





**THE SOMALIA SAGA:  
A PERSONAL ACCOUNT  
1990-1993**

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# INTRODUCTION

I arrived in Somalia in November, 1990 as a U.S. PSC (United States Government Personal Services Contractor) to the USAID Mission in Mogadishu, where I was responsible for overseeing the Mission's PVO Partnership Project. The principal aim of the project was to support international and Somali PVOs in the design and implementation of development programs throughout Somalia. As the security situation deteriorated in Somalia and the USG moved to declare an ordered evacuation of USG personnel, I was evacuated to Nairobi; all other direct hire and contract USG personnel were evacuated to the U.S.

USAID Director Michael Rugh believed that it would be a good idea to "pre-position" me at the Regional Economic Development Services Office for East and Southern Africa (REDSO/ESA) in Nairobi to assist with relief programs once the situation in Mogadishu settled. On or about December 20, 1990, I was evacuated from Mogadishu. From that time until the end of January, 1994, I worked out of the REDSO/ESA Nairobi office under an OFDA contract to assist with the USG's emergency response to the Somalia crisis and provide regular status reports on the emergency to OFDA/Washington. In February 1991, I was designated as OFDA's Somalia Emergency Aid Coordinator, a post I held until the end of 1993.

The following is my recollection of events, policy decisions and roles of key players involved in the Somalia relief program from 1990-1993, as recalled and recorded in early 1994. The opinions expressed are my own and in no way represent the Agency for International Development's position on events during this period.

Jan Westcott  
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## **BACKGROUND: NOVEMBER 1990 - JANUARY 1991**

### **Mogadishu**

Soon after my arrival in Mogadishu in November of 1990, I found that most of my time was spent following security incidents involving NGOs as opposed to doing paperwork to extend or expand their programs. Africare had already evacuated their expatriate employees from Gharo in the northeast region of the country earlier that year due to security incidents. One Somali women's organization was already setting up feeding kitchens in Mogadishu to serve the increasing numbers of Somalis, primarily women from the central region, fleeing insecurity and banditry in the countryside. By late November, reports of vehicle thefts and shooting of NGO employees became a daily reality.

In early December, an American-based NGO's office in Mogadishu was attacked by armed bandits in broad daylight. Brandishing hand grenades, knives and AK-47 assault rifles, they robbed the NGO after forcing the NGO director's wife and small children to remain locked in a bedroom. This was likely the final security incident that prompted Ambassador Bishop to call a special security meeting for official and unofficial Americans on December 5, at which he recommended voluntary departure of U.S. government dependents and non-essential employees. He also urged private American citizens to consider the seriousness of the security situation and to evacuate dependents.

Notes taken during NGO meetings in December include the following:

- ◆ UNHCR program officer shot in Qorioley yesterday; in critical condition in Nairobi.
- ◆ SCF has grounded all four-wheel drive vehicles as they are coming under increasing attacks -- use local taxis only.
- ◆ CARITAS to suspend all activities outside of Mogadishu until January.
- ◆ World Concern to temporarily relocate all expatriates to Nairobi -- Luq is becoming increasingly insecure.

- ◆ Fighting reported in Jalalaxi and Buale; all schools closed.
- ◆ British Embassy issues letter advising all British nationals to leave the country.

One night in early December, one of the compound guards at my residence paid me a visit to warn me that I "must go home soon...something very, very bad is going to happen here."

Playing a round of golf at the Embassy's golf course at that time was certainly challenging. It seemed as if each time I got to the top of my backswing, a barrage of machine gunfire would go off just on the other side of the Embassy wall. At least it was a good excuse for another bad shot. My British and Welsh golf partners assured me that "you get used to it [the gunfire]." However, on at least two occasions we had to leave the course because of the proximity of the shooting.

By mid-December, I had given up keeping a roster of NGO security incidents and was busy packing out USG employees who had opted to leave following Ambassador Bishop's authorization of voluntary evacuation. At this point, the U.S. Embassy had warned all USG employees not to drive four-wheel drive vehicles and was operating a shuttle service from USAID and private residences to the Embassy to mitigate against possible attacks. Virtually all areas of Mogadishu, except for the immediate vicinity of the Embassy, had been declared "off limits" since November.

As the U.S. Embassy worked to evacuate all non-essential personnel by December 20, NGOs were also sending most of their expatriate staff out of the country. By early December NGOs had requested USAID assistance in relocating their vehicles from their compounds to the U.S. Embassy compound, in hopes that they could return in a few months and reclaim them for program use. The convoy of at least 20 ELU/CARE vehicles passing down Afgoi Road to the Embassy compound was most impressive, but made many nervous because of the "high lootability" factor involved in the mass movement of so many vehicles. Unfortunately, following the final evacuation of the Embassy compound on January 5, 1991, armed Somali elements stormed the walls of the compound and destroyed and looted nearly everything they could find, especially the impressive fleet of vehicles stored at the compound for safekeeping.

Several Somali friends in Nairobi reported that many of these vehicles, as well as others looted earlier, were sold at the Kenyan border to wealthy Kenyans able to afford a charter flight there. During a "fly-over" along the Kenyan/Somalia border with a

UNHCR colleague in early January, I actually saw my former Mogadishu neighbor's unmistakable neon yellow Suzuki parked in a compound in a village along the Kenyan border.

By mid January, fleeing Siad Barre troops and rebel USC (United Somali Congress) soldiers had looted and partially destroyed most public and private buildings, embassies, expatriate and NGO compounds in Mogadishu as well as in the countryside. At a January 15, 1991 NGO meeting in Nairobi, a World Concern representative reported that, via radio contacts with their local Somali employees, they had just learned that Marihan soldiers had looted the World Concern, ELU/CARE, AMREF, and Family Life compounds in the Luq area. Ethiopian refugees in camps in the Luq area scattered at the same time, as well as local officials and NGO staff. Thousands of displaced Somalis began arriving in Mandera as clan fighting increased in Gedo region.

By the end of January 1991, MSF/France had sent a team back to Mogadishu to provide emergency medical and food assistance. ICRC also sent in an advance team to prepare for their return. By February, only SOS, MSF/France, and ICRC were operational in Mogadishu. A *Christian Science Monitor* reporter, one of the first international journalists to visit Mogadishu since the fall of Barre, arrived in the capital in late January. The following notes reflect what he told those at a February 5, 1991 meeting of the NGO Coordinating Committee for Somalia in Nairobi:

"The journalist was given a vehicle and military escort by the USC. He observed that there is still constant shooting, many guns in the hands of the people, a growing food and water shortage, and that there now seemed to be more looting of looters going on."

Siad Barre's forces looted whatever they could prior to being driven from Mogadishu by advancing USC forces. The conquering USC forces then did what invading forces throughout history have done: looted their share of the incredible booty available in Mogadishu. Over 37,000 MT of ELU/CARE food stored at the port was looted. All embassies, NGO offices, and private residences were stripped of whatever could be hauled away. All banks were looted, as were the former armories of Siad Barre's military. Within a few months, according to expatriates visiting Mogadishu, almost all of the copper wire in the capital had been removed and reportedly sold in the Gulf. Many Somalis reported that a good deal of the food looted from the port was taken to private businessmen's warehouses in Mogadishu, where it would remain until prices rose and food became more scarce. In essence, Somalia received probably the biggest overnight infusion of "capital aid" (aid yourself) in its history.

The average Somali did not benefit from this massive looting. Most of the looted goods, according to Mogadishu Somalis, were either put into warehouses or exported to Kenya or the Gulf States. One should also note that poor urban and rural Somalis were victims of looting by both fleeing Barre soldiers and invading USC troops. A close Somali friend recounted the massive looting of Brava as well as the raping of women there during these early days. What was most tragic about the massive looting throughout the country during this period was the wanton destruction of buildings and other physical assets. When asked why there was so much needless destruction of assets that could have been used to rebuild the country, many Somalis responded that, because people had been repressed by Siad Barre for so long, they wanted to vent their anger and destroy everything that reminded them of his brutal dictatorship. Yet much of the violence was self-destructive: relief workers at Baidoa hospital reported seeing a pile of new medical equipment and surgical instruments smashed by rocks.

During the early tumultuous weeks of January 1991, only one NGO, SOS-Kinderdorf, was still working in Mogadishu. Its Austrian doctor worked all hours of the day and night under dangerous conditions to treat not only the many war-wounded but also, I recall him saying, many victims of car accidents and of looters looting looters. The rapid increase in car accident victims was due to those Somalis who, having never before driven a vehicle, had now found the opportunity to loot a car and take a spin around town. The SOS clinic was the only functioning medical facility in Mogadishu during these early days. At one point, armed looters attempted to attack the SOS clinic. They failed, according to SOS, after hundreds of Somali women surrounded the building to protect it. The Austrian doctor, who stayed through some of the most violent days in Mogadishu, quickly became a hero to Somalis in Mogadishu for his bravery and commitment.

## **Nairobi**

As noted earlier, virtually all expatriate NGO, United Nations, and diplomatic staff were evacuated from Mogadishu to Nairobi by early January. Many were lodged in the same hotel in Nairobi and constantly tried to keep abreast of events in Mogadishu and Somalia. Once the Gulf War began, we were soon joined by our colleagues from USAID evacuated from Sudan. One day in early January I recall sitting down at the Thorn Tree Cafe in Nairobi with fellow UNDP, CARE, Africare, and World Concern evacuees from Somalia, all exchanging the latest "rumors" about Somalia. Someone suggested we formalize these meetings to more regularly exchange information on the evolving

situation in Somalia, and to begin to formulate how NGOs and donors could best respond to the situation once the security aspects of the country became reasonably tolerable. I suggested convening the first meeting in the conference room at REDSO, so that other REDSO officers, especially Food for Peace Officers, could be present. Hence, the first NGO coordination meeting for Emergency Relief Assistance to Post Civil War Somalia was held on January 15, 1991, at REDSO/ESA. Fourteen individuals, representing four NGOS (CARE, Africare, World Concern and AMREF) and REDSO Food for Peace Officers, attended. We decided to hold future meetings on a weekly basis at AMREF, and to invite other relief organizations, the U.N. and donors as well.

By the end of January, a similar NGO coordinating committee was formed in Britain; it and the Nairobi group soon reached agreement on sharing information. The two groups eventually became known as INCS/Nairobi (the Inter-NGO Coordinating Committee for Somalia) and INCS/U.K. At the February 5, 1991, INCS/Nairobi meeting, 13 relief organizations discussed, voted on and agreed to the following INCS statement of purpose:

- ◆ To establish open, clear and effective communication between Somali authorities and NGOS;
- ◆ To coordinate resources and programs of agencies working in the same areas of relief, to assure maximum effectiveness thereby eliminating conflicts of efforts and duplication of capital assets;
- ◆ To establish a forum through which all NGOS interested in involvement in Somalia can gain and share knowledge of existing and planned programs; and
- ◆ To promote donor confidence in a coordinated NGO effort toward Somalia through effective communication to attract maximum donor funding.

At the end of January, an article on the group's purpose and a photograph of the initial INCS participants was published in the *Kenyan Times*. This publicity encouraged other NGOS, ICRC, donors, Somali factional representatives, and eventually U.N./Somalia staff to attend the weekly meetings. At its inception, the INCS Nairobi group set two urgent priorities: first, to organize an assessment mission to Somalia; and second, to form a working group to draw up guidelines/conditions under which NGOs would be willing to return to Somalia.

One of the reasons why NGOs were concerned about getting local authorities to agree to their conditions for returning was due to frustration over having all of their offices/assets lost through looting. Starting up programs again would be time consuming and costly. It was felt that guarantees from Somali authorities over security and duty free issues would be crucial. I recall that there was some sort of loose Somali "interim administration" during the early months of 1991; the idea was to sign an agreement, or "letter of understanding" with whoever claimed to be in power.

As the number of embassies and international organizations attending the weekly meetings grew throughout 1991, so did the number of Nairobi-based Somali factional representatives. While Somali participation, particularly by Somali NGOs, at the INCS meetings was encouraged, members of the group soon tired of listening to lengthy clan-biased lectures on the situation in Somalia. Meeting participants then agreed that factional representatives would be allowed to speak for ten minutes at the beginning of each meeting and then, after a brief question and answer period, asked to leave the room.

## **KEY EVENTS/POLICY OPTIONS: NOVEMBER 1990 - JANUARY 1991**

### **The Decision to Evacuate the U.S. Embassy**

This was, without a doubt, the most critical key event/policy decision during this period. U.S. Marines and Navy Seals, in a dramatic rescue, safely evacuated 241 individuals from the besieged Embassy compound on January 5, 1991. Numerous expatriates and Somalis have since opined that if the Americans had secured the compound with Marines and Seals after the evacuation of the civilians, the compound might not have been looted and calm might have been restored earlier to the city of Mogadishu. I believe that Ambassador Bishop made the correct decision in calling for the immediate evacuation of remaining expatriates and U.S. forces involved in the evacuation, however, given the violent, completely "out of control" situation in Mogadishu at the time. It would have been too risky to think that a command of Seals could have kept the Embassy from being overrun and at the same time have a calming influence on USC and Barre troops rampaging throughout the city and countryside.

### **Massive Looting of ICRC, U.N., and NGO Facilities and Assets**

While the U.N. stated that it was not prepared to return to Mogadishu in the near future, NGOs were willing to move back to Mogadishu fairly quickly. They were hampered by the total looting of their assets and dispersion of many of their local employees. However, the biggest impediment for NGOs to return to Somalia was the security situation. Additionally, NGOs like Africare and World Concern are organizations geared towards long-term development programs, not emergency relief. During these early days, they were busy communicating the evolving situation in Somalia to their home offices. In the end, it often was the home office that would decide whether they should go back to Somalia or not. I generally found that those NGOs (like World Concern and CARE) who had been working in Somalia for many years remained committed to return. International expatriate NGO workers were especially concerned about finding ways to get money to their Somali staff.

## **The Total Collapse of Banking, Postal and Telecommunication Systems in the Country**

This seriously affected the lives of many Somalis who depended on remittances from family members living abroad. However, being the clever and adaptable people that they are, Somalis began handling the remittances from Djibouti and Nairobi. I recall meeting one Somali friend in Nairobi who said that he was in town to pick up several thousand dollars to take back to Somalia. He said that he was working on behalf of ten different families.

## **The Start of the Gulf War in January of 1991**

The international media was completely focused on covering the Gulf War; as a result, the disastrous situation in Mogadishu and in Somalia in early 1991 received little if any international media attention. Hence, neither the U.N. or international community was seized with attempting to assist in reconciling the warring factions. It has become clear from the Somalia experience that CNN is able to dictate when, where, how, and how much aid is provided to a country by the international community.

## **ICRC and MSF/France Returned to Mogadishu**

As regular and reliable information on the evolving situation in Somalia was scarce, the return of these two agencies was critical in generating updated situation reports on security and emergency needs. Their presence also paved the way for other agencies to initiate programs in Somalia.

## **Creation of an NGO Coordinating Body**

Another key decision made during this initial phase of the crisis was the decision of NGOs who had been evacuated from Mogadishu to come together to formalize a coordinating body to bring more attention to the Somalia crisis, obtain and disseminate information on the crises, and attract donor attention and funds. The formation of a

similar body in the U.K. (INCS/U.K.) assisted in generating more attention in Europe to the Somalia crisis, yet events in the Gulf still precluded much media attention to the appalling situation in Somalia.

### **The Destabilizing Effects of Refugee Flows**

Thousands of Somalis fled insecurity across the Kenyan border at Mandera and Liboi, with more refugees arriving by boats in Mombasa. The influx of these refugees into Kenya added greatly to UNHCR and WFP/Kenya's workload. It was also tricky getting aid to the refugees along the border: insecurity along the Kenyan border increased with their arrival due to the availability of guns and booty looted from Mogadishu.

### **Operational Approaches During This Period**

Essentially, there were very few options for approaching the crisis in the weeks immediately following the heavy fighting in Mogadishu in January 1991. ICRC, MSF/France, and SOS were mobilizing airlifts of critically needed food and medical supplies. The same organizations also developed working relationships with the Somali Red Crescent Society and Somali health workers in local hospitals. Essentially, all international relief organizations worked on the same principle: do what you can where you can. The humanitarian needs were immense; serious insecurity remained in certain areas; and there was a paucity of experienced humanitarian relief organizations poised to deal with the multitude of problems in a country still in a state of total upheaval. Relief efforts had to be modest out of necessity.

NGO collaboration in creating INCS/Nairobi was certainly an appropriate and timely action which contributed to more NGOs being able to move back to Somalia to provide assistance over the next several months since INCS provided an excellent forum for updating information on the situation that NGOs could provide to their home offices. Because ICRC and MSF/France are organizations geared towards emergency responses under war conditions, their early experiences in finding the most effective modes of operation in Somalia greatly aided other NGOs as they moved into Somalia.

## **BACKGROUND: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1991**

An ICRC representative who visited Mogadishu in late January 1991, noted a marked improvement in conditions there by mid-February. At a February 18 U.N./NGO coordinating meeting, he reported a decrease in the numbers of armed young men in Mogadishu (compared to the presence of thousands of armed USC supporters and soldiers in late January). He also noted that the airport was secure and under police control. At the same meeting, NGO representatives from SCF-U.K., OXFAM/U.K. and ACORD/U.K. reported on their recent assessment mission to Mogadishu: bodies had been removed from the streets and they also noted fewer numbers of young men carrying guns. They added that although some shooting was continuous throughout the day and the night sky was often lit by tracer bullets, the team did not feel terribly worried about their physical safety since most gunfire was aimed at the sky.

During their mission, ICRC and NGO reps stressed to the local authorities and USC officials the need to allow the ICRC, Somali Red Crescent Society, and relief organizations to work wherever there was a need. They reported that while local officials seemed to agree with the concept, the latter warned the expats against travelling to Baidoa and Kismayu where the security situation was less sure.

As regards relief requirements, ICRC noted that it was sending a ship with 300 MT of food and medical supplies to Kismayu, Merca and Brava. It was also initiating a rehabilitation program at Martini hospital and planned to begin supplying food and medical supplies to the other hospitals in Mogadishu. (By March 1991, ICRC had stepped up its delivery of food and non-food items to the major urban areas of northwest, central, and southern Somalia including the distribution of seeds to farmers in the riverine areas.) The SOS-Kinderdorf medical team in Mogadishu reported that the clinic was receiving over 500 children daily, but that 30-50 were dying daily, mainly from diarrhea, and malnutrition rates were increasing drastically.

In February, INCS fielded an assessment team to Somalia where they travelled for two weeks by road from Mogadishu to Baidoa, Brava, and Belet Weyne. UNICEF also fielded an assessment mission during the same period, except that the UNICEF team spent only one day in Somalia and only visited Mogadishu, a trend that became a trademark of U.N. assessment missions throughout 1991 and into 1992, known as "doing a U.N. woofie" [term denoting quick in and out visit with no substance].

The INCS mission noted a decrease in the Mogadishu population of 40-60% of its pre-war numbers, bullets and guns were readily available in the market with AK 47 guns selling for \$200 each. Gunfire could be heard day and night but was usually not aggressive and came from a growing lively gun market. Looting, particularly at night, remained a problem. Regarding priority needs, the team cited food aid, fuel, vaccines and shelter material for displaced who had fled the center of the city during the fighting and were now encamped in outlying areas of Mogadishu and in the countryside.

The key conclusions of the INCS mission are contained in the March 7, 1991, INCS meeting minutes. Some of the following INCS recommendations are identical to what relief workers are calling for today, three years later:

- ◆ need for NGOs to promote national peace
- ◆ aid should facilitate an independent and unified national state
- ◆ food aid was needed
- ◆ food aid should have an aim to reduce and stabilize food prices
- ◆ certain areas needed fuel aid
- ◆ technical assistance was needed in the area of communications and water pump repair
- ◆ employment was needed
- ◆ a new approach was needed to these problems with less reliance on expatriate involvement
- ◆ Somali NGOs are willing to help in any relief effort

INCS/Nairobi continued to meet on a regular basis up until about June of 1991, when the venue for NGO coordinating meetings was moved to Mogadishu. During the period February-May the numbers of individuals and relief agencies attending the meetings steadily increased. By early March of 1991 it was not uncommon to have anywhere from 25 to 40 people in attendance including NGOs, ICRC, the World Bank, USAID/OFDA, EC, Representatives from the British, Japanese, Italian and Nigerian Embassies, and U.N. agencies.

By the end of April, the following organizations were working in Somalia:

Northwest region: ICRC, MSF/Holland, and German Emergency Doctors  
Central region: ICRC, SOS, MSF/France, CARITAS, SCF-U.K.  
South region: ICRC

Conoco/Somalia expatriate staff returned to their compound in early 1991 and remained in Mogadishu throughout 1991-92, often assisting NGOs. The Conoco compound was one of the few offices/residences that was not looted during the heavy fighting in January 1991. Embassies began to return as well: in April, the Italian government installed a first secretary in a compound in Mogadishu.

By the end of May, the city of Mogadishu was becoming more stable; uniformed police were on patrol in certain areas of town and the airport. The Central Bank had reopened, with CARE opening the first bank account in post-war Mogadishu. Cinemas were open and the market was doing a lively business, especially in many looted items (TVs, stereos, cameras, videos, computers, printers etc). One day a Sudan Airways plane landed in Mogadishu ostensibly to deliver a few tons of food aid. The plane took off later in the day loaded with looted electronic equipment purchased at the market. Similarly, I had lunch with officials from the newly self-declared independent "Somaliland" one day in Mogadishu. They too had come down to Mogadishu on a shopping spree for computers as well as to meet with General Aidid.

While things seemed to be improving in Mogadishu, security risks were not to be ignored. International organizations working in Mogadishu always travelled with armed guards, primarily to keep their cars from being looted. The Somalis were delighted to have international organizations back in Somalia and, as a general rule, expatriate relief workers were rarely targets of armed attacks.

## **USAID/OFDA and State Department**

Word soon got out in the Somali community that I was the only member of the former U.S. mission in Somalia still remaining in Nairobi in early 1991. As a result, I received visits almost daily from former USAID and Embassy employees asking for their pay and benefits. Due to the hasty evacuation of the Embassy, it had been impossible to pay off the local staff. Many of these former employees arrived in Nairobi in miserable condition, many having walked from Mogadishu to Nairobi to escape the fighting. The

mental and emotional strain of their exodus was clearly written on their faces. I tried always to give them some money to help them settle in Kenya and told them that someone would be coming from State Department to pay their salaries.

In late February/early March, John Fox, the political officer of the U.S. Embassy in Somalia, returned to Nairobi to report on the evolving political and security situation in Somalia. One of his most immediate concerns was to get to Mogadishu to pay former FSN employees. I was delighted with his return as Fox and his wife had been good friends in Mogadishu. At last I had help in dealing with the myriad tasks involved with reporting on Somalia and getting the OFDA grants and USG food program for Somalia on track. More importantly, I could now refer the numerous international and Somali special interest groups and visa seekers to Fox.

Shortly after John's arrival we began working on a strategy to get the State Department to give me clearance to visit Mogadishu. State was very concerned about the unsettled security situation in Mogadishu and did not want to deal with any American official being wounded or killed -- even a contractor to the USG (although I suspect that the paperwork is less for a contractor than a direct hire). John Fox was in regular contact with the President of Conoco/Somalia in March and April for updates on the situation in Mogadishu, since Conoco still had a full complement of staff in Mogadishu. The President of Conoco, who has spent many years in Somalia and is one of the most knowledgeable sources on Somalia, assured Fox and the State Department that Conoco would meet me in Mogadishu and provide the required number of body guards for the proposed 24-hour visit to the capital.

I remember the day that Fox called to inform me that State had finally approved a 24-hour visit, on condition that I travel at all times with a certain number of armed guards and that I stay at the Conoco compound. When I complained to Fox about the brevity of the visit, too much like a U.N. "wooftie", Fox replied: "all you have to do is not get shot and then we can go for increasingly longer visits".

Upon arrival in Mogadishu, I received the warmest greeting from Somalis everywhere. They were happy to see USAID back in Somalia. The Mogadishu press corps interviewed me at the Conoco compound shortly after arriving in the capital, at which time I explained what the USG was planning in terms of assistance to Somalia and that the USG would not desert them. Former USAID and Embassy employees as well as household help began showing up at the Conoco compound as soon as the word was out that USAID was back. I had brought a few hundred dollars in twenty dollar bills in anticipation of finding former colleagues and friends, and doled out what I could to them, many of whom were in incredibly poor mental and physical condition. Their stories of

USAID and Embassy FSNs who were killed during the fighting as well as of the loss of family members were disturbing. Many of them did not know where family members were and asked me to look for them in Nairobi.

After this first trip to Mogadishu, the State Department agreed to my making increasingly longer visits there, which allowed me to monitor the large quantities of USG food aid arriving in August and later in the year as well as to promote funding for ICRC and NGO relief programs. Within a few months of my first visit to Mogadishu, John Fox, also with the support of Conoco, was likewise able to travel to Mogadishu to make the first installment of payments to our FSNs.

In July of 1991, I made my first visit to the northwest. I joined the EC humanitarian relief coordinator and a representative from MSF/Holland in travelling by road from Hargeisa to Berbera and Burao. While the level of gunfire in Hargeisa was less than in Mogadishu, it was fairly noisy in Berbera and Burao. The night before our group arrived in Burao, we learned that MSF/Holland expatriate staff in Burao had been robbed at gunpoint. Upon arrival in Burao, MSF/Holland staff recounted to us how gunmen awoke them in their bedrooms the previous night, demanding cash. Walking down Burao's main highway early the following morning, a barrage of gunfire commenced not far behind me and my EC colleague. I commented that the bullets were impacting rather than going into the air, to which the EC coordinator responded "That's right. If I tell you to get down, get down fast and don't worry about gravel in your face."

### **Mine Clearance Activities**

Shortly after this visit to the northwest, the successful Mine Clearance program was initiated with EC and USAID/OFDA funding. Phase II was funded by the EC, OFDA, and the Dutch and British governments. UNHCR provided funding at a later date to train additional Somalis in mine clearing techniques. The 440-strong Somali Pioneer Humanitarian Mine Clearance Corps, with training and supervision from "Rimfire", a British firm, functioned surprisingly well for over two years and managed to pretty much rid Hargeisa town and airport, as well as many roads and villages along the Ethiopian border of deadly landmines.

The mine clearance program had been initiated by MSF/Holland, which funded a survey of the problem following an incident where a Dutch nurse lost both legs when a landmine exploded under her vehicle. NGOs, the EC, OFDA, the British government and UNHCR remain concerned about the serious problem of mines in Somaliland and have

urged UNOSOM to expand mine clearance activities by training more Somalis. UNHCR is also concerned about assisting the tens of thousands of Somali refugees to return to Somaliland if the danger of mines still exists. Physicians for Human Rights did a good study of the problem of mines in northern Somalia in 1992. (Another special interest group also put out a paper on mine clearance in Somalia recently, but it is poorly researched and inaccurate in many ways.)

UNOSOM assumed responsibility for the mine clearance program in January 1994, and the program is now unravelling. Lack of knowledge about the current program and Somalia in general on the part of those responsible in New York and Mogadishu for mine clearance has resulted in a new program design which turns all responsibility for mine clearance over to Somalis without expatriate supervision of actual clearance and mapping. According to MSF/Holland's independent program monitor, casualty rates for clearance under the MSF/UNHCR mine clearance program were lower than other mine clearance programs in other parts of the world. If UNOSOM proceeds with its plan, these rates may well increase and it is unlikely that mapping will continue.

### **Growing Insecurity from Mid-August 1991 On**

By mid August 1991, there were approximately 13 NGOs in addition to the ICRC working in Mogadishu (approximately 100 expatriates). U.N. agency presence was sporadic to non-existent throughout 1991. The quality of ICRC and NGO staff was outstanding and coordination meetings among these organizations were held on a regular basis in Mogadishu. In early September, heavy fighting broke out in Mogadishu and lasted for approximately 3 days. Reliable NGO sources estimated that between 1,000-2,000 people were wounded or killed during this period. Most NGOs reduced their expatriate staff temporarily, but returned them to Mogadishu soon after hostilities ceased. The general feeling among Somalis and expatriates in Mogadishu at this time was that another round of fighting between Ali Mahdi and Aidid was highly likely. This feeling proved to be correct when an outbreak of the worst fighting since January 1991 occurred in November of 1991.

Throughout 1991 the EC humanitarian coordinator and OFDA relief coordinator were the only two donor representatives travelling on a regular basis throughout Somalia to monitor their respective relief programs and provide whatever support they could to ICRC and NGO field workers. Both Somali and expatriate relief workers in the field said that they appreciated the visits as it showed that they were not forgotten, and also gave them the opportunity to demonstrate progress being made in their programs as well as to

discuss implementation problems. These regular visits also helped the EC and OFDA representatives explain to their respective head offices the types of urgent food and non-food assistance required in Somalia.

Since the EC and OFDA's policies for provision of relief were very much the same, the EC and OFDA representatives could pretty much show a consolidated front when dealing with problems with local authorities. During each visit to Mogadishu, the EC and OFDA relief coordinators met with both Ali Mahdi and General Aidid to discuss needs and logistical/security problems faced by relief workers. Meetings with elders, factional leaders and religious leaders were also held in other parts of the country during these visits.

During one visit to Mogadishu, I noticed that one of the EC compound guards was carrying a M-16 rifle with a USAID sticker and stamped "property of U.S. government". I joked that people might think it was another EC/USAID co-financed project.

In October, the State Department sent a security assessment team to Mogadishu to determine if the security situation was stable enough to think about re-establishing a U.S. presence in Mogadishu. (The Italian chargé in Mogadishu was constantly asking me to urge the U.S. to return to Mogadishu to support the Italian government's peace initiatives). The mission determined that the situation in Mogadishu was still too insecure to set up a permanent U.S. Embassy presence at that point. One of the team's members told me upon his return that he thought Mogadishu was worse than Beirut. At a November 1 U.N./donors meeting in Nairobi, the UNDP representative announced that the results of the U.S. State Department's assessment mission had been broadcast on BBC. According to the BBC, the U.S. government announced it would be willing to play a mediation role in the existing crisis in Mogadishu if asked.

Italian Embassy officials did not have an easy time from the day they arrived in Mogadishu. General Aidid as well as many other Somalis view the Italians with suspicion because of their previous close ties with the Barre regime. Additionally, because the Italians had provided only a minimal amount of assistance to Somalia since the civil war (less than 2,000 MT of food), their presence in the capital aroused even more suspicions. By September, I was being approached by Aidid, elders, local administration officials and businessmen on a continual basis and asked to urge the United States government to send a senior diplomat to assist them in reconciling their differences. Jimmy Carter's name was brought up several times.

On October 29, while walking down a side street, I heard missiles screaming through the air. Expecting shells to begin exploding everywhere, I crouched against the nearest wall. A vehicle screeched to a halt and Aidid jumped out and told me not to worry. He was just firing some shells out to sea over the airport "to keep that Italian Delegation's plane from landing." According to Aidid, he was miffed that the Italian Embassy in Mogadishu told him that if he wanted to meet with the delegates, he would have to come to the Italian Embassy. Aidid had also not been consulted about the delegation prior to their visit.

The outbreak of fighting in September and anti-Italian demonstrations created a more tense situation in Mogadishu. CARE was also experiencing more security incidents in general food distributions throughout the city. Throughout 1991 CARE and ICRC were the only organizations doing general food distributions throughout Somalia. From January to October, ICRC shipped and distributed approximately 21,500 MT of food throughout Somalia. CARE commenced food distributions in Mogadishu in early October, primarily covering Mogadishu, with ICRC sending ships to the coastal ports in southern and central Somalia. Supplementary feeding was being handled by other NGOS. Transporting and distributing food in Somalia was and remains the most dangerous relief intervention to implement. Many Somali aid workers were killed during food distributions as gunmen often moved in to take what they could.

In 1991, CARE, OFDA and the EC began developing a program for the monetization of food to help defray transport costs and eventually fund rehabilitation activities. This seemed like a good option for stabilizing food prices. Moreover, private traders were rarely looted -- only donated food. Free food would continue to be distributed, but with a greater effort for better targeting. At a November 1, 1991, U.N./donors meeting, CARE and the OFDA coordinator explained very clearly what monetization was about. The Chairman, who was the UNDP Resident Representative, responded that "while USAID and the EC may concur to this approach, the U.N. clearly rejects the sale of U.N. food for emergency relief assistance." Another U.N. official cried out, "You can't sell food to starving people". They just couldn't get it. It took many months to explain to the U.N. that monetization was selling food to traders, not to starving people.

Fierce fighting between supporters of Ali Mahdi and General Aidid erupted again on November 17. Within a period of one month, relief workers estimated 4,000 people had been killed and 9,000 wounded. Commodities at the port were being pilfered on a regular basis, and most NGOs evacuated expatriates or reduced the size of their staffs. In an ICRC/Red Crescent Societies press release dated December 11, an ICRC nurse who had just returned from Mogadishu was quoted as saying "...The smell of blood and decay

is everywhere... The hospitals are overflowing. There is blood dripping down the steps of the hospital and houses where the wounded are piled up. Bits of bone, flesh, and amputated limbs litter the floor or are thrown out of the windows. There is a shortage of water and disinfectant. Operations are performed anywhere -- under trees, on low walls, even on the ground. It's Solferino all over again. Many of the capital's inhabitants have fled. We found 50,000 displaced people in a camp near Mogadishu and there are about 50,000 more in the south, mostly around Kismayu and Brava.... The cities' markets are almost empty. The ICRC is therefore encouraging local women's committees to provide the population with some food by setting up community kitchens."

On December 11, a Belgian national working for the ICRC was critically wounded at Martini hospital. He died of his injuries on December 16. His bodyguard, a member of the Somali Red Crescent Society, died after being hit by three bullets while trying to protect the ICRC worker. The Belgian ICRC relief worker was the first expatriate to be killed while attempting to deliver relief in Somalia.

## **The United Nations During This Period**

United Nations staff who were evacuated from Mogadishu to Nairobi in January of 1991 for the most part retained their positions. When the UNDP Resident Representative charged with the U.N.'s relief response to Somalia learned that a UNDP employee was attending the weekly INCS meetings in early 1991, he told her to stop attending because the U.N. did not have anything to do with the NGOs. The U.N. later changed their attitude when they realized that the ICRC and NGOs were way ahead of them in terms of knowing what the situation was in Somalia and planning relief interventions. In February, UNICEF called a meeting of NGOs to advise them that UNICEF would serve as a coordinating agency responsible for "information/documentation, distribution of information to the various NGOs, facilitation of NGO affairs with the Kenya Government, and assistance to individual NGOs." It became clear that although UNICEF had sufficient numbers of staff, it lacked competent staff and was unable to follow through with its pledges, although it frequently claimed to be taking the lead.

Following one INCS meeting in 1991, a camera crew from a major network asked to interview individuals carrying out relief programs in Somalia. The UNICEF representative rushed before the other NGOs and demanded to be interviewed (UNICEF was not operational in Somalia at the time). His inflated claims of what UNICEF was

doing in Somalia elicited so many hoots of laughter from us, however, that the cameraman had to stop filming several times until we settled down. In general, while UNICEF managed to deliver some relief items to Somalia during 1991, they consistently maintained they were doing much more than they actually were. UNHCR, UNDP, FAO, and WHO did not have programs functioning. The USG channeled a good deal of its food assistance through WFP. Although WFP claimed to be managing a large food program, CARE was the organization that actually took the risks and managed virtually all of the logistics of the food program for WFP from port to end distribution point.

In sum, although donor governments and NGOs were pushing the U.N. to go back into Somalia and establish support programs for NGOs, U.N. staff were reluctant to return, and this was reflected in their weak and often non-existent programs. One U.N. official said that the U.N. did not work in war zones, but NGOs and donors pointed out that UNICEF had been managing a successful program in southern Sudan, which most people considered to be a war zone. Why was Somalia different?

Part of the United Nations' problem was due to the absence of a Somali government since U.N. agencies usually work through various governmental ministries. When Ali Mahdi was inaugurated as Interim President on August 8, 1991, U.N. heads of agencies perked up, hoping that it would be back to business as usual. The arrival of the first WFP/USG donated food coincided with Ali Mahdi's inauguration and he visited the port to watch the off-loading. I was lucky to see the WFP representative just as he was about to sign over the bill of lading to Ali Mahdi; I yanked the paper out of his hand. When asked what he thought he was doing signing over 12,000 MT of USG-donated food to Ali Mahdi (acc businessman), he said he thought it would be a good publicity stunt for the U.N. At one U.N./donors meeting during the heavy fighting of November a report came in that Ali Mahdi forces had driven deeper into Aidid's territory. Some U.N. officials started clapping and cheering!

International pressure mounted for the United Nations to do something as the fighting continued into December. The NGOs were desperate to find transport for the delivery of emergency supplies and consistently asked the U.N. to make one of their planes available. The U.N. eventually made one its planes available to transport desperately needed relief supplies. In a December 19, 1991 *New York Times* article by Jane Perlez, Pierre Gassman, ICRC's Delegate General for Africa, was quoted as asking "How come UNICEF Somalia has 13 people in Nairobi and no one inside Somalia?" In the same article, a State Department official said "We have put pressure on the United Nations at the highest levels to do more ... We have asked couldn't you at least make a plane available, but there has been no response."

In mid 1991, OFDA/Washington asked the author to draft a cable recommending approval for \$3,000,000 for UNICEF programs in northern Somalia. The author stated that she could not in good conscience recommend this given the current low capabilities of the UNICEF/Somalia staff. Washington said that they were getting pressure from New York to fund this and eventually, with reluctance, the author wrote the cable. Through monitoring, it was found that much of the material that UNICEF claimed they had distributed to NGOs and hospitals was not delivered. A good deal of the funds were used on setting up offices and paying rent. Under pressure to spend the money from New York and lacking the logistical capability to deliver the health supplies as required under the grant, UNICEF used part of the funds to purchase new vehicles that remained for a long period in Mombasa. New vehicles, when UNICEF knew that international organizations only used rented vehicles because of security risks!

UNICEF operations improved dramatically when Mark Stirling was assigned as its new Somalia country director in March of 1992. Mr. Stirling demonstrated outstanding commitment to the Somali people and succeeded in developing excellent working relationships with the NGOs and donors.

## **POLICY OPTIONS: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1991**

### **Key Events**

- ◆ **U.S. aid to Somalia.** By December 1991, total USG emergency assistance to Somalia was \$21,496,847 [OFDA Situation Report No. 5, December 10, 1991].
- ◆ **Impact of NGO deaths.** The death of a Belgian ICRC relief worker in Mogadishu in December devastated his Somali and international colleagues, as he was an outstanding and dedicated individual known to all relief workers in Mogadishu. His death reminded everyone of the highly volatile and dangerous environment they were working in. Although several more expatriates were to lose their lives in Somalia, the true unsung heroes were the many dedicated Somalis working for the Somali Red Crescent Society, NGOs, and other community relief committees who lost their lives in attempting to deliver relief assistance, particularly food aid.
- ◆ **Establishment of the Italian Embassy in Mogadishu.** While the Italians were the first to establish a diplomatic presence, they were ineffectual in negotiating a settlement to the conflict. Perhaps if more donor countries had taken an interest in trying to reconcile the warring parties in mid 1991 when the situation was taking a turn for the better, an agreement might have been obtained that would have stopped renewed urban warfare in the city later in the year.
- ◆ **The State Department security mission** in October was a policy decision to see if it was feasible to establish a presence in Mogadishu. At this point the city was tense, with the possibility of renewed fighting very real. The Somalis wanted the USG to help them solve their problems. If the USG had sent along a senior diplomat with this team to begin discussions with the Somali factions, tensions might have been eased. Or, if a senior diplomat from the USG had started some shuttle diplomacy from Nairobi, the Somalis might not have felt so abandoned by the international

community. It is possible that this option was discussed in Washington. I do not know. Perhaps Washington felt that this type of diplomatic negotiation among the factions was the responsibility of the United Nations. Whatever the case, Washington should have known by late 1991 that the United Nations was unable to provide any substantial type of assistance and was not terribly interested in involving itself too deeply in Somalia's civil strife.

- ◆ **A fledgling police force had been established by mid 1991.** Both Ali Mahdi and Aidid agreed to Ahmed Jama, former commander of the police, serving as the head of the emerging police force. During a meeting with Aidid in August, the General said that he supported the police under Jama and he believed the best way to secure food and non-food relief deliveries was to support the police to patrol the streets of Mogadishu, the port warehouses, and airport. Jama's police force, he suggested, could provide escorts for food deliveries within Mogadishu, and USC ex-militia men could escort convoys outside of the city to interior locations. He argued that this could help in demobilizing the militia, but that food aid for the police and militias was essential. I feel that if the U.N., particularly WFP, and international community would have supported this new police force with food and technical assistance, there would have been a substantial decrease in looting incidences as it was Jama's intention to initiate a vigorous disarmament campaign in the city.
- ◆ **Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in May of 1991.** While not recognized by the international community as an independent country, relief organizations worked through the new Somaliland administration and continue to do so.
- ◆ **Mogadishu port ceased to function with the fighting in November.** ICRC attempted for three weeks to dock a ship at the port in December and was forced to give up.
- ◆ **The appearance of a "green line" by the end of November** further increased risks to relief workers as they had to cross the line to ensure equitable distribution of assistance.
- ◆ **The USG increased pressure on the United Nations to do something.** Although the NGOs were willing to cooperate with the U.N. and anxious

for their return to Mogadishu, like Somalis and others they began to reconcile themselves to the fact that they could not rely on the U.N. for support.

- ◆ The Arab League was also conspicuously absent during this period. When asked "why isn't the Arab League here?", Somalis would generally laugh and say that not only do they not expect relief assistance from the Arab League. They did not want the Arabs meddling in their affairs. They only wanted Europeans or Americans to help them sort out their problems.

## **Operational Approaches During This Period**

- ◆ **Regular NGO meetings.** NGOs continued to meet on a regular basis in Mogadishu to exchange information on their programs and general situation. Responsibilities for different aspects of the overall relief effort were shared -- fuel and food for hospitals, drugs and medical supplies etc.
- ◆ **Growing numbers of chartered airlifts.** As the situation worsened in Mogadishu and elsewhere, SCF/U.K., ICRC and SOS chartered aircraft to bring in medical supplies and supplementary foods.
- ◆ **Growing NGO use of rented vehicles.** ICRC and NGOs operating in Somalia soon relied solely on rented vehicles, since the probability of having a new imported vehicle looted was running at 99.9%.
- ◆ **Varied strategies for traversing Mogadishu.** Relief agencies adopted different strategies for "going cross line". This often entailed a car from Mogadishu north meeting a car carrying a relief worker from Mogadishu south at a crossing point, or "check point", and vice-versa. This often was a very tense experience, and there were numerous security incidences involving NGO and U.N. vehicles and personnel at crossing points.
- ◆ **Security Guards.** All organizations employed armed guards to protect them, their residences, cars, feeding centers, hospitals etc. I was instructed by the State Department to travel with at least three armed guards at all times. For food deliveries or travel outside of town, some agencies engaged vehicles mounted with heavy caliber weapons. While using

protect relief workers and relief supplies was decried by congressional delegation members and other European visitors to Somalia in 1992, the employment of armed guards was prudent and wise under the circumstances. In essence, the international organizations adopted the best ways of operating in Somalia, and this included the employment of armed guards. When some NGOs asked where they should include ammunition in their proposals to OFDA, I advised them to include the costs of ammunition under the security line item (guns came with the guards). It should also be noted that not all NGO guards were thugs holding NGO staff ransom. Many of the guards employed in 1991 by international organizations were extremely dedicated to the relief personnel they were guarding as well as to the success of the programs being undertaken by those groups.

- ◆ **Growing number of supplementary feeding centers for children and food kitchens.** Recognizing the poor state of nutrition of mothers and families, take-home rations were provided to poor families in addition to on-site wet feeding of malnourished children. ICRC and NGOs involved in dry and wet feeding programs all agreed that general food distributions and supplementary feeding were necessary and complementary programs. As the food situation in Mogadishu became increasingly critical in November-December, ICRC/Somali Red Crescent began to establish community kitchens. Again, it was agreed that general food distributions needed to continue. It was felt that the ICRC feeding kitchens would come under attack if general food distributions ceased.
- ◆ **Maintaining flexibility and innovation.** ICRC and CARE had to remain continually flexible and innovative in how they delivered food aid due to the extremely high security risks associated with the delivery of food. As one IMC nurse said, "you can always tell when there has been a food distribution -- we receive an increase in bullet wound cases at the hospital". For example the following was reported in a CARE food distribution report in October: "We ran into almost every problem imaginable. There were two slight injuries among our own staff, several deaths including a guard to the governor, along with direct looting." CARE adapted by increasing the number of security guards accompanying food convoys and limiting the number of neighborhoods receiving food each day. This tactic improved control over the operation.

- ◆ **Need for close coordination.** Close coordination of food aid deliveries between CARE and ICRC was essential. For example, CARE provided food to ICRC to complement ICRC's program of transporting seeds to the interior of the country. Distribution sites (neighborhoods and districts) and times of day for food distributions were constantly being revised in order to ensure better security and control over the food. I recall that ICRC, when trucking food outside of Mogadishu, used to begin transporting before dawn on many occasions (hoping that the troublemakers were still sleeping).
- ◆ **Working with neighborhood committees.** CARE worked through neighborhood committees that consisted of women, police and local militia. Whenever possible responsibility for distributions was given primarily to women. Following the killing of a ICRC Belgian national, it became the general consensus among relief workers that any expatriate with authority to release food was in physical danger. Plans were made to give more authority and responsibility to elders and food committee members to move food from the port to their neighborhoods. CARE expatriates eventually ceased travelling to distribution sites as the security situation worsened later in the year. CARE food monitors were also in danger as they reported on looting incidents. Eventually, the CARE Director decided to make these reports confidential to reduce security risks to its monitors.
- ◆ **Regular nutritional surveys.** Surveys conducted primarily by ICRC, MSF/France, and SCF/U.K. were critical in identifying where the most vulnerable groups were and what type of assistance was required. Based on nutritional and hospital surveys ICRC began moving food, blankets, medical supplies, and fuel by air and sea to Mogadishu and Kismayu in March 1991.

## **BACKGROUND: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1992**

In early January, a second expatriate humanitarian relief worker was murdered in the port town of Bosaso in northeastern Somalia. The female UNICEF doctor was gunned down by three men. A CARE expatriate colleague sitting with the group was wounded during the attack. Some Somalis in the region believe that "Islamic fundamentalists" were behind the assassination. The SSDF (Somali Salvation Democratic Front) representative in Nairobi explained that the "fundamentalists" would carry out such a crime to discredit the SSDF and discourage international organizations from operating in the northeast region.

When fighting broke out in Mogadishu in November 1991, I contacted Osman Ato, Aidid's chief advisor, and asked him to have Aidid place extra security guards at the port to guard the recently arrived 6,000 plus MT's of USG food aid. I reminded him that if this tonnage of food was looted, the United States Government would not be eager to provide additional food. Ato did as requested and amazingly, the food was not looted or "liberated" until almost three months later on January 21. Somalis present during that looting said that much of it went to the general population -- a sort of spontaneous distribution. But they added that much of it also was loaded (at gunpoint) onto merchants' trucks and driven away. IMC medical personnel reported an increase in gunshot wounds at the hospital that day. Hospital personnel knew the fresh flow of wounded was connected with a food distribution as many wounded arrived covered with wheat flour.

By the end of January, the fighting in Mogadishu had diminished, and according to the SOS-Kinderdorf coordinator, the level of gunfire was back to normal. In late January, this Austrian-based NGO and the Austrian Ambassador convoked a donors' meeting at the Ambassador's Nairobi residence to discuss a proposal for "zones of tranquility". The proposed zones were to be protected by an external armed force. The Austrian Ambassador had just returned from Mogadishu and described the devastation of central Mogadishu. All donors thought the idea of the zones was a good one, but wondered who would send troops. The UNDP Deputy Resident Representative stated that both Ali Mahdi and Aidid had informed the United Nations that they were against armed intervention by foreign forces.

Although Ali Mahdi and Aidid signed a cease-fire agreement at the United Nations in New York on March 3, the fighting was to continue. In April, Aidid launched a counter-offensive when Barre's troops, having regrouped, reached a town about 20 kms outside of Mogadishu. Aidid's forces succeeded in defeating the SNF forces and driving Barre and part of his forces into Kenya. The fighting that took place from Afgoi to the border of Kenya, however, left a path of devastation and destruction soon to be known as "the famine belt". ICRC and other NGO relief workers were aware that the situation in Baidoa, Hoddur, Bardera and other areas in the path of the fighting was disastrous in terms of severe food shortages, but it was impossible to reach these areas due to the heavy fighting and insecurity.

As a result of the fighting in Mogadishu and the countryside the numbers of displaced Somalis increased drastically. By February there were over 250,000 displaced in the greater Mogadishu area alone. A large percentage of these had come from towns in the interior of the country where fighting had been intense. Merca and Kismayu were also being flooded with displaced, as well as Belet Weyne from fighting in the Galcaio area. The international relief community in Mogadishu was terribly frustrated that ships were still unable to dock at Mogadishu port. ICRC was the only agency managing to deliver large amounts of food aid for general distribution to Somalia at this time. ICRC had chartered five ships and was making deliveries to coastal ports. They were attempting to move food from Kismayu up to Jilib and Jamama, but recognized that the security situation in these areas remained very tense with sporadic fighting and looting continuing in the area. A Somali World Concern employee travelled up the Juba river to Bantu villages, where the villagers told him "we don't need medicines; we need food."

Through coastal deliveries to Merca, ICRC was hoping to move food out to rural areas between Merca and Jilib. An ICRC nutritionist found that the condition of the displaced in these areas was "catastrophic", with some camps showing severe malnutrition rates of 70-90 percent. An assessment of the children at Qorioley showed similar rates of malnutrition. Off-loading food at Merca proved difficult at times as young gunmen from Mogadishu had moved to Merca upon learning that food was arriving there.

## **Travelling to Somalia**

When the heavy fighting broke out in Mogadishu in early 1991, the State Department denied me permission to travel to the capital for a period of time. I requested clearance to go to Mogadishu in March and April, but was only allowed back in May.

During this period of "no travel to Mogadishu", I was travelling in Somaliland and northeast region. In March, the Director of OFDA, James Kunder, made his first visit to Somalia, joining me in a visit to Hargeisa. In February, I had received clearance to travel to the northeast region once Conoco assured U.S. officials that they would look after me (USG officials were particularly concerned about the security situation in the northeast following the assassination of the European UNICEF doctor in January). In February, only ICRC was actively implementing emergency programs in the northeast region. Much of their work involved treating war wounded arriving from the front line near Galcaio. I spent much time in 1992 and 1993 encouraging NGOs to establish programs in northern Somalia. The assassination of the UNICEF doctor in January made relief organizations reluctant to set up programs in the northeast region despite the obvious needs in the water, livestock, and health care sectors.

In May 1992, the State Department gave me clearance to visit Mogadishu. Although I have previously worked in drought and famine areas elsewhere in Africa, I never expected to see the catastrophic situation that prevailed in Mogadishu in May; the number of adults suffering from severe malnutrition was shocking. One watched adults and children dying of starvation in camps for the displaced. At the ICRC beach landing sites, Somalis were seen picking through the sand for grains of rice or drinking vegetable oil directly from tins. Security problems linked to the delivery of food aid were also on the rise, especially at the port of Mogadishu.

ICRC, CARE, SCF/U.K., MSF/France, CISP, IMC, and other NGOs, although already stretched, stretched some more throughout spring and summer of 1992 and expanded their numbers of feeding kitchens, health care facilities and supplementary feeding centers to cope with the rising numbers of starving and sick in southern Somalia. Their heroic efforts saved many.

At an August 3 press conference in Washington immediately following his return from Somalia and Kenya, OFDA Director Jim Kunder said "The men and women relief volunteers who have been working in Somalia since this tragedy began are among the most heroic people I have met. The conditions under which they work and the situations they have had to endure are beyond comprehension" (*Front Lines*, USAID, September 1992).

World Food Program announced that it "delivered the first relief assistance to ever reach Mogadishu on May 3, 1992, since November of 1991." While it was good news that the U.N. and WFP had succeeded in negotiating the opening of the port and that a ship had finally docked at the port, the international community had to chuckle again at the inflated claims made by the United Nations' eager public relations people. Everyone

knew that for months the ICRC had been delivering thousands of tons of food to Mogadishu by coastal barges at beaches north and just south of Mogadishu.

Following a visit by OFDA Director Kunder to Mogadishu in July, and subsequent press conferences in Nairobi and Washington at which he described the appalling condition of the people of Somalia, more Congressional delegations started lining up their trips to Somalia, and the USG initiated its airlift and dispatched a DART team. The subsequent invasion of the press turned into a nightmare for many working in Mogadishu. At one point in August, MSF/France had 17 journalists staying at their compound, and the U.N. had about 40.

Insecurity in August in Mogadishu was on the rise again. Although vehicles flying U.N. flags were generally more prone to attacks than NGO cars, by August NGOs were also experiencing more security problems. Insecurity at the port was also on the rise. During a visit to Mogadishu in August, gunmen drove two tanks into the port and began shooting and looting. Several people were killed and wounded during this day of shoot and loot. It is difficult to gauge exactly why this increase in insecurity occurred, but I believe that the large numbers of reporters arriving with money in their pockets to rent vehicles and guards, more food arriving at the port, more NGOs setting up programs, an expanding U.N. bureaucracy, and the announcement of the deployment of 500 U.N. security guards all contributed to this increase in insecurity and an even more crazy carnival-like environment in Mogadishu -- journalists skateboarding down main street in shorts!

Experienced relief workers in Somalia have learned that a sudden increase in resources in an area often results in increased insecurity. For the first time ever, I encountered targeted armed aggression during a visit to the port in August when a port guard pushed his AK-47 against me and shouted "No journalists!" The flood of journalists with all of their camera and video equipment certainly made many Somalis feel jumpy and insecure. They could not understand what was happening to their country.

While the airlift contributed to saving thousands of starving people and the DART team succeeded in drawing many new NGOs into the relief effort, some relief workers felt that it would have been wiser to keep pressure on the U.N. to keep the port and relief routes open. At an NGO meeting in Mogadishu in mid-August, some NGOs expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of prior consultation with them regarding the airlift and the DART team. I told them that I also hadn't been consulted about the airlift, and only learned about it while watching CNN at the Sheraton in Djibouti. When CNN announced that the USG was about to initiate a massive airlift of food into Somalia, my first thought

was "Thank God I'm in Djibouti and will be off to Hargeisa tomorrow". The next morning I received a cable telling me to proceed to Mombasa immediately to brief the DOD.

From notes taken at the time, the most pressing problems faced by the NGOs in August included: lack of U.N. involvement; lack of a reliable supply of drugs and medical supplies to hospitals; inadequate supply of fuel for hospitals; and, the need for incentive payments for hospital and health staff. It should be noted that today the NGOs continue to face the same problems.

The DART team largely handled the coordination of the DOD airlift and the review and funding of new NGO proposals during the period August-December 1992. I continued to monitor ongoing activities as OFDA's Somalia Emergency Aid Coordinator, and also spent much time arranging Congressional delegation visits. It seemed as if just as one would finally leave, another would arrive.

## **UNITAF**

During a visit to Mogadishu in late November, I was confronted by a group of agitated Somalis in north Mogadishu asking when the U.S. Marines were landing -- tomorrow? Not knowing anything about the deployment of U.S. troops, the Somalis explained that BBC had broadcast that U.S. Marines were off the coast of Somalia and were planning an imminent landing. Subsequent broadcasts over the next few days reported the same. Being the only official American in Mogadishu at the time, I was under pressure from NGOs, factional leaders and Somalis to explain what the U.S. was up to. On Thanksgiving day morning I called OFDA/Washington from Mogadishu and asked if something was going on I should know about. OFDA's Director of Disaster Operations said that he had heard the same broadcast, was trying to find out what was happening, and that I should probably get out of town until we knew what the situation was.

A couple of weeks later during the December, 1992 Addis Ababa Humanitarian Conference, I received a telephone call early one morning. The voice on the other end announced that he was calling from the SS Tripoli and wanted more information on the landing since a "Mr. Westcott's" name was included on his list of people involved in the advance party for the landing of the Marines. When asked his location, he said just off the coast of Mogadishu. Yikes!

Shortly after the call, I met Ambassador Oakley in the elevator and explained the strange call I had just received. The Ambassador responded that I would be flying with him, OFDA Director James Kunder, and the political officer that afternoon to Mombasa, and that tomorrow I would be travelling with the political and security officers to Mogadishu to help lay the groundwork for his arrival the following day. My first thought was that I had not brought the right clothes for Mombasa and Mogadishu, and I suggested that the group arrive in Mombasa early enough to do some shopping. It was fun helping to outfit the OFDA Director in T-shirts and sneakers.

The State Department had secured the agreement of the President of Conoco/Somalia for USAID and State Department officers involved in the landing of the Marines and the humanitarian relief program to set up offices at the Conoco compound in Mogadishu. Within a few weeks, the compound was filled with USG officials and Marines. The cooperation of Conoco/Somalia was key in assisting the Ambassador and other U.S. government officials to do their jobs.

Once the Marines had landed in Mogadishu, I and a UNOSOM official were sent to Kismayu to brief General Omar Jess on what was about to happen in Kismayu. I told him that the Marines would be coming to Kismayu "very soon", that Ambassador Oakley would be arriving tomorrow to meet with him and the elders of Kismayu, and that he should make sure all the "technicals" were off the streets. I then asked one of Jess's aides to make sure adequate security was provided at the airport for the Ambassador's arrival the following day. I asked him "to bring out the big stuff". Upon landing in Kismayu the following day with the Ambassador, the Ambassador's security guards' eyes were popping when they saw the impressive array of heavy and light weapons lined up on the tarmac -- indeed they were made a bit nervous by the display.

I and the USLO political officer soon made a similar trip to Baidoa to explain to NGOs and local officials what was about to happen in their town. The Ambassador met with NGO, U.N. and ICRC reps during each of his visits to Mogadishu, Kismayu, and Baidoa to explain how and approximately when the Marines would be landing and to advise them to stay in their compounds for the next few days since it was impossible to predict how the Somalis would react to the armed forces taking over airports/ports.

The NGOs' initial reaction to sending in large numbers of troops was mixed. In a cable to the State Department in late November regarding NGO opinions, I noted the following: Some NGOs felt that large numbers of troops could severely hamper their programs and prospects for continuing their programs. Others feared that the troops

would be seen as an occupying army and spark renewed fighting in the capital, which in turn could lead to renewed attacks on expatriate relief workers. Some believed that troops were necessary to ensure the delivery of food to large numbers of people at risk.

I also had concerns about the imposition of foreign troops in Somalia, and expressed them to Washington in the same cable:

"The Uncertain Mandate: At this point, the question most in the minds of the expatriates in Mogadishu, Merca, Qorioley, Baidoa etc. is what will be the mandate for the troops? The current level of uncertainty and tension in Mogadishu stems from this question. Do they think that they can come in and sort out the security problem in a few months? Will they only secure the port and airport? Will they work with and train the current Somali forces at the port and airport? Do they realize that they could cause an escalation in tensions and fighting, and create a more dangerous long term situation in Somalia?"

While the atmosphere in Mogadishu at the time of the Marines landing was euphoric -- Somalis lining the streets to cheer the U.S. troops -- I still had reservations about a military solution in Somalia. Expectations among the Somalis were running extremely high, and the ability of the U.N. to oversee the operation was questionable based on their track record in Somalia. Nevertheless, the actual landing of the Marines was a success, if not the media event of the year. The atmosphere in town was one of relief and celebration. Everyone, Somalis, NGOs, DART, the U.N., chipped in with high spirits in a genuine attempt to make the armed forces humanitarian intervention a success.

## **The United Nations During This Period**

The U.N. assumed a much higher political profile during this period as a result of constant prodding from the U.S. government and U.N. member states. The appointment of Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun as Special Representative of the Secretary General in April 1992 was one of the most constructive things the U.N. did in Somalia. Sahnoun, unlike many other U.N. officials, genuinely cared about Somalia and Somalis. He was highly respected by the Somalis and the international community and was making slow but steady progress in reconciling groups within the various regions of Somalia. He was

also critical of the lack of U.N. response to the crisis in Somalia and openly stated this in his opening address to the first United Nations Coordination meeting on Assistance to Somalia on October 12, 1992:

"...A whole year slipped by whilst the U.N. and the international community, save for ICRC and a few NGOs watched Somalia descend into this hell."

According to reliable sources, Sahnoun was asked to resign by the UNSG because of his frank remarks about U.N. agencies operating in Somalia. Sahnoun's departure from the Somalia scene, in my opinion, was a major setback in efforts to reconcile the warring factions and begin the process of reconstruction of the Somali society.

While a large number of Somalis have always distrusted Boutros Boutros-Ghali [for his pro-Barre stance while serving in the Egyptian foreign ministry], the departure of Sahnoun further increased Somali distrust and dislike of Ghali as well as UNOSOM operations in Somalia overall. Although I had little contact with Sahnoun's replacement, Ambassador Kittani, from conversations with NGOs working in Mogadishu I gather that the NGOs were not terribly impressed with him.

The U.N. also acted wisely in appointing Bryan Wannup, UNDP, as the Acting Special Emergency Coordinator in February 1992. He quickly gained the confidence of the NGOs and the donors within weeks of his arrival in Nairobi. He actively sought to increase UNDP's involvement in Somalia, and I and the EC coordinator were working closely with Wannup to have UNDP provide aircraft support for NGOs, take over the Mogadishu water project, and eventually assume responsibility for mine clearance in the north. At an EC/OFDA/NGO coordinating meeting in March, the NGOs praised Bryan Wannup and said they had developed good working relationships with WHO, WFP and UNDP, but that certain coordinating problems remained with UNICEF. NGO complaints about UNICEF included: UNICEF flying in quantities of relief goods without informing NGOs what was being brought in or where the supplies were destined; UNICEF first asking NGOs to implement their program for them and later changing their mind; UNICEF not sharing their plan of action with NGOs (if indeed they have one); and UNICEF failure to coordinate issues such as incentive payments with the NGOs. But in another U.N. blunder, Wannup was replaced in April by someone who had thus far not earned the confidence of the NGOs.

In April, the U.N. sent a technical team with NGO participation to Somalia. Prior to the Mission, USG/Somalia's political officer, John Fox, and I requested that the team provide us and the EC with a debriefing upon their return. When the team returned they

held a meeting with NGOs to relate their findings, but did not invite any donors! I had to get the findings from an NGO participant. According to this participant, one NGO representative attending the debriefing stated that the U.N. must make an effort to eliminate the distrust that has grown between the U.N. and NGOs and that the U.N. must coordinate its relief activities prior to implementing programs -- not after. He additionally noted that U.N. relief actions must take precedence over U.N. publicity actions.

In the absence of any U.N. coordinating meetings for several months, the EC coordinator and I called informal meetings with NGOs and donors to discuss relief strategies and coordinate programs. The U.N. Special Emergency Coordinator learned of these meetings and expressed his displeasure to us; after all, it was the U.N. who should call these meetings. We both agreed with him, but stated that given the absence of U.N. initiatives in calling these meetings, we thought we should call one. This prompted the U.N. Coordinator to call a meeting on July 22, 1992, with donors and NGOs. For almost two hours, each of the U.N. agencies gave a detailed description of their emergency programs in Somalia. The author recalls the Chairman looking at his watch and, noting that they were running short of time, asked the ICRC and NGO reps to limit descriptions of their activities to one minute. Rather than expressing frustration over this, the NGOs, some of the donors, and U.N. relief workers had a good chuckle after the meeting.

Throughout 1992, U.N./donor/NGO meetings were held on an ad hoc basis in Nairobi. Meanwhile NGOs working in southern Somalia were meeting on a regular basis in Mogadishu. In late 1992, responding to my expression of frustration with the U.N., a senior U.N. official from New York said "The problem with the U.N. in Somalia is that they are trying to lead from behind."

Although the foregoing presents the shortcomings of the United Nations in 1991 until late 1992, it should be noted that U.N. agencies had some very competent and dedicated individuals working on their staffs who were just as frustrated as the NGOs with the U.N.'s inability to follow through on its own promises and effectively coordinate relief assistance. Several of these dedicated U.N. relief workers quit out of frustration. Many wondered why the U.N. was able to provide such excellent support to the relief organizations working in southern Sudan and not in Somalia. The answer seems to be assigning competent and committed individuals to a program.

## **POLICY OPTIONS: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1992**

### **Key Events**

- ◆ **Assassination of a European UNICEF doctor in Bossaso in January.** Later in 1992, a group of "fundamentalists" attacked SSDF officials in Garoe. The ensuing battle between the "fundamentalists" and SSDF resulted in over 300 deaths (mainly "fundamentalists"). The murder of the UNICEF doctor and later battle between the SSDF and the "fundamentalists" inhibited NGOs from establishing needed programs in the northeast region for a period of time.
- ◆ **First visit by OFDA head to Somalia.** OFDA Director Jim Kunder visited Somalia for the first time in March, and again later in July. These visits resulted in increased international attention to Somalia and subsequent visits by members of congress members and House testimonies on Somalia. As the Somalia story moved to the front pages of the international media, the numbers of journalists visiting Somalia increased dramatically, resulting in increased pressure on the international community to do more: hence the airlift was born.
- ◆ **Forced departure of Ambassador Sahnoun by the U.N. Secretary-General.** With the departure of Sahnoun, efforts to reconcile the various factions stopped until the arrival of Ambassador Oakley. I think that Sahnoun's departure from the Somali scene hindered the U.N.'s peace initiatives and increased Somali frustration and distrust with UNOSOM.
- ◆ **Initiation of U.S. airlift and positioning of an OFDA/DART team in August.** International media coverage of the horrendous disaster unfolding in Somalia as well as several congressional delegation visits to Somalia no doubt prompted the USG to initiate the large scale airlift. Many believe that the airlift was critical in saving thousands of Somali lives, and was credited by some organizations as pretty much ending the famine in Somalia. A colleague from IMC said that he thought that by the time the airlift ended, those who were going to die had probably already

died. It is difficult for me to comment at any length on the airlift or DART team activities since I was really only closely involved with the airlift when it was initiated. I, ICRC, World Food Program, NGOs, and Bill Garvelink from OFDA/Washington spent a good deal of time briefing DOD officers on the famine and the situation in Somalia when DOD initiated the airlift.

- ◆ **Military Deployment.** Large numbers of military forces were sent to Somalia, but little done to reconstitute a Somali police capacity. It is impossible to know how or why the decision to send troops was made or who were the key instigators behind the decision. In any case, the decision to send troops was not discussed with relief personnel working in the field prior to their arrival. In my opinion, other options were not considered. The mandate of the troops never seemed clear and changed as the crisis moved into 1993. Unemployed young gunmen created the biggest security threat to relief workers and effective delivery of assistance. Rather than foreign troops escorting food convoys, the troops should have been training, equipping and supervising Somali escorts in preparation for the military's eventual withdrawal.

For at least one year prior to the decision to send troops, Somalis were requesting international assistance to form and support regional police forces. The USG and U.N. should have looked at the option of sending military police or civilian police with uniforms and equipment to Mogadishu, Baidoa, Belet Weyne, Kismayu, Garoe, etc., to recruit, train, equip, and supervise local and regional police forces. This type of program would not be a short-term, high-profile, "quick fix" option, but rather one of sustained expatriate expertise, support, and supervision for at least one year. During his opening address at the October 12 U.N. Coordination meeting on Somalia, Ambassador Sahnoun stated "We have therefore decided to establish small security units of Somalis to assist United Nations forces at the airport, seaport, and distribution centers. Starting with Mogadishu where the United Nations troops have already arrived. It is only an arrangement of this nature that can assure safety for relief workers and protection for humanitarian supplies. This could ultimately form the nucleus of a Somali police countrywide. These proposed Somali guards would require uniforms, transport, and communications equipment. It is an area where we need urgently the

support an assistance of governments." This plan was apparently scrapped for some reason.

Had donors vigorously pursued this option, more Somali gunmen would have been demobilized and employed. It could have led to an eventual more orderly withdrawal of troops. Disarmament efforts would have involved Somalis disarming Somalis as opposed to foreign troops attempting this without knowing who the "bad guys" are. The troops that were sent were not trained to deliver humanitarian aid in urban and rural civil strife areas.

Many Somalis and other relief workers still question the interests and motivating forces behind the decision to send troops to Somalia, and who the "Somalia experts" were back in Washington and New York advising the United Nations. Was UNOSOM's military humanitarian intervention a "fig leaf" for a military experiment? Whatever the motives, the activities of the troops were not always entirely humanitarian, as I discovered in the northeast region. Upon my arrival in Bossaso in 1993, I discovered hundreds of special forces racing around town up and down the main road in humvees. They appeared to be on some military training exercise. When I asked one of the Marines what they were doing in the northeast, one of the officers instructed the Marine not to talk to me "...because she works for the U.S. government". The one-month deployment of troops in the northeast only raised Somali expectations and eventually frustrated many. They could have at least sent an engineering unit to repair the Bossaso-Galcaio road.

It was clear that members of the Marine special forces in Bossaso knew little or nothing about northern Somalia. One of them asked me what Somaliland was like since they were going there next. I advised them not to go to Somaliland since they were not wanted there, and if they did go the Somalis would start shooting at them as soon as they arrived. I explained that the imposition of foreign troops in Somaliland would require the full agreement of the Somaliland authorities and general population and that at that point in time they were not wanted. The Marines laughed and said "see you in Somaliland."

I can not really comment on the effectiveness of UNOSOM I since after the initial landing of the Marines. Given the presence of a DART in Mogadishu, I spent most of my time in the northern parts of the country

and only made two brief visits to Mogadishu during the period December - May, 1993.

## **Operational Approaches During This Period**

- ◆ **UNITAF represented a major change in operational approach.** The massive airlift of food and use of foreign troops to escort food convoys was a major change from previous operational approaches and has been described above.
- ◆ **The ICRC used diverse approaches to deliver needed food.** The ICRC moved into high gear and used several approaches to deliver desperately needed food. By August, they had engaged nine ships with a total capacity of about 18,000 MT to deliver food to different ports along the coast of Somalia. ICRC also began a ship to shore helicopter operation along the northern coast of Somalia in addition to its cross border trucking operation from Kenya. The various approaches of the ICRC were effective.
- ◆ **OFDA and the EC remained major donors.** While other European governments stepped up their assistance programs to Somalia, USAID/OFDA and the EC remained the major donors throughout 1991-1993, and maximized the use of their funds, particularly in 1991-92, by co-financing NGOs and ICRC relief and rehabilitation programs. This close collaboration reduced the possibility of double-funding. Additionally, throughout 1992 a group of donors used to meet occasionally for lunch in Nairobi to discuss who was funding what. This group usually included the Dutch, Canadians, British, OFDA, EC, Japanese, and the Swiss.

## SOMALIA 1993

After December, 1992, I spent most of the time in Somaliland and the northeast region reporting on the situation, monitoring OFDA-funded programs and encouraging increased donor, UN, and NGO attention to the north. Despite agreement by the U.N. and donors at Addis Ababa and donor conferences that the north should not be punished because it had to a large extent remained peaceful, most media and donor attention remained focused on the South where the troops were deployed.

During one visit to Mogadishu in 1993, I suggested to one well-known reporter a trip to northern Somalia where he could do a contrast story about how it makes much more sense to focus rehabilitation efforts in the north compared to the south given the better security situation there. He said that the only reason that he and other reporters were still hanging around Mogadishu was because they "were just waiting for another U.S. soldier to get killed." That makes news, not success stories in the north.

Mohamed Abshir, Chairman of the SSDF, had been requesting USG help in forming a regional police force and the deployment of U.S. troops along the front line south of Galcaio since early 1992. While the U.S. helped initiate and fund several international NGO programs in the health, livestock and water sectors in the northeast region, more attention should have been given by other donors to the region in assisting with its rehabilitation. One Somali from the northeast informed me that the northeast region had entertained about 42 delegations and assessment missions in 1993, yet no firm commitments of support had been given. In a letter dated August 29, 1992, to Andrew Natsios, Presidential Coordinator for U.S. assistance to Somalia, General Abshir of the SSDF wrote "We wish to call for an equitable and balanced distribution of relief supplies to all the four U.N. designated regions of Somalia. Unfortunately no significant relief has been provided to the north-eastern region (NER) of Somalia during the 19 months of the civil war even though there are over 500,000 displaced people. Nor is there any presence of the U.N. agencies or other major NGOs except ICRC which has limited operations in the health sector."

Although numerous security incidents occurred in Somaliland in 1992-93, the area was still far safer and more prepared to receive assistance in rehabilitation activities than the South. NGO program activities remained at about the same levels during this period. Again, unlike southern Somalia, administrations in Somaliland and the northeast

had formed local police forces and were actively seeking U.N. and donor support for these forces. The U.N. is now supporting police forces in Somaliland, but has yet to initiate a similar program in the northeast.

UNICEF made important progress in its programs in Somaliland and the northeast region throughout 1993 (primarily due to highly competent and motivated nurses). UNICEF programs in southern Somalia also became more effective in 1993 than they were in 1992.

In summary, it is the opinion of many expatriates and Somalis that if more donor and U.N. attention had been paid to strengthening local administrations/police forces in Somaliland and the northeast region, security would be much better today, resulting in a more conducive environment to attract outside private and public investment in the productive sectors ( e.g., fisheries, communications, livestock export). Improved security and gradual revival of the economies of these areas would possibly have had a "spill-over effect" and resulted in the southern part of the country returning to a more stable situation sooner.

## LESSONS

- ◆ An external military solution is not necessarily the correct response to a social and political problem.
- ◆ A colleague from Somalia advised that he saw too much of the "Viet Nam Syndrome" going on with the military's role in Somalia. He explained the syndrome as one where people back in Washington and New York were making decisions without having reliable information about the situation on the ground or an understanding of the various social and political elements at play during a war or civil strife. Many people experienced with the ongoing problems in Somalia feel that the U.N. and USG underestimated the complexity of the Somali situation and sent troops to Somalia without a clear mandate. This was illustrated in newspaper articles describing how the USG's position was that U.S. forces were in Somalia only to escort humanitarian relief convoys. U.N./New York argued that the U.S. troops must remain in the country to disarm the population. This lack of a clear mandate often frustrated U.N. and NGO relief organizations and frustrated Somalis as well.
- ◆ Lack of a clear mandate and clear lines of communications among the numerous UNOSOM troops was also evident on the ground. One day, the French troops created huge traffic jams in Mogadishu when they started stopping cars and searching for weapons. The French commander was told by UNOSOM that this was not part of their mandate and to cease their disarmament project. The next day the French were back on the streets searching cars.
- ◆ If the United Nations attempts another UNOSOM experiment elsewhere in the world, they must first look at the problem from every angle and obtain as much information about the situation in the field from people in the field as well as recommendations from those closest to the situation. All possible options for addressing the situation should be discussed with military intervention being the last option. If military intervention is decided to be the most effective way to address the problem, decision makers need to know what their chances of success are and what will be the short, medium, and long-term repercussions of the military intervention on the society and relief efforts.

- ◆ Many also feel that UNOSOM's eventual mandates were far too ambitious for UNOSOM to succeed. On a countrywide basis UNOSOM planned to disarm the population, establish police and judiciary systems, carry out a demobilization program, rid the country of land mines, and establish an administration that would lead to a Transitional National Council and eventually national reconciliation. Not only did UNOSOM lack the funds to carry out these broad mandates, several high level UN officials in Mogadishu and New York lacked the will and competence to even partially succeed. Inter-U.N. agency fighting also hampered UNOSOM. The author is aware of at least two advisors to UNOSOM who are well known Somali experts who quit UNOSOM out of frustration.
- ◆ The bureaucracy of the United Nations renders them less than effective in many countries. To create a new U.N. body, UNOSOM, and charge it with the myriad tasks noted above in a country where anarchy was prevalent in several regions was akin to setting it up to fail. If UNOSOM would have focused initially on the biggest problem in Somalia, security, and established regional police forces, UNOSOM would have had a better chance at success and been seen in a different light by both Somalis and outside observers today.
- ◆ The United Nations should not attempt to impose a new government or administrative structures in a country. Past experience illustrates that unless institutions arise from local communities and are supported by the local community, they will probably not last.
- ◆ UNOSOM zone offices in the northern regions suffered due to the highly centralized UNOSOM bureaucracy that mushroomed in Mogadishu. Whether in Somaliland or the northeast region, UNOSOM zone officers would often wait for weeks for responses to messages sent to Mogadishu (if indeed a response was ever received). I recall one conversation with a UNOSOM official when I noted why ICRC was both the lead and one of the most effective organizations working in Somalia. ICRC had decentralized operations so that ICRC in Somaliland was supported logistically and administratively from Djibouti and ICRC in southern Somalia received support from Nairobi. I suggested he recommend the same to UNOSOM in Mogadishu. His response was that it was an idea far

too logical for UNOSOM/Mogadishu to consider. A decentralized UNOSOM would have helped it in implementing some of its programs and at the same time provided better support to its programs in northern Somalia.

- ◆ Until there is a major reorganization of the United Nations, the USG should channel the bulk of its emergency assistance through the ICRC and NGOs. Funds should be provided to U.N. agencies, e.g. UNICEF, where they have a proven track record in the country. In the future, USG funds provided to U.N. agencies should be contingent on those agencies submitting detailed project proposals and budgets as is currently required for an international NGO seeking funding from the USG.
- ◆ International NGOs and U.N. agencies should continue to reduce their reliance on expatriate personnel and to increase Somali involvement in their programs to make them feel a sense of ownership of relief and rehabilitation programs.
- ◆ In future U.N. multinational military interventions in support of humanitarian assistance, it is recommended that informal briefing sessions by ICRC, U.N. relief workers, NGOs and host country nationals for officers and enlisted men be set up as soon as possible after troops arrive in a country. This would enable the troops to know at least something about the culture and society as well as the current situation.