-
mentary institution building efforts such as the recreation of a Baidoan police force. At UNITAF headquarters the Australian legal advisor’s input was much appreciated, but he was told that his specific views on this matter were his own, and not shared by the Australian government.

While Hurley considered the question of whether UNITAF constituted an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention unanswered, he accepted most of the responsibilities involved and would increasingly draw on Kelly’s much-needed legal advice. However, the decision to take on tasks outside the original mission, was not reflective of a preconceived plan or strategy based on legal obligations. Instead, Hurley wrote, it “reflected the pace at which developments were happening on the ground and UNITAF’s and the UN’s inability to provide timely advice and policy direction.” He readily admitted “mission creep” was occurring in the course of his deployment. In some cases, in order to avoid the implied negative connotation, he preferred the term “mission stretch” to emphasise the deliberate nature of his decisions to interpret the mission broadly.

Major Stanhope’s liaison team became Hurley’s most important tool in managing the administrative and political complexities in his sector. The field artillery battery commander and his forward observer parties had expected to perform military liaison duties with other UNITAF units and higher headquarters, so his twenty-two strong unit had not been prepared for civil-military operations. Although experience in the Second World War and in counterguerrilla operations had brought home the importance of Civil Affairs, the small Australian Army had long since lost a specialised capacity to perform this function. After military liaison duties proved of lesser importance, Hurley assigned Stanhope and his men to act as a Civil-Military Operations Team to represent him on the local committees the Australians inherited from the Marines. Their most important point of contact was the committee of twelve representatives of the forty-one elders, the leader of whom they met once every two days. They were also to coordinate with all other organisations and individuals that approached the contingent. Stanhope broke his unit up into four teams, consisting of one officer and three others, each with their own transport and communications. These teams would also assist the companies in the provinces, liaise to local elders in the villages and proved crucial for gathering information on key people, banditry and political activity.

Although obviously not keen on political entanglement, the Australians were not as apprehensive as the Americans to become involved. Hurley accepted that with nine hundred troops at his disposal he was the most powerful player in the Bay region and every step he took and contact he made was highly political and therefore better considered and preferably based on adequate intelligence. The political alternative to the SNA-SLA in Baidoa that was able to raise its profile after UNITAF created rudimentary security was the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), representing the indigenous Ranhanweyn people. The fairly homogenous and primarily agricultural Ranhanweyn people constituted ninety percent of the population in the Bay region, but had no significant armed organisation to defend itself from the armed factions from the traditionally nomadic clans that overran and occupied the region
in 1991. Effectively, Hurley chose sides with moderates in SDM against SLA as he regarded this in the best interest of maintaining a secure and politically more stable environment. He distanced himself from the SLA after its initial attempts to gain recognition from the Australians, and the commander denied their requests and offers for cooperation on security operations.

In early February, while the first steps were taken to reconstruct an independent new police force, a self-proclaimed chief of police from the SLA paraded three hundred men down Baidoa’s main road as an “instant police force” and offered to cooperate with the Australians. He was immediately informed that such displays would not be tolerated. The SLA police chief had been put forward by one of Aideed’s strongmen who had travelled down to Baidoa for this specific purpose. Thomson and Douglas had gathered this information during the last two weeks of January, when they were in frequent contact with SLA officers in order to rapidly draw up an intelligence picture of its local political and armed branch. In order to impress the two Australians the SLA had paraded no less than 450 in their presence. Their contacts soon revealed that Gutaale, although not operating openly in the city as he used to, was behind all the efforts to push the SLA “police”, militia and other representatives into the emerging local institutions.

Hurley’s decision to ignore and marginalise, as far as possible, the local warlord was not in line with the policy adopted in Mogadishu. Here, Oakley and Johnston stuck to the line of involving the two major warlords as much as possible. Also Zinni would later argue that it was crucial to give everyone with power a forum, or otherwise they would resort to violence. In the capital the result was that too much influence and authority was ceded to the warlords, thereby avoiding potential military confrontations, but postponing problems for the UN force for which UNITAF was supposed to pave the way. It should be noted that Hurley’s assertiveness was facilitated by the weaker popular power base in Baidoa of those loyal to Aideed, but at the same time the Australians were providing the type of security that allowed those who were opposed to the rule of the warlords—clearly also a majority in Mogadishu—to come forward.

This being Somalia, politics in the Bay region were obviously more complicated than two monolithic parties representing a minority and a majority. The SDM was an overall moderate political movement, but consisted of no less than three factions. As a result of its inability to organise armed resistance against incursions, part of the SDM aligned itself with powerful outside organisations in the hope of gaining protection. As a result the SDM was split into one Ali Mahdi oriented branch and one Aideed oriented branch. To their dismay, the Australians had no choice but to acknowledge the authority of the SDM “governor” who was affiliated with the pro-Aideed faction. His efforts were primarily aimed at raising taxes, ostensibly for the reconstruction of local administration, schools, sanitation and police, but he had a record for self-enrichment prior to UNITAF’s arrival. Early information on the political nature of both parties from both Stanhope and the counterintelligence specialists proved crucial for choosing who to marginalise and which political factions to foster. The Australians facili-
tated and fostered the development of a new united SDM branch. Late February and early March an SDM conference was held which the Australians secured against disruption by the SLA with an extra company and additional armoured vehicles. Their involvement went further than that. On the night of 1 March a desk officer volunteered to escort counterintelligence personnel into town to meet with members of the SDM. “It was quite ‘hairy’ patrolling down little alleyways on to the house where the meeting took place”, he noted in his diary when he returned at two o’clock at night. “It was excellent. I sat and talked to an expatriate Somali who works in Yemen, who has returned to Somalia for the SDM election to take place in the next couple of weeks. It was refreshing to finally meet some Somalis who had a positive, progressive approach to fixing this country’s problems.” The Baidoa conference succeeded in electing both new SDM representatives for the upcoming UN-sponsored Addis Ababa Conference and a local representative body.

Hurley was content with the progress made in March, but also worried about becoming more embroiled with local politics by the day. “It is not really my job”, he wrote back home, “so I will be glad when the UNOSOM II political officer arrives next week (at last!).” He hoped to be able to concentrate more on commanding and monitoring his troops in the field and on organising a big cleanup of the city with the cooperation of the local population. However, his hopes were raised too high since UNOSOM political advisors would only visit infrequently. The only UN representative working in Baidoa was Patrick Vercammen, a young Belgian who was officially a UNOSOM “humanitarian assistance officer.” While he had substantial experience in humanitarian work, he was not at all trained in civil administration or in dealing with local politics. He saw his work primarily as coordinating the efforts of the NGO community, but although he was friendly with his former colleagues, they made it very clear from the beginning that they would not accept much UNOSOM oversight. He was given no staff and hardly any funds and found himself in a rather isolated position with little to no guidance from UN headquarters. Stanhope empathised with Vercammen and brought him a box filled with food when he first arrived in his barren UN office in February. They soon established friendly relations and were in daily contact. He basically latched on to the Australians who tried to involve him as much as possible, but continued to lead in all institution building efforts. Vercammen tried to scramble for funds and materials to facilitate their efforts.

On 8 March, the NGO community wrote a protest letter to Boutros-Ghali, lamenting the total lack of accomplishments by UNOSOM in reconciliation, institutional and infrastructural reconstruction and the failure to even support its own field staff. The Secretary General, like the Americans, were awaiting the outcomes of a national peace process and refused to take any action to fill the void in which the military contingents were trying to find their way. In late March the first concrete steps towards reconciliation on the national level were undertaken when sixteen faction leaders met in Addis Ababa. They agreed on an interim government, a cease-fire and total disarmament, and the creation of a national police force. Meanwhile, a new UN resolution was drafted to provide the new UN force with a mandate to
enforce its provisions. The NGO Human Rights Watch criticised this process for being "a conversation amongst warlords." The Australians were extremely aggravated by UNOSOM's refusal to permit the newly elected SDM representatives to attend the meeting in Ethiopia. Instead the UN continued to work with the established faction leaders affiliated with Aideed and Ali Mahdi.  

The most imminent concern in Baidoa continued to be the maintenance of law and order. The idea that the Australians had arrived with a plan had led to the common misconception that they came fully prepared to assist in the reconstruction of the police and the local court system. In an influential analysis on the Auxiliary Security Force, Lynn Thomas and Steven Spataro held that the Australians brought police trainers and integrated "judicial experts" into their force after having studied the situation. However, the Military Police detachment had not anticipated performing any such role, and would only do so to a limited extent since the detachment was already seriously understrength. MP Sergeant Peter Watson, who had seen service in the New Zealand Army and civilian police force, was in charge of just five corporals. Attached to Colonel Mellor's Australian Forces Somalia Headquarters in Mogadishu, they were initially tasked to provide security for the headquarters and perform policing duties for almost one thousand personnel.

Kelly's task was officially not planned to go beyond the normal legal advisory role to the contingent commander. Driven partly by his personal and professional interest in the legal aspects of the mission, Kelly played a substantial role in lifting the institution building effort in Baidoa to a higher level. His work cannot be seen in isolation from the initiatives by Lorenz, Spataro and some of the UN staff in Mogadishu. By February the ASF in Mogadishu was clearly showing some promise. At UNITAF headquarters, Kelly had established a close working relationship with Lorenz and Spataro and was able to convince them that the relative success in Baidoa should be exploited and serve as a model for the rest of Somalia.

With both UNITAF and UNOSOM providing lacklustre support, the ASF continued to struggle for funding, civilian expertise and political guidance. Instead of sending support the UN and the United States sent a steady stream of consultants to report on the potential of police reconstruction. After the UN had fielded three investigators in January who proposed a five hundred strong UN Civilian Police contingent, the U.S. Department of Justice team concluded in March that the ASF could work, but needed close to thirteen million dollars to function in Mogadishu the coming half year. This would have been a modest sum considering that the United States was spending thirty to forty million to keep its troops afield each day. In April, Martin Ganzglass was somewhat surprised when he was sent as yet another consultant, this time by the State Department. The American lawyer, a former Peace Corps legal advisor to the Somali government in the 1960s, was given a somewhat broader assignment to include, apart from police reconstruction, reviewing the potential for the resurrection of a judicial system.

Without formal international control, accountability continued to hamper the functioning of the ASF. Oakley argued that the Police Committee set up to take charge of the police
in Mogadishu was non-partisan and that it somehow "reported to the Somali people." Ganzglass and Brigadier Ahmed Jama regarded the ten appointments of police, army and former secret service colonels and generals, five by Ali Mahdi and five by Aideed, as highly political and problematic in the long run. Ganzglass and the former Somali police commander argued that Oakley should have strictly limited the committee to former Somali National Police and expanded the effort to the provinces, where the police was operating in a vacuum, or under control of the more active UNITAF contingents, but frequently under control of local warlords. Ganzglass suggested that the Ambassador refused to challenge the control by the warlords in Mogadishu in order to get the Committee and the police force of the ground as soon as possible. He also criticised the Americans for their excessive focus on Mogadishu and the failure to create non-partisan local councils elsewhere in the country to rebuild local courts and police forces.

Without a coordinated and internationally funded program for police support, it fell to the different UNITAF contingents to help create and support regional police. This resulted in very different levels of performance by the local police units. Addressing a RAND Corporation conference in the year 2000, Oakley held that the Somali police performed effectively in the vast majority of the cities and towns. While he correctly lauded the Mogadishu police for its overall performance under extreme pressure, its success here depended for large degree on the operational control executed by Brigadier Zinni and Spataro. As long as the ASF was propped up by U.S. Marines, Italians and other UNITAF units, the police held their ground, although one source in the State Department called the force "unarmed and with uncertain loyalties." Thomas and Spataro were more critical of the overall performance of the police, concluding that "[i]n Mogadishu and some outlying areas (such as the French and particularly the Australians sectors), the police performed reasonably well during the UNITAF period. In other areas they performed poorly, even being controlled by local warlords. Nowhere but in the Bay region was there any serious support for judiciary or penal rehabilitation." The efforts by the Australians were widely regarded as by far the most effective in re-establishing a degree of law and order, but even "the Baida model", as it was sometimes referred to, was obviously not without flaws.

Hurley's primary motive for energetically pushing the police program was that policing-type jobs were absorbing his soldiers. Clearly, there was a simultaneous urge to make a lasting impact. On 4 February he presented a plan for the establishment of a local Auxiliary Security Force in Baidoa. Stanhope was tasked to liaise with the emerging police force and UNOSOM, that was hoped to start supporting the force soon. There is no evidence to support the claim that earlier efforts by the Marines were built upon. The process was started from scratch with the distribution of leaflets in Baidoa and a briefing to the Council of Elders advising them that anyone with at least two years' previous police service prior to January 1991, no criminal record and the approval of the Elders could be a member of the ASF. Although not always adhered to, these criteria were the same throughout southern Somalia. Candidates were to be checked against the old nominal rolls found in Mogadishu containing
the names of former members of the Somali National Police. Stanhope informed UNITAF legal staff on 8 February of the contingent’s intentions to give high priority to the re-establishment of a police force. Three days later an important meeting was held with the local elders to select a police commander acceptable to all elements and determine the initial thirty members of the force. Hurley had anticipated “a lot of interfactional squabbling”, but he was now hopeful of soon having a local security force and “a jail to throw the people we catch into.”

On 15 February the ASF started operating in Baidoa with twenty policemen. By March, the force numbered seventy-five and new uniforms arrived from a large stock that had been ordered before the war in Italy and had withered in a depot in Kenya since. They would soon be issued their traditional blue berets, handcuffs and night sticks. Two vehicles would be “on loan” to the ASF from American stocks left over from the Gulf War. Batons, whistles, belts, badges, boots, typewriters, filing cabinets and eventually weapons were eventually all scavenged, but even though the ASF in Baidoa was given priority by UNITAF headquarters, its poor equipment remained a serious impediment. After having served unarmed for almost two months, UNITAF authorised the issuance of weapons in March, so the Australians handed out the first three M-16s confiscated from bandits. Eventually, twenty-five percent of the total force was equipped with firearms, the maximum allowed by UNITAF headquarters.

The Australians accepted responsibility for the supervision of prisons, but were glad to share this task with the International Red Cross, which also provided food for both prisoners and prison-guards. Lacking material support from UNITAF or UNOSOM, the contingent’s engineers started restoring the police stations, the central prison, police cells and eventually also the court house. Initially the ASF was paid in food provided by World Food Program and the Red Cross. Later they received wages from UNOSOM in local currency, which for some mysterious reason had retained some of its value in Somalia. The police were trained with some support of Australian MPs and regular infantry, but most of the training was done by a former instructor from the Somali Police Academy. By April 260 policemen were recruited, more or less trained, and deployed throughout the Bay region.

Kelly, Thomas, Spatharo and Oakley all describe police reconstruction effort in Baidoa as a success story. Bob Breen, however, was not convinced of its effectiveness after conducting his field research towards the end of the Australian deployment. The prime goal for its creation was eliminating the need for UNITAF to perform police functions in the short term. Even in Baidoa, this proved elusive. Although it was no longer necessary to hold Somalis in the battalion’s temporary detainee facility once the police had been established with a detention facility, Hurley regarded his battalion still “very much a police force in town” and his troops continued to arrest persons right up to their departure—although in decreasing numbers.
Unarmed Somali policemen of the newly created “Auxiliary Security Force” join Australian infantry on patrol in urban Baidoa (Photo: AWM Archive).

From February to May the cautious and reluctant police officers were often included in operations and patrol commanders tried hard to raise their profile and status in the eyes of the locals. However, the Australians were not always impressed with their performance for example, in crowd control situations at food distribution points. They also failed to show up when called upon by the Australians to help when a row between SDM and SLA women escalated from shouting insults to hurling an ever increasing amounts of rocks at each other, leaving some wounded. Instead, a section of Australians was sent down to disperse the crowd of violent women. The police proved quite susceptible to bribes and intimidation by bandits, and often proved incapable of holding detainees for much longer than twenty-four hours. It was after all a still underpaid, unarmed and underequipped police force. One notorious bandit called Gaardub was even released twice, adding much to the anger of the Australians, one of who was wounded in a scuffle to recapture him. Meanwhile, the Australians still lacked the authority to hold detainees longer than forty-eight hours in their own facilities. Only very serious cases were referred to Mogadishu.

Creating a politically independent police force in proved hard in Somalia. The verification of names by the Police Committee in Mogadishu against the old record was sloppy and caused the Australians to step up their interrogation of police recruits. While the initial security committee set up by Marines had been dominated by the SLA, Kelly and Lorenz found that the local Ranhanweyn politicians, now largely in charge, were also eager to use the ASF to further their political goals. This meant giving priority to tax-gathering over investigating and detaining criminals in order to protect lives and property of ordinary Somalis. Tax revenue was hoped to be used for payment of SDM civil servants and the party hoped to use the police as their own security force against the SLA.
Breen rightfully corrects the image of a smooth-running Somali police force in Baidoa and elsewhere, an image that has been used too easily to underline American success in the UNITAF phase versus the United Nations’ eventual failure. However, his healthy scepticism, based mainly on accounts of Australian soldiers in the field, fails to measure the rapid relative success in the context of police monitoring and reconstruction efforts in other interventions such as Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, East-Timor. Here, meagre progress or modest levels of success mostly required massive and costly efforts and took years. Lack of progress there often resulted from poor cooperation between military peacekeepers and UN Civilian Police. Moreover, police reconstruction in Baidoa, despite its many flaws, was still far more effective than in most places in Somalia. When the Australians were preparing to be relieved by French forces in May, Kelly saw the ASF performing most of the regular policing in Baidoa. Breen also fails to mention the Criminal Investigations Division (CID), which the Australian legal advisor considered a key element in raising the effectiveness of the police force.

Regular Somali police lacked the training to perform careful investigations, gather criminal evidence or reliable criminal intelligence. The Police Committee in Mogadishu—dominated by two major factions—was reluctant to re-establish a criminal intelligence branch, which had existed within the regular police force prior to 1991. The Australians decided to press ahead anyway and established a unit of twenty hand-picked former criminal investigators. These retained a considerable degree of independence from the police commander, Colonel Aden Nuur, and were put in charge of monitoring any corruption in the police force and the emerging judiciary. The police commander was specifically warned not to interfere, and reminded that UNOSOM paid his wages and could remove him, which in reality meant that the Australians could do so, as they were clearly running the whole operation. They became increasingly disillusioned with the police commander, who had been acceptable to all parties for a reason as he clearly avoided any trouble with the major bandit leaders in the region. The Australians showed their willingness to intervene when they fired his deputy police commander after the counterintelligence personnel discovered he tried to strike a deal with bandit elements. Nevertheless, other local police commanders such as in the provincial town Dinsoor performed admirably. Kelly also had full confidence in the CID commanders, with whom he, the battalion’s intelligence team and MP Sergeant Watson all cooperated closely and effectively.

The creation of the ASF in Baidoa, although more successful than in most places, was not unique. However, the Bay region was the only sector where any serious support was provided to the rehabilitation of the judiciary and penal system. Also in this respect the Australian efforts have often been lauded and portrayed as the path that UNITAF should and could have taken to seriously prepare the way for the United Nations mission. Justice reconstruction in Baidoa was a trial balloon and emerged from a cooperative effort by some individuals amongst UNITAF’s legal staff and the Australians. With the rising number of detainees held in Mogadishu prison, the inevitability of some support to the reconstruction of a judiciary system was becoming apparent to UNITAF headquarters and in Oakley’s Liaison
Office. To this end the American military legal advisors met with a group of Somali lawyers and judges from southern Mogadishu, all of who were aligned to Aideed. This triggered more criticism that the United States was again ceding too much authority to the dominant warlord and neglecting other parties.156

After Kelly’s arrival in January he became involved in efforts by Lorenz and Philip Ives to form the U.S. Liaison Office to assemble a broader cross section of Somali laymen. In the period between January and late March these local initiatives were emerging in the virtual policy vacuum that existed in Washington and New York. It was a time when the Americans in Mogadishu started to recognise there was little chance of raising viable institutions by working merely through the warlords. At the same time the new Clinton administration was under increasing pressure from Colin Powell and the Joint Chiefs to stick to the plan to get out of Somalia as soon as possible. Nevertheless, Lorenz and Ives organised a conference on 3 March that was attended by forty-three lawyers under UNITAF protection. Although the UNOSOM office was asked to participate in the process, no representative was present and the UN failed to encourage judicial reconstruction efforts afterwards, waiting instead for political guidance to follow the Addis Ababa conference held later that month. Quite happy with the vague arrangements made in January, some of those aligned with Aideed questioned the need for the creation of a new Steering Committee to carry forward the revival of the Mogadishu courts. Nevertheless, some positive result came from the meeting as this committee was created and headed by a former professor at the University of Mogadishu and Supreme Court Judge, Dr. Abdullah Ossable Barre. Dr. Ossable had impressed Lorenz and Kelly as very capable during a meeting in the previous month.157 It was also agreed that the old Penal Code of 1962 applied.

Lacking formal UNITAF backing and devoid of any UNOSOM support the initiative never showed much promise in Mogadishu. However, Kelly basically took the effort from there and with Lorenz’ support he directed his efforts towards Baidoa. The conditions here were better with less hindrance of factional infighting after the Australians had temporarily neutralised the SLA. Moreover, they found a willing commander in Hurley who was not hampered by fixed ideas that all “mission creep” was dangerous. During a meeting with Dr. Ossable and a former Ministry of Justice official on 22 February a list former judges and court personnel from the Bay Region had already been obtained, which allowed for the selection of judicial personnel. Dick Stanhope’s CMOT personnel were given the list and traced down some of the former local judges and even court personnel.158 On 6 March Hurley, Stanhope and Vercammen held a meeting with Dr. Ossable and another former leading Mogadishu judge that Kelly and Lorenz had brought in. After consultation with the committee of local elders it was agreed upon that the old penal code applied. Lorenz had some colleague Judge Advocates in Washington dig up an English copy of the Penal Code of 1962 in the Library of Congress, which together with some old cases allowed the legal officers in Somalia to follow and verify the proceedings. This English version and commentary had in fact been written by Ganzglass in 1969. A regional court was established in Baidoa and five district courts were

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eventually established in the major towns. Seven local judges from before the civil war were selected and a President of the Court of Appeal and a Chief Prosecutor were appointed.¹⁵⁹

Courtrooms had to be built or refurbished and were usually co-located with the local police station, which facilitated protection by Australian troops. In the meantime Australian army tents were used. During the first trial under the new judiciary system a car thief was convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment for armed robbery. After various offenders had been released from police cells in the recent past, Stanhope had permanently stationed one of his CMOT teams at the police station to monitor detention and judicial procedures. Later in March, two bandits arrested by the Australians were released under dubious circumstances by the Somali judges.¹⁶⁰ Kelly spoke of "teething problems", but held that after initial close monitoring by the Australians, the judiciary was functioning well and was "totally independent" of the Australian force or UNOSOM. Apart from criminal matters the courts also started to deal with family and other civil disputes.¹⁶¹ Despite the lack of UNITAF and UNOSOM support, the UN was unwittingly paying the judges as the Australians and Ver- cammen simply put down the names of the judges as police officers in the highest pay scale.

An important incentive for the creation of a justice system was the Australians' wish to capture and prosecute the major local warlords. By March they were confident that their removal from local society would seriously ameliorate the security situation. The effort was hoped to work both ways as such a high-profile case was likely to help build local confidence in the courts and the rule of law. Warsame was arrested on 13 March and sent to Mogadishu Prison after he had threatened to kill Australian troops. Meanwhile, Hurley had his sights set on the overall bandit leader Gutaale.¹⁶² Between them, the bandit leaders were suspected of some one hundred murders. The criminal investigations were a collaborative effort of the Australian counterintelligence personnel, MP Sergeant Watson and Kelly, but local criminal investigations staff from the old police force proved to be extremely helpful. The creation of the CID was in fact a by-product of these investigations into the dealing of Warsame and Gutaale. A very strong case against Warsame was established after long and laborious interviews with twenty-two eyewitnesses, who dared to come forward now that he was in captivity and gave horrific accounts of the atrocities he had committed in the previous two years. The most infamous of these was the so-called "truck massacre", when Warsame and his men shot dead and robbed sixteen people returning from the market. The accounts were corroborated by hospital records and other physical evidence.¹⁶³

After the evidence was gathered, Kelly went back to Mogadishu to prepare for the trial. He reviewed the evidence with Lorenz and the UNITAF Chief of Staff before it was submitted to General Johnston, who determined that he could be held and tried.¹⁶⁴ While Kelly was on his way back to Baidoa news broke that Warsame had been released from Mogadishu central prison. An investigation into the release by Lorenz showed that Gutaale had travelled down to Mogadishu to bribe a judge loyal to Aideed into signing a release order. The judge was arrested by Spataro and held at the UNITAF detention facility. The whole episode was a serious blow to the Australians prestige amongst those who had just taken the
risk of giving evidence, but also to Australians’ confidence in the Mogadishu judicial and penal system. Warsame would remain at large, but did not dare return to Baidoa. Instead he continued to lay low in Mogadishu. An important by-product of the investigations into the two major bandit figures in Baidoa was the unravelling of their criminal empire. It showed how they had taken many shops, private houses and hotels by force and gave some clear insight into the command structure and functioning of their organisation.165

Angered by the release of Warsame, Hurley issued orders to search Gutaale’s premises and to arrest him. His detention and possible trial were hoped to further assert the Australians’ authority and reinforce confidence in their ability to deal with the major thugs. The opportunity emerged when Thomson and Douglas, who had done much of the investigations into his case, recognised his car as it approached them in Baidoa on his return from his trip to secure Warsame’s release. They had four soldiers with them and as the vehicle was forced to stop for a donkey cart, Thomson ran toward the car and dragged Gutaale from behind the wheel. They packed him in their Land Rover and immediately drove off to the base, “leaving Gutaale’s car with its engine running, driver’s door open and a group of shocked passengers with mouths agape in the back seat.”166 According to Thomson, the effect of the arrest and trial was that many of his henchmen packed up and left Baidoa. This time, Gutaale was held in the UNITAF detention facility guarded by American MPs and only transferred to Baidoa prison just prior to his trial. In the meantime, the same team that had worked on Warsame’s case went to work on the flood of evidence that was coming in after his capture. The case focussed on two of his worst crimes. In August the previous year, Gutaale had deliberately driven his Fiat Armoured Vehicle into a group of refugees, hitting fifteen women and children. He had stopped, reversed, and crushed the bodies while his gunmen mounted on the vehicle were allegedly “cheering and yelling in delight.” A former policeman who had helped clean up the carnage, was amongst many giving detailed evidence in this case. The second charge was of a robbery of an International Red Cross warehouse, where sixteen local employees were shot and killed.167

The two-day trial of Gutaale commenced on 24 April and was a test case for the rudimentary legal system. The court found him guilty of the murder of thirty one persons and many cases of robbery and under the provisions of the 1962 Somali law he was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment. Both his lawyer and the prosecution appealed, the latter having expected a death sentence.168 It took the Australians some effort to gather the six judges willing to fill the required seats at the appeal hearing, but during a one-hour session Gutaale was indeed sentenced to death. Ten minutes later Kelly and the other Australian officers present witnessed how a firing squad of ASF policemen executed Gutaale in the prison next door in the police compound.
Conclusion

By May 1993 the Australian contingent in Somalia had had gone quite far in assuming a role similar to military governance. For the troops on the ground their role resembled that of assistance to the civil power in a counterinsurgency operation, with the notable distinction that the civil power was under construction and for the most part temporarily replaced by some of their own officers. They were not alone in facing these challenges as all UNITAF contingents struggled with the lack of guidance from the political level and absence of substantial international civilian or military Civil Affairs personnel. Like Hurley, Major Stanton recalled how he and his colleagues in a regular infantry battalion staff were “handed the reins of government” and came up with thoughts and suggestions on how to go about business in Marka “like improv actors performing without a script.”¹⁶⁹ Even though they did not face the same circumstances as the Marines in Mogadishu, the Army battalion arguably gave the best performance of all U.S. forces in filling the power vacuum. Oakley called Marka “a sort of living laboratory” in this respect. The French would also look back at substantial successes in Huddur and the surrounding Bakool region, but no contingent had taken the experiment as far as the Australians.

It has to be remembered that the assumption of the governmental role and the reconstruction of local services by the Australians were all in support of the provision of security, rather than planned or executed as a primary role.¹⁷⁰ Although they had some advantage from arriving late, Hurley and his staff had come as ill-prepared as any UNITAF contingent to engage in institution building. Claims that the Australians had come fully prepared only seem to serve the purpose of absolving others for the missed opportunities and wasted months elsewhere in southern Somalia in early 1993. Their chief advantage over the Americans was their different mind-set. Part of that mindset was determined by their focus on a fixed exit date in May, which gave the Australians a somewhat longer perspective and prepared them to operate under the United Nations that was expected to take on additional responsibilities. The Australian government gave their contingent substantial latitude to execute their ill-defined mission. Provided this freedom, the Australians showed their capacity to improvise with their commander ready to exploit every opportunity to try make the relative degree of public safety created by intense military operations more than cosmetic. Their flexibility showed in the use of the Stanhope’s liaison teams, the legal advisor, the intelligence staff and eventually also the MP Sergeant, none of whom where specifically trained and prepared for the sort of mission they ended up executing. Their different military mind-set showed in the acceptance and execution of constabulary-type duties, without which the creation of institutions and fostering of local political alternatives to the rule of the warlords would have been impossible. From late March, the Australians had been well on top of the security situation, with close protection of the NGOs and wherever possible also the Somali population. They engaged in much broader disarmament and exerted far more control over the countryside than the Americans, Belgians and Italians, who tended to stay locked up in the main towns instead of venturing
out. Only the French seem to have rivalled their success in stirring up the hide-outs of nomadic bandits.

Australian institution building activities have been described as a successful example of “bottom-up” approach to “nation building”, that was in stark contrast with UNITAF’s and the UN’s “top-down” approach that focused on the warlords. It was confirmed in the following years in several conferences that no success in re-establishing order was ever to come from nation-wide measures focussed on those already in power. Smaller scale grass-roots initiatives have yielded some results in creating several oases of order and safety in Somalia. Nevertheless, Bob Breen sensed there were doubts amongst many Australians in the field about the longevity of their “nation building” efforts. In the course of Gutaale’s trial he also witnessed how “many felt that without the presence of the Australians during the proceedings, this outcome might not have been achieved.” He was probably correct, but the trial and execution were a culmination of the Australian contingent’s efforts and exemplary for its boldness in wearing down the power of the warlords.

The relative order in the Bay region and the institutions created proved not to be as short-lived as some Australians feared. The official U.S. Army After Action Report noted how, despite the escalation of violence in Mogadishu, progress continued to be made in some of the provinces in the summer of 1993. Most of the examples used were from the Bay region. When the French took over from the Australians late May, they found the province functioning relatively well. There was a temporary increase in banditry, but the weapons confiscation and registration program continued to go well. In August, UNOSOM II reported on the recovery of businesses and the “booming local economy” in Baidoa. The Moroccans were making headway with limited police training in Buurhakaba, and issued weapons to the local police in the area that month. According to Kelly, who remained in contact with some Somalis from the region, the administrative and judicial institutions continued to function with a relative degree of success and some European Union and other foreign support until 1995. Even the Indian contingent taking over from the French later in 1993 and 1994 had a relatively easy tour in the Bay region with its comparatively well functioning police force. Meanwhile the functioning police system established in Mogadishu collapsed under pressure of renewed factional fighting and political confrontation.

The Australian Battalion Group in Somalia not only went further than all other contingents in assuming governmental responsibilities in Somalia, their institution building efforts would remain unrivalled by any military contingent during peace operations in the remainder of the 1990s. The Australians had shown in Somalia what could be done with very few means and clearly were Patrick Vercammen’s implicit point of reference when he told the Time Magazine reporter Andrew Purvis in May 1993: “The Americans could have done ten times more than they have done. Fifty times. They thump on their chests, but the biggest part of the job has yet to be done.” Robert Oakley was not at all pleased with the UN field officer’s comments. As the bulk of U.S. troops withdrew in May, he and other U.S. officials were clearly trying to steer the erupting debate over success or failure by pointing out that Opera-
tions Restore Hope was never intended to be more than a stopgap and that it probably saved hundreds of thousands of Somalis who were on the brink of starvation only six months earlier. The general tenor of the Time article was exemplary for many instant evaluations at the time. While acknowledging the accomplishments, it still called security a “very, very relative term” in southern Somalia and seriously doubted if the powerful intervention force had performed the other part of its mission: adequately preparing the ground for the UN force. In the absence of a clear political strategy for the intervention in Somalia, the United States had focussed primarily on its military “exit strategy.”

Measuring the success of the UNITAF phase of the Somali intervention, already complicated by the great gap between the originally assigned “apolitical” mission and the actual measures required to impose any real order on the ground, would soon be dominated by the dramatic events that unfolded soon after the handover of the mission to the United Nations. The transfer of command immediately displayed the United Nations’ shortcomings, such as its inability to operate as a strategic headquarters—a problem that was already hampering operations in Cambodia and Bosnia. Although Boutros-Ghali can be charged with failing to balance his ambitions with the means at his disposal, a substantial share of the blame fell on the member states. When the UN assumed control of the Somalia operation on May 4 it had only 16,000 troops on the ground and would only reach its planned peak strength of 28,000 November 1993. At the time of the transfer its military staff was only twenty-five percent of its authorised strength. Moreover, when they finally arrived over the coming months the quantity and quality of UNOSOM’s civilian personnel tasked with “peace building” still left much to be desired.

This much smaller and less capable force was given a much broader mandate laid down in Security Council Resolution 814. It was also given a larger area of responsibility. The United States had played a leading role in drafting this new Resolution that included the reconstruction of a new national government and comprehensive and, if need be, coercive disarmament of the militias. The United States supported the force with four thousand logistical personnel and twelve hundred infantrymen in a Quick Reaction Force. American troops were officially outside the UN chain of command under direct U.S. control, but as one American military analyst has argued, “American diplomacy in the United Nations had created a U.S. command and control structure for UNOSOM II in all but name.” The Special Representative to the Secretary General was a retired U.S. admiral, the Force Commander a hand-picked Turkish NATO ally and his deputy was a U.S. general who was also in control of all U.S. forces in Somalia.

Only a month after UNITAF’s departure, Aideed’s forces started to launch unprovoked attacks on UN personnel. This confirmed earlier concerns that the leading warlords, whose power had hardly been diluted in the previous months, were just laying low until the more muscular U.S.-led force withdrew. Inflammatory anti-UN and anti-U.S. propaganda on Aideed’s radio station prompted an action to close it down—and inspect several of his weapons storage sites. During the action Aideed’s militia killed twenty-four Pakistani peace-
keepers in an ambush. This in turn triggered the “hunt for Aideed”, mandated by a new Security Council Resolution in which the United States again pushed the United Nations’ hand. It would be simplistic to denounce the retaliatory action after the deliberate attacks on the UN, but its execution in the coming months was rather blunt and in such sharp contrast to the earlier accommodating stance by American diplomats and military leaders.

An attack by five U.S. helicopter gunships firing guided missiles on a compound in Mogadishu killed an estimated forty people from Aideed’s clan in July in an attempt to deliver a serious blow to his organisation. The prominent Habir Gedir clansmen later turned out to be discussing the possibility of persuading Aideed to leave the country and achieve an accord with the U.S. and the UN. They had reported on the purpose of their gathering to UNOSOM, but at this time communications between U.S. forces and UN force were extremely poor. According to Oakley the result of this raid was that “there were no moderates left. Everybody on the Somali side then began to look not to fight the United Nations but rather began asking ‘How can we kill Americans?’” The American Quick Reaction Force, strengthened by Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos, undertook increasingly violent operations to catch Aideed, eventually ending in the climactic battle in the streets of Mogadishu on 3-4 October 1993. The intense fighting left eighteen Americans troops dead and seventy-eight wounded. Conservative estimates put the number of Somali dead at three to five hundred and seven hundred wounded, including substantial numbers of women and children that were drawn to the battle and sometimes deliberately used as human shields by the gunmen. The death of American soldiers during this raid led to the withdrawal of U.S. troops and caused contributions from other more powerful member states to dwindle. As a result most of the country slid back into chaos in 1994-1995. After having spent more then four billion U.S. dollars, the intervention eventually ended in the embarrassing evacuation of all UN personnel under fire in March 1995. After the withdrawal of Indian troops from the relatively peaceful Bay region it was overrun by Aideed with an army of six hundred militia and thirty technicals. In 1999, after four years of relentless oppression, the local population was eventually able to liberate themselves through armed resistance by the newly formed, Ethiopians-backed Ranhanweyn Resistance Army (RRA).

The general perception of the entire mission as a failure triggered a reaction in the United States, aimed at fencing off criticism by arguing that UNITAF was an overwhelming success. Chester Crocker from Georgetown University in his introduction to the book written by Hirsch and Oakley contrasted the “skillfully managed, U.S.-led UNITAF” with the “overstretched, coercive nation building phase of UNOSOM II.” Although this revisionism has been useful in correcting some the lingering idea that there were no positive experiences in the early phase of the intervention, it has left the U.S. public and military with a distorted picture of their own achievements in the early phase. While lives were saved, it blinded them to the political realities the United States had already created during Operation Restore Hope. It also created the wrong impression that “mission creep” was to blame for all the wrongs in 1993. While the inclusion of “nation building” and the deepening involvement of U.S. troops
in combat operations were specific policy decisions reached by the U.S. government and can therefore be categorised as “mission shift”, both decisions have wrongly been criticised as “mission creep.” For a domestic audience the Clinton administration was reasonably successful at spinning the story into that of the United States intervening adroitly in a limited humanitarian mission only to have the United Nations bungle because it chose to do “nation-building.” Bending, as often, under heavy pressure from the majority Republican Congress, he even created the false impression that the UN was to blame for the death of American soldiers in Somalia. The fiction that U.S. troops had died under UN command also further strengthened the idea never to allow American troops to serve under foreign command. The general tendency by Republicans to bash the United Nations for all possible wrongs, which the Clinton Administration chose not to contest, hurt the organisation badly.

The tendency to declare UNITAF a success, while deferring all the blame for failure to the United Nations, heavily influenced operational and tactical lessons the U.S. government and military have drawn from the intervention. These lessons would resonate throughout to 1990s and heavily influence choices made in future operations such as Bosnia. Most of the learning went into avoiding the mistakes made after May 1993, while little was done with the earlier hard-learned positive lessons. Rather than claiming UNITAF ambitions were set too low, the prevailing argument became that the United Nations’ ambitions were too high. Rather than calling for closer integrated civil-military operations, the dominant theme in most of the short-term “lessons learned” to come out of Somalia amounted to a further limitation on military mandates in line with the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. All interference by military forces in the civilian sphere—most of all military involvement in public security—was to be avoided and discarded as “mission creep.” A “zero-casualty” edict by the Clinton Administration caused force protection measures to be further stepped up and would seriously hamper U.S. forces in accomplishing their mission in future operations. Another vague notion to arise in the wake of the Somali intervention was that peace operations dulled “the warfighter’s edge.” While many American officers learned valuable lessons from Somalia, risk aversion and a general aversion to any involvement in peace operations further handcuffed innovative military leaders. The mark left on the American military psyche left by Vietnam and Beirut was only deepened in Somalia, and reinforced many of the tendencies already present.

Driven by failure in Bosnia and Somalia, the heady optimism and dizzy expectations that surrounded UN peace operations in 1992 evaporated in the second half of 1993. Its most dramatic effect was the failure to intervene forcefully in Rwanda in 1994, when close to one million people were slaughtered in a premeditated genocidal campaign. The events in Mogadishu also temporarily put an end to Clinton’s ambitions to play an active role in enforcing the peace in Bosnia, where his European allies were struggling with another vaguely defined humanitarian mission in a war zone and where the United States and Europe tended to thwart each other’s efforts instead of working in concert. In most European capitals the failure of enforcement measures in Somalia led to the conclusion that they were on the right course by sticking to a neutral position in Bosnia. UN peacekeepers who ever more frequently came
under fire from, or were taken hostage by Serb forces in the next two years were expected to turn the other cheek for fear of what UN commander General Sir Michael Rose called “crossing the Mogadishu line” between neutral peacekeeping and forceful intervention.\(^{18}\) This image, and the subsequent fixation on the need to redraw the borders between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, shaped much of the view of soldiers and politicians of what was, and what was not outside the military scope.

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1. Based on a conversation between the author and Alan Ryan, a senior defence analyst at the Land Warfare Studies Centre (Canberra, September 2001).
4. For an important journalistic account the rising influence of the regional military commands on American foreign policy see Dana Priest’s *The Mission*. Central Commands budget grew from $36.7 million in 1990 to $55.2 million by 2000, when the military staff at its headquarters in Florida had doubled to some 1,050 people. Priest, *The Mission*, 71n, 74.
6. Ibid., 8-20.
10. Ibid., 4-9.
11. Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-3; Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 88-89. As indicated in the previous chapter, Dawson mentioned Omar Elmi as the local leader of the Aideed faction in Baidoa. However, his name does not appear in Kelly’s, Breen’s or any other account of UNITAF operations in Baidoa.
12. At the time, according to Hurley, no ordinary citizen dared to go out in the streets at night and only a few would come out in daytime
16. Private letter by Hurley to his family, 12 January 1993, Australian War Memorial Archive (Hereafter AWM), PR 00294 (Papers of Lt-Col D. Hurley 1 RAR, Hereafter referred to as AWM, Hurley Papers).
Handbook Operation Solace, Somalia

Report, 68.

on Human Rights


Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-2, 23, 25, Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope* 88-89. According to Kelly, Gutaale took his order from one of Aideed's trusted subordinates, Colonel Arabee, who visited the region occasionally from Mogadishu to secure Aideed was getting his fair share of the local revenue.

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 89. In Dawson's account the Marines used the services of local gunmen as guards in charge of airport security. There is a possibility that they were hiring Gutaale's men. As soon as the Australians took over, Gutaale offered his "services" for airports security, vowing to kill any infiltrator immediately. His offer was declined.


Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 73, 89.


McBean, "Taking Comfort from Solace", 15; Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 78, 91-92. Company commander Major Mick Moon said how by the end of January "many of the lads very tired now. I can't see us keeping up this pace for too long."

The method was tiring on the soldiers and was combined with regular section/sized and half-platoon patrols. Although the Australians had received no specific training in brick method, troops were happy with the flexibility that the method afforded. McTavish, "Rifle Platoon Command Experience", 13-14.

McBean, "Taking Comfort from Solace."

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 96.

Ibid., 97-98.

Ibid., 67, 106.

Ibid., 101.

Ibid., 106-107.

On 29 December 1992 the Australian Defence Minister's spokesman Senator Robert Ray, had said: "Our general attitude is, if UNOSOM, the group that is to follow Operation Restore Hope, is to be successful, some attempt must be made to disarm the warring factions." Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 48.

McTavish, "Rifle Platoon Command Experience", 12.

Breen concludes that issuing weapons cards was well-intended but ineffectual, because NGO guards had access to vast amounts of arms. Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 341. However, while there is no denying that there was an abundance of arms, the registration system served as a basis on which the Australian could find their weapons policy and exert their authority within the framework of a set of rules.
The Australians captured and held 900 weapons, ranging from pistols to a 106mm recoilless rifle. The vast majority was of the confiscated arms were assault rifles. David J. Hurley, “Operation Solace”, *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 104 (January and February 1994) 30. Patman gives the unsubstantiated number of one thousand fire-arms captured by the Australians. Patman, “Beyond the Mogadishu Line”, 65. The grand total captured by UNITAF in April was 4,651 of which 710 were returned to NGO guards. The total amount captured and held by the end of the operations is therefore likely to have been between four and five thousand. Kevin M. Kennedy, “The Military and Humanitarian Organisations”, 117n16 ( Mentioned in previous chapter).


Ibid., 341.


The Counte r Intelligence personnel’s tent, initially in a distant corner near the latrines, inch ed ever closer to the staff quarters during the deployment. The CI teams ended up inside the headquarters building next door to Hurley’s office. Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 87-88.


Peterson, “Human Intelligence”, 37.

Peterson, “Human Intelligence”, 35.

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 85-87, 339, 341. The additional Counte r Intelligence personnel consisted of one Warrant Officers and three Non-Commissioned Officers.

McTavish, 14; McBean, “Taking Comfort from Solace”, 14-18; Breen described a large number of contacts. Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 91, 109, 123, 127.


McBean, “Taking Comfort from Solace”, 16. In April a bandit in a crowded streets held a gun against a Diggers stomach and pulled the trigger. The gun jammed and the assailant was wrestled to the ground by the bewildered digger.


Sergeant Wayne Douglas, the intelligence specialist, just happened to be leading a U.S. intelligence officer into town to chat with local political leaders. They stumbled on this crime in action. Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 128.

Another border-line case that stretched the Rules of Engagement to its limits were “white light ambuses” conducted on roads approaching the base. Soldier would lay an ambush in pitch dark with night vision equipment, wait for bandits to approach, flood them with light when just in front of the ambush and demand them to surrender. If a suspect pointed his weapons, the Diggers were allowed to fire according to the rules. Sensing the danger of escalation, Hurley stopped such operations around Baidoa late January. Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 340.

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 339.

Ibid., 69-70.


Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 117.


“Mission command” as a warfighting command philosophy is primarily attributed to the German military. *Auftragsstaktik* meant “directive control” and was opposed to *Befehlsstaktik*, a style of command which essentially meant control by detailed order. Its early development was rooted in German tactics at the end of the First World War and further developed in the Second World War.

Although the particularities of U.S. culture provide no sufficient explanation, the tendency in public life in the United States to warn for all sorts of eventualities and to prescribe in meticulous detail what not to do—which seems related to the claims-culture of the late twentieth American society—appear to hamper "mission command" within the U.S. military. For instance, an article in Jane's Weekly in 2003 held that the U.S. Armed forces on average issued orders three times the length of their French equivalent.

Based on conversation with Alan Ryan, LWSC, Canberra, September 2002.

Diary entry by Caligary, 2 March 1993 as quoted in Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 126.

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 104-5.

Ibid., 109.

Peter Kieseker, "Relationships Between Non-Governmental Organisations and Multinational Forces in the Field", in Hugh Smith (ed.), *Peacekeeping: Challenges for the Future* (Canberra 1993) 74; Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 129-130.


Ibid., 155-156.

Ibid., 159-160; Stanton, *Somalia on Five Dollars a Day*, 169.

McTavish, "Rifle Platoon Command Experience", 15.

Private letter by Hurley to his family, 11 February 1993, AWM, Hurley Papers


Nevertheless, some Australian military personnel did long for a more conventional infantry work. One lieutenant though his job would be easier if an open war was declared. "At least we would feel free to act as an Army should, rather than as a police force which is what it feels like at the moment." Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 336, 105.


Kelly, "Legal Regimes and Law Enforcement on Peace Operations", 200. In Bardera, U.S. Marine Corps Colonel Bedard seized and burned a large shipment of *khat* late December, only to find out that this was like destroying a shipment of tea to the British. *Khat* is a mild narcotic leaf chewed by the locals. The raid caused quite some embarrassment as the Marine Colonel was obliged to compensate the drug-traffickers in dollars. Dawson, *The U.S. Marines in Somalia*, Chapter 5.

McTavish, "Rifle Platoon Command Experience", 15.

In March 1993 the NGO community wrote a letter to commend the Australians for their actions. Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-11. This letter is also mentioned in Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*. Patrick Vercammen, a Belgian civilian UNOSOM field officer in Baidoa also regarded them the best peacekeepers he met all his postings as an NGO-worker in Africa. He contrasted their behaviour with the bluntness of U.S. Marines in executing orders. Patrick Vercammen in interview with author (Brussels, 12 June 2003).

Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope*, 339.

During the previous decades the Australian military had participated in various United Nations peace operations with support units, but no substantial combat units had been deployed. For an overview of Australian peacekeeping experiences see Lieutenant Colonel N.F. James, "A Brief History of Australian Peacekeeping", *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 104 (January and February 1994) 3-18.

McBean, "Taking Comfort from Solace", 16. Also Lieutenant McTavish wrote, "[o]peration Solace was a rewarding experience for me personally and professionally." McTavish, "Rifle Platoon Command Experience", 15.


Ibid., 9.
Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, *Command at the Operational Level* (Presentation to the Australian Command and Staff College Queenscliff, 26 June 2000); Evans, *Forward from the Past*, 73.

Like most European armed forces the Australians were unable to provide expeditionary land forces capable of higher-level offensive operations during the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991.

Evans, *Forward from the Past*, 20-22, 36-37.


In retrospect, Hurley mentioned counterinsurgency various times in relation to the operations in Somalia. Hurley, “Testimony to Joint Standing Committee Inquiry on Australia’s Participation in Peacekeeping (JCS Inquiry), Official Hansard Transcript (8 April 1994) 531; Hurley, “Operation Solace”, 30; Hurley, “An Application of the Law of Armed Conflict”, 180. In this last article Hurley wrote: “The operations was conducted in a similar manner to counterinsurgency operations: establish a secure base and expand in steps to establish controlled areas.” This is the only explicit reference Hurley makes to counterinsurgency principles as they were codified from the 1960s. Kelly wrote: “The appropriate strategy applied by the Australian commanders was derived from a rich vein of received wisdom in the Australian Army based on a wealth of experiences in such circumstances. The circumstances in fact bore a close relationship to counterinsurgency or guerrilla warfare. The strategy therefore was to include, as an essential element, effective civil affairs. Australian experience in the years since World War II brought home the importance of civil affairs, particularly when operating in environments where the opposing elements are difficult to distinguish from the community and where a sensitivity to, and the support of, the community is essential to achieving success. This experience includes conflicts in Malaya, Vietnam and Borneo and then an array of peace operations.” Although his suggestions of the applicability of such traditions and concepts are correct, he fails to explain how counterinsurgency and Civil Affairs were used by the Australians as concepts. Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-4. See also Kelly, “Legitimacy and the Public Security Function”, 420. Also Patman makes a reference to counterinsurgency without explaining if or how its principles were consciously applied. Robert Patman, “Beyond ‘the Mogadishu Line’: Some Australian Lessons for Managing Intra-State Conflicts”, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2001) 62-63.


Kelly suggested that restoring the Somali police force was “part of efforts to meet the Hague Regulations”, that obligated an occupation force to restore law and order. Kelly, *Peace Operations*, 8-12.

According to Kelly, "the genocidal campaign against the Ranhanweyん people of the Bay region was well on the way to succeeding." Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-2.

According to Patman "the Australians embarked upon a process of ‘bottom up’ political reconstruction" by fostering the third, new wing of the SDM. "This caused problems with UN, who stuck to top-down approach." Robert Patman, “Disarming Somalia: The Contrasting Fortunes of United States and Australian Peacekeepers During United Nations Intervention, 1992-1993”, African Affairs (October 1997) 7.

The United States, Italy, and France had military police personnel and units. Each of these nations used its MPs differently in support of ASF. Police officers in the ASF were most effective when integrated as equal partners into a military commander’s strategy for providing security.” Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia”, 198 550.

The UN had an direct input into the Group’s activities although the view of the humanitarian assistance officer were frequently sought.” Hurley, “Operation Solace”, 29.

The United States and the UN are both to blame for the failure to sufficiently support the recreation of a national police force. See: Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing”, 187.


There is general consensus that the United States and the UN are both to blame for the failure to sufficiently support the recreation of a national police force. See: Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing”, 187.


This comment was attributed by the Refugee Policy Group to Ambassador David Shin, in charge of Somali affairs in the State Department. Quoted in Ganzglass, “The Restoration of the Somali Penal System”, 39n31.

Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia”, 213-214. Oakley considered Mogadishu, Baidoa, Huddur, Marka and Belet Weyne the most successful ASF examples. For the Ambassador’s account see Oakley, “The Urban Area during Support Missions”, 335; Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, 91.


Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 208-9.

Private letter by Hurley to his family, 12 February 1993, AWM, Hurley Papers.

Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-11,12. February is also mentioned as the start for the ASF in Baidoa in: Private letter by Hurley to his family, AWM, Hurley Papers.

All material support was hampered by U.S. legislation that prohibited its military from supporting foreign police services outside the Western Hemisphere (see previous chapter).

Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 213; Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-12,13.

Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-15.

Eighty policemen were placed in Baidoa, forty in Buurkhaba and twenty each in of the other six major towns. Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-13.

Kelly, “Legal Regimes and Law Enforcement on Peace Operations”, 197; Private letter by Hurley to his family, 24 April 1993, AWM, Hurley Papers. Hurley wrote: “The activity level has slowed down considerably over here. Most locals are getting on with life. The Battalion had become very much a police force in town, arresting criminals etc. We are still patrolling in the outer towns.”

Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 218, 130-131.

Ibid., 145.


In March, Breen writes, “[t]here appeared to be little chance of creating an impartial police force.” He called the ASF “ineffectual” in this regard. “If the SDM factions had been given their way, the focus of the ASF enforcement duties would have been on tax collection, and possibly the elimination of political opponents ….” Breen, A Little Bit of Hope, 213, 348-9.

Vercammen in an interview with the author (Brussels, 12 June 2003). Vercammen, who was running UNOSOM’s post in Baidoa all by himself, hardly recalled his involvement in police reconstruction, indicating that this was primarily an Australian military activity.

According to Kelly the CID was “working independently the time the Australians left.”

Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-20, 21.

In Oakley’s account, which has been copied since, there was also substantial progress toward “the beginnings of a court and prison system” in Mogadishu and other locations. See Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, 91. This view is echoed in Perito, Where Is the Lone Ranger when You Need Him?, 102. Clarke, Ganzglass, Thomas and Spataro, all of whom were present in Somalia in 1993, saw little evidence thereof. In correspondence with Karin von Hippel, Clarke told her that only two Somalis were detained in Mogadishu prison when the last Marines left the city on 4 May 1993. Von Hippel, Democracy by Force, 73. See also Thomas and Spataro, “Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia”, 214. Ganzglass, “The Restoration of the Somali Penal System”; Walter Clarke, “The Political Component: The Missing Vital Element in US Intervention Planning”, Parameters, Autumn 1996.


Kelly, Peace Operations, 8-15.
Regiment with inferior units. Meanwhile many of the Western troops were under strong restrictions as to what kinds of activities they could legally engage in. Bullock, *Peace by Committee*, 37; United States Forces, Somalia After Action Report, 61-62.

UNSCR 814 noted that it was to set up “transitional government institutions and consensus on basic principles and steps leading to the establishment of representative democratic institutions.”

Clarke, “Failed Visions and Uncertain Mandates”, 9. Clarke argues that all the major Security Council Resolutions on Somalia, including the initial draft for UNSRC 814 on nation building, were written by U.S. officials, mainly in the Pentagon.

John T. Fishel, *Civil-Military Operations in the New World*, 197-198. Fishel argued that unity of effort was lost not because American forces operated partly under UN command as has been argued, but because “the U.S. military refused to allow the elaborate command and control structure it had created to work in the way intended.”


Hirsch and Oakley, Somalia and Operation Restore Hope, xii.


