

A Hopeless Cause? American Involvement in the Somali Civil War

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The continent of Africa has been plagued with violence since the time of European colonization. Once independence was granted to many African countries, the violence worsened as competing warlords engaged in armed struggles for power. It is the citizens of these countries that suffer the most, especially when man-made famines are used to create compliance. Somalia is an example of an African country wrought with civil war that gained the attention and the aid of the international community. The United States had a large role in the humanitarian assistance that went to Somalia, beginning with President George H.W. Bush and ending with President William J. Clinton's administration. Somalia was not enthusiastic in welcoming United Nations assistance, particularly from the United States, which continually underestimated the resolve of the Somalis to take control of their own affairs. While the intentions of the United States in Somalia were based on helping those who could not help themselves, the American political and military leaders failed to gain a sense of the cultural issues valued by the Somali people. The approach used in Somalia by the United States, via the United Nations, was another example of the United States believing it would be able to solve what was ultimately an insolvable problem.

In 1996, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said, "The efforts of the United Nations to end the human suffering in Somalia, foster reconciliation among the warring factions and promote national reconstruction led to one of the most challenging, arduous undertakings in the Organization's 50-year history."¹ The words of Boutros-Ghali could not be more correct. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali involved the United Nations in an unprecedented mission by involving the organization with the Somali civil war. As stated in a *New York Times* article published on 12 January 1992, "The new Secretary General's handling of the Somali crisis . . . will also test his capacity to deal with a well-known handicap affecting much of the United Nations' work and which stems from the strict prohibition in its founding charter against interfering in countries' internal affairs."² In order to understand the events that lead to the involvement of the United Nations, and therefore the United States, one must understand what created the political unrest in Somalia.

Somalia is located on the Gulf of Aden on the east coast of Africa.³ Due to Somalia's location, the country provided a key stop on the shipping route between India and Europe, making it a desirable country for colonization. Somalia was colonized by both Italy and Great Britain, dividing the ruling tribe into two factions. The British combined their piece of Somaliland, as it was then known, with their control of the

¹ Peter D. Little, *Somalia: Economy Without State* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

² Paul Lewis, "War in Somalia a Major Test for New U.N. Leader," *The New York Times*, 12 January 1992, section A, p. 8.

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States: Somalia* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988), 3.

Ogaden in Ethiopia. When Ethiopia gained its independence from Britain, the country also gained control of Britain's piece of Somaliland, until the Italians granted Somalia its independence.⁴ Italy granted Somalia independence on 1 July 1960 and both the British Somaliland and the Italian Somalia were reunited.⁵ Unlike most other African countries at the time of independence, Somalia was initially able to put their tribal differences aside and created a multi-party democracy. The Somali government was able to operate for only a short nine years before corruption and inefficiency took over.⁶

On 15 October 1969 the Somali President, Abdirashiid Ali Shermaarke, was assassinated by a member of the Somali police force. Violence erupted in Somalia and on 21 October General Siad Barre led the Somali army in a "bloodless coup," taking control of the government.⁷ General Barre formed an organization called the Supreme Revolutionary Council, or the SRC, to help facilitate the affairs of his rule. "They were seen as heroes," states Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, "who had left the barracks to save the nation."⁸ In the beginning the Barre regime was welcomed. The SRC settled long-debated parliamentary issues and established adult literacy and relief programs for victims of Somalia's reoccurring droughts. Barre also developed his own political ideology, which he called "scientific socialism," which brought the economy and industry under a Marxist-type of control, and outlawed "clan or 'tribal' identities."⁹ However, by the middle of the 1970s, it was becoming increasingly obvious to the Somali people that Barre had no intentions of bringing democracy back to Somalia. Instead, he intended to run the country as a dictatorship. Factions of the SRC began acting as a secret police force, and dissenters to the Barre regime were executed or simply disappeared. "Barre permitted state-sanctioned veneration of the 'Revolution,'" observes Lyons and Samatar, "to be twisted into a cult of personality and sycophantic flattery hitherto unseen in the history of the country."¹⁰

Like most African countries during the independence phase in the mid-twentieth century, Somalia was caught in the middle of the Cold War that waged for decades between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Fearing the implications of the alliance between Ethiopia and the United States, Somalia allied itself with the Soviet Union, from which they gained military training and weapons.¹¹ However, once war broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s, and Ethiopia became Communist during the conflict, Somalia quickly cut their ties with the Soviets and allied themselves with the United States.¹² A *New York Times* editorial reminds the American people of this legacy when the anonymous writer states: "For decades, Somalia was a cold-war pawn, aided initially by the Soviet Union and then after 1978 by the U.S. and other Western powers, China and Libya. Tanks, artillery and rocket launchers flowed into an impoverished country. . . . [T]his huge arsenal has fallen into the hands of warring

⁴ Patrick Brogan, *World Conflicts* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Brogan, 97.

¹² *Ibid.*, 97-98.

factions.”¹³ The end of the Cold War brought a new era of devastation to all of Africa as the world’s two superpowers quickly withdrew their support to the region. Ved P. Nanda observes that: “A major outcome of the end of the Cold War and especially the rapprochement between the U.S. and Russia was the closing of the chapter on superpower intervention and proxy wars on ideological grounds.”¹⁴ It would not be long before the international community would completely ignore the widespread poverty that was to take over Somalia.

Somalia’s economy was always in a state of crisis; however, nothing was bad as it would become once the democratic government created after independence had collapsed. Agriculture is Somalia’s prime source of income. The main crops are sorghum, corn, bananas, mangoes, tomatoes, watermelons, and the raising of livestock such as cattle, camels, sheep, and goats. While there is enormous potential for fishing, oil refineries, and mineral extraction, Somalia has never been in the financial position—or stable enough to set up the infrastructure—to develop these resources. Also, the lack of a well-developed road system and railroads makes the transport of materials for exporting rather difficult. Somalia also suffers from an “inadequate and deteriorating” public utility, health, and education system.¹⁵ All of these factors have contributed to widespread poverty throughout Somalia and also mean that without aid from the international community, Somalia’s hopes for change are slim. In a report published in 1988 by the United States Department of Commerce, it was observed that “[b]arring major mineral discoveries, Somalia will remain one of the world’s poorest countries for the foreseeable future.”¹⁶

Somalia had been receiving economic support from the United States since the 1977 alliance between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. However, by the middle of the 1980s, the United States rapidly began decreasing its support to Somalia. Nanda observes that “[b]y 1988, the U.S. and the European Community, except for Italy, had virtually abandoned Somalia.”¹⁷ This created a compromising position for Barre, who quickly became unable to control the now rampant clan rivalries. Furthermore, he was unable to conceal the extent of his corruption. Barre’s government finally collapsed in January 1991. Ali Mahdi Mohamed was appointed by the United Somali Congress, or the USC, to become Somalia’s interim President while the country began to debate how to handle Barre’s collapse.¹⁸

Ali Mahdi Mohamed belonged to the Hawiye clan, the largest and most powerful in Somalia, and it was also the biggest supporter of the USC. A member of one of the sub-clans within the Hawiye clan, General Mohamed Farah Aideed, was not happy with the USC’s choice of Ali Mahdi Mohamed, believing that he deserved to be leader of Somalia. Aideed, along with those clan members loyal to him, began a violent conflict with Ali Mahdi Mohamed and his supporters, which developed into a devastating civil war in Somalia. The city of Mogadishu was destroyed in the early years of the civil war

¹³ Editorial, “Help Needed for Forsaken Somalia,” *The New York Times*, 9 February 1992, section E, p. 16.

¹⁴ Ved P. Nanda, Thomas F. Muther, Jr., and Amy E. Eckert, “Tragedies in Somalia, Yugoslavia, Haiti, Rwanda and Liberia – Revisiting the Validity of Humanitarian Intervention Under International Law – Part II,” *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 26 (1998): 830.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, 3-4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Ved P. Nanda, Thomas F. Muther Jr. and Amy E. Eckert, 832.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

before the violence spread to the countryside. "The ongoing civil war between the USC factions," observes Nanda, "along with the presence of violent armed gangs in the country, resulted in the collapse of an effective government in Somalia."¹⁹ As if the civil war was not bad enough, Somalia suffered from a devastating drought at the same time. The combined factors of drought and civil war resulted in three hundred thousand deaths in Somalia. The large number of deaths gained the attention of the international community.²⁰

The United Nations (U.N.) Security Council first addressed the situation in Somalia on 23 January 1992 issuing U.N. Resolution 733. Resolution 733 stated that the U.N. Security Council was "[g]ravely alarmed at the rapid deterioration of the situation in Somalia and the heavy loss of human life and widespread material damage resulting from the conflict in the country and [was] aware of its consequences on [the] stability and peace in the region."²¹ Fearing that the situation in Somalia posed "a threat to international peace and stability," the U.N. called for humanitarian assistance to Somalia and to appoint a "coordinator to oversee the effective delivery of . . . [the] . . . assistance."²² Resolution 733 also called upon the member nations of the U.N. to aid in the humanitarian efforts to Somalia. The United Nations also called for a meeting between Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and the leaders of the warring factions of Somalia in order to discuss an end to the violence and a lasting peace. The Security Council also wanted a guarantee from the warring factions that they would not impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia.²³

Along with Resolution 733, the U.N. invoked Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and enacted an arms embargo on Somalia in the hopes of placing pressure on Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed to end the civil war. Representatives for Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Aideed were invited to New York in February 1992. After engaging in peace talks with U.N. representatives, the two representatives signed a "vague cease-fire."²⁴ Wanting a more defined document, the U.N. sent James Jonah, a special envoy, to Mogadishu, Somalia, to negotiate a more concrete cease-fire agreement. The new agreement was signed on 3 March 1992.²⁵ The U.N. Security Council then enacted Resolution 746 on 17 March 1992 recognizing the cease-fire agreement made on 3 March but warning that the factions had yet to fully comply with the cease-fire. Resolution 746 also recognized that the humanitarian assistance going to Somalia was still being hindered in its efforts to deliver the assistance to the people and asked that Somalis honor the right of the U.N. to provide aid to the region.²⁶

Many critics in the aftermath of the Somalia incident found that the United Nations did not use the opportunity of the cease-fire agreement to their full advantage.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 733* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1992).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lyons and Samatar, 30.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 746* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1992).

Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar quote in their book *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* one critic who observed, "After the cession of hostilities, U.N. senior diplomats floundered in the field, the Security Council dithered, and U.N. relief agencies squandered valuable time."²⁷ On 24 April 1992 the U.N. Security Council enacted Resolution 751, which established United Nations Operation Somalia, or UNOSOM, the official name of the humanitarian relief operation working in Somalia.²⁸ While UNOSOM organized itself in Somalia, the forces of Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed grew increasingly agitated. The cease-fire slowly deteriorated, and any hope of a peace agreement between the two factions dwindled as a result. Demands by both sides increased, as well, which created an impossible situation for UNOSOM.²⁹

The United States general public was made aware of the devastation in Somalia by a *New York Times* article along with photos of starving Somalis.³⁰ Somalia was now in the hearts and minds of many Americans and on the political agendas of many in Congress. Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum traveled to Somalia in July and upon her return, she generated much attention on the issue of Somalia along with Senator Paul Simon. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali grew increasingly frustrated with both UNOSOM and the international community's complacent response to Somalia, feeling that more attention was geared toward what he called "the 'rich man's war' in Bosnia."³¹

United States President George H.W. Bush first addressed the situation in Somalia on 13 August 1992 via his press secretary. President Bush authorized aid to Somalia in the form of United States "airlift transport to a [United Nations] guard force and its associated equipment to Somalia."³² This guard force was to consist of five hundred American servicemen who would help the humanitarian workers deliver food and necessary supplies to Somalis in need. President Bush also committed \$76 million to the U.N. efforts in Somalia and promised more would be forthcoming.³³ The guard force provided by the United States, however, was not enough to end the looting and armed resistance to the humanitarian efforts. The U.N., along with the United States, ignored the fundamental problem. As long as the armed bandits and warring tribes were able to enforce their will on the Somali people, the humanitarian efforts would continue to fail, an issue consistently ignored by UNOSOM and the United States.³⁴ Even though President Bush's Press Secretary himself recognized that "armed bands are stealing and hoarding food as well as attacking international relief workers, the primary challenge that the international community faces is the delivery of relief supplies." No steps were made by the United States to find a resolution to this problem.³⁵

²⁷ Lyons and Samatar, 30.

²⁸ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 751* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1992).

²⁹ Lyons and Samatar, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³² Public Papers of the Presidents, *George Herbert Walker Bush: Book II – August 1, 1992 to January 20, 1993* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1993), 1354.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Lyons and Samatar, 32.

³⁵ Bush, 2:1360.

Almost a year had passed with no improvement. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali continually pleaded with the Security Council to take a sterner stance in relation to the Somalia situation. Armed Somali forces continued to attack relief supply lines and had embarked on a program of attacking relief workers, as well. The Security Council denounced these actions in Resolution 794, passed on 3 December 1992, calling for additional forces to be sent to Somalia to be used at the discretion of the Secretary-General. Resolution 794 also stated that the people of Somalia were responsible for their "national reconciliation and reconstruction" and the international community was only there to offer humanitarian assistance.³⁶

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali asked the United States to lead the coalition forces in Somalia, to which President Bush agreed. President Bush addressed the American people from the Oval Office on 4 December 1992 in hopes of gaining their support for the Somali cause. Playing upon their sympathies, President Bush opened with the statement: "I want to talk to you today about the tragedy in Somalia and about a mission that can ease suffering and save lives. . . . Already, over a quarter-million people, as many people as live in Buffalo, New York, have died in the Somali famine. In the months ahead 5 times that number, 1 ½ million people, could starve to death."³⁷ President Bush then went on to detail for the American people the amount of relief that had been sent to Somalia, but reported that very little of that relief had reached Somalis due to the looting and armed banditry. President Bush also pointed out the lack of government and order in Somalia. "Imagine 7,000 tons of food aid literally bursting out of a warehouse on a dock in Mogadishu," stated President Bush, "while Somalis starve less than a kilometer away because relief workers cannot run the gauntlet of armed gangs roving the city."³⁸ By painting a picture of the desperateness of the situation in Somalia, President Bush hoped that the American people would understand the need to send in additional American troops. President Bush announced that he had sent a Marine Amphibious Ready Group, the First Marine Expeditionary Force, and the Army Tenth Mountain Division as the initial ground forces to Somalia in response to the Secretary-General's call for aid. President Bush also announced that he had termed the Somalia mission Operation Restore Hope. The President emphasized to the American people that the mission of Operation Restore Hope was purely humanitarian, but he reminded the people of Somalia that any armed resistance to their humanitarian efforts would not be tolerated.³⁹ President Bush ended his address with the statement, "To the people of Somalia I promise this: We do not plan to dictate political outcomes. We respect your sovereignty and independence."⁴⁰ With that the United States was committed, along with the international community, to alleviating the suffering of millions of Somalis and establishing peace in the country.

Operation Restore Hope was a unique mission for the United States. It was the United States' first attempt to combine peacekeeping and military efforts without total armed engagement. President Bush sent thirteen hundred American troops to Somalia on

³⁶ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 794* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1992).

³⁷ Bush, 2:2174.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2175.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2175-2176.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2176.

9 December 1992. Ultimately, twenty-five thousand United States forces would be sent to Somalia under the command of Lieutenant General Robert Johnston.⁴¹ In order to create a “balance” between the military and the political forces involved in Somalia, President Bush appointed Ambassador Robert Oakley as special envoy to the President in Somalia. Oakley had previously served as ambassador to Somalia from 1982 to 1984, giving him previous knowledge of the country.⁴² Due to the United States’ status as the world’s only remaining superpower, the American forces tended to hold more weight with Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed than the U.N. coalition as a whole. Ambassador Oakley continually attempted to reemphasize for the Somali people that the United States was limited in their role and that they were acting merely as agents for the United Nations. John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley state in their book entitled *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* that “[e]ven though Oakley repeatedly made clear the limits of the U.S. mandate and stressed the need for Somali cooperation with the United Nations, the Somalis believed that the United States was more likely to make things happen.”⁴³

Many factors contributed to this feeling among the Somalis. The most prominent reason being the ineffectiveness already displayed by the United Nations through UNOSOM. Somalis knew of the U.N.’s humanitarian efforts, but they were also well aware of the U.N.’s inability to bring peace to the country or to deliver the assistance promised. Another leading factor was the rumor spread by Aideed that U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had lent support to the corrupt Barre regime, creating a great deal of distrust for the U.N among Somalis.⁴⁴

President William Clinton inherited the problems in Somalia with his defeat of the incumbent President Bush in 1992. President Clinton fully supported the efforts that his predecessor had started in Somalia. In his campaign for the presidency, Clinton had continually stated that he wanted the United States to focus more on “humanitarian concerns.”⁴⁵ President Clinton was a proponent of the use of multilateral intervention, rather than a unilateral response more typically favored by the previous presidential administrations in the face of the Cold War. In a book entitled *Clinton’s World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, the author William G. Hyland observes, “In April 1993 the new secretary of state said that the Clinton administration would emphasize multilateral peacekeeping and ‘peacemaking.’”⁴⁶ The mission that the United States was undertaking in Somalia was an example that fit Clinton’s agenda.

Even with the efforts of the United States forces in Somalia, food and relief supplies were not reaching the starving Somalis and the attacks on humanitarian aid workers had not subsided. On 26 March 1993 the U.N. Security Council enacted Resolution 814 in which the Security Council recognized “. . . the continuing reports of widespread violations of international humanitarian law and the general absence of the

⁴¹ Louis J. Klarevas, “American Public Opinion on Peace Operations: The Case of Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti” (Ph.D. diss., The American University, 1999), 115.

⁴² John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 49-50.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ William G. Hyland, *Clinton’s World: Remaking American Foreign Policy* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1999), 54.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

rule of law in Somalia . . .⁴⁷ Resolution 814 called for the continuation of humanitarian assistance, assistance in the refugee problem created by the conflicts in Somalia, and aid in the reestablishment of law and order and government in Somalia.⁴⁸

Forces loyal to Aideed were determined to impede the efforts of UNOSOM and the U.N.'s attempt to enforce Resolution 814. Frustrated by Aideed's continued resistance UNOSOM informed the warlord on 4 June 1993 ". . . that they would be inspecting his weapons depots."⁴⁹ When Pakistani forces, accompanied by American and Italian forces, went to inspect Aideed's weapons the next day, they were met with strong resistance by not only Aideed's forces but also by angry mobs of Somalis who felt as though UNOSOM was not providing what they had promised. Twenty-four Pakistanis were killed in the ambush.⁵⁰

President Clinton addressed the American people regarding the violence incurred on the Pakistani forces, calling it a "cold-blooded ambush."⁵¹ The President went on to reaffirm his commitment to the U.N.'s efforts in Somalia and stated the United States would continue to work towards restoring peace in Somalia. President Clinton also warned that should the United States forces—or any of the forces working in the coalition—come under attack, they would take all necessary measures to defend themselves against the encroaching violence. In an attempt to show the American people that the U.N., with the aid of the United States, was making progress in Somalia, President Clinton asserted that there has been re-growth of crops in Somalia, among other things, and even claimed that "starvation has ended," an assertion which was wholeheartedly false.⁵²

In response to the violence on the Pakistani forces, the United Nations Security Council enacted Resolution 837 on 6 June 1993. Resolution 837 ". . . identified the Somali National Alliance (SNA) forces (i.e., Aideed's forces) as responsible for the 5 June killings and authorized the use of 'all necessary measures' to capture and prosecute those responsible for such attacks."⁵³ Resolution 837 did not scare Aideed's forces, however, and they continued their attacks on humanitarian workers. Beginning on 2 July 1993 Aideed's forces attacked the Italian forces in Somalia, killing four soldiers. In response to the attacks on the Italians, the United States forces launched a raid on Aideed's headquarters on 12 July 1993. The numbers of forces killed in the raid have yet to be determined; some accounts suggest there were as few as twelve and as many as seventy. The International Red Cross claimed that fifty-four Somalis were killed and one hundred sixty-one wounded in the raid. Somalis were outraged by the attack on Aideed. When international journalists came to report on the incident they were attacked by angry mobs of Somalis, with one British journalist killed in the attacks. Somali public opinion about the American forces, and the United Nations mission in general, were irreversibly

⁴⁷ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 814* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1993).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Klarevas, 125.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Public Papers of the Presidents, *William Jefferson Clinton: Book I—January 20 to July 31, 1993* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1994), 839.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 840.

⁵³ Klarevas, 125.

changed by the raid on 12 July.⁵⁴ No longer were the United States forces fighting the armed factions of Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, but now they were up against the entire country of Somalia.

Violence against United States forces in Somalia drastically increased. On 25 September 1993 a mob of Somalis shot down an American Black Hawk helicopter with a rocket propelled grenade. Three American soldiers were killed in the attack, and the pilot and co-pilot were severely injured. The Somali mobs dragged the dead bodies of the American soldiers into the main market of Mogadishu where they were mutilated and laid out for display. Americans were outraged by such an atrocity. Congress convened that same day and pushed President Clinton to change his response toward Somalia. Congress wanted to send a message to Somalia that such actions would not be tolerated.⁵⁵ Later that day President Clinton's press secretary addressed the issue in a press conference, condemning the attack and calling on the American people to remember the mission at hand: humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping. Clinton hoped his pleas would persuade the American people to continue supporting the United States' efforts in Somalia. Clinton's press secretary also stated that the American forces involved in Somalia since December 1992 had decreased by eighty percent, leaving only five thousand United States troops in Somalia. The United States involvement in Somalia would continue to decrease as the American public became more aware of the costly nature of their involvement in a country that seemingly no longer wanted their aid.⁵⁶

The deadliest single-day battle the United States had seen since the Vietnam War took place on 3 October 1993. Operating on intelligence that twenty-four of Aideed's high ranking officials would be meeting at Olympia Hotel in the violent Bakara Market in the heart of Mogadishu, leaders of the United States' forces planned a mission to capture the men. The United States believed that the capture of those leaders would help bring an end to the violence and would provide a way of placing pressure on Aideed to surrender. A force of Army Rangers and the elite Delta Force would be deployed to capture the members of Aideed's forces. The initial mission was a success in that the Delta Force was able to extract the members of Aideed's forces. However, a problem arose when the Ranger and Delta Forces attempted to leave the hostile Bakara Market which was now filled with angry mobs of Somalis. As one of the United States' Black Hawk's, the *Super Six One*, was hovering overhead after dropping in a unit of Rangers, it was shot down by the Somali mobs gathering below. The mission quickly spiraled out of control as the American forces attempted to recover their downed men and destroy what was left of the Black Hawk. In their rescue efforts, another Black Hawk, the *Super Six Two*, was shot down. Once the battle was over, eighteen American soldiers were killed and seventy-eight wounded. The Somali casualties were much higher with three hundred killed and another seven hundred wounded.⁵⁷

The pilot of the *Super Six Two*, Michael Durant, was taken hostage by the Somalis. The bodies of the soldiers that had died in the same crash were dragged through the streets by angry mobs of Somalis who cheered with delight at their kill. Television footage of both Durant and the dragging of the dead bodies was played across the United

⁵⁴ Ibid., 127-128.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁶ Clinton, 1:1598.

⁵⁷ Klarevas, 132.

States. Americans were horrified; many had never given a second thought to the violence that waged in the far off African country.⁵⁸ The day after the battle, *The New York Times* reported that “[a] still photo showed Somalis watching as the body of an unidentified American was dragged through the streets at the end of the rope.”⁵⁹ The article also detailed the CNN footage of the captured pilot, Michael Durant, describing him as appearing “frightened.”⁶⁰ There was an immediate call for action or some sort of definitive answer from the American government as to what the continuing role would be for the United States in Somalia.

President Clinton addressed the nation on the night of 7 October 1993 from the Oval Office. He began his address much in the same way that President Bush had almost a year ago when he announced Operation Restore Hope. “A year ago, we all watched with horror as Somali children and their families lay dying by the tens of thousands,” stated President Clinton, “dying the slow, agonizing death of starvation, a starvation brought on not only by drought, but also by the anarchy that then prevailed in that country.”⁶¹ President Clinton denounced the actions of the Somali mobs of the 3 October incident, going on to address the questions that were on the minds of every American: what was the mission of the United States toward Somalia going to be now? Many Americans were not willing to engage in, nor be supportive of, an effort of armed intervention in Somalia. President Clinton, however, noted that should the United States withdraw support to Somalia, the other member nations of the United Nations coalition would withdraw their support as well, leaving Somalia to starve. “So now we face a choice. Do we leave when the job gets tough,” observed the President, “or when the job is well done? Do we invite a return of mass suffering, or do we leave in a way that gives the Somalis a decent chance to survive?”⁶² Drawing upon earlier statements made by General Colin Powell, President Clinton urged the American people that the answer was not to give up. Additional American forces were sent to Somalia along with additional armored vehicles to protect the humanitarian workers as well as the coalition forces. However, President Clinton reminded the American people that he was still committed to a 31 March 1994 date for the withdrawal of American troops from Somalia.⁶³ The United States made good on their promise to withdraw troops from Somalia by March 1994. The United Nations only lasted a year longer, withdrawing their support to Somalia in March of 1995 as mandated in Security Council Resolution 954.⁶⁴ Somalia became a lost cause to the United Nations and the international community, an example of a country that was in desperately in need of help, but was unwilling to take it.

The biggest mistake that was made in regards to the Somali conflict by the United States and the United Nations was underestimating the determination and strength of the Somali rebel forces. American forces looked upon the Somali forces as nothing but an

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

⁵⁹ R.W. Apple, Jr., “Clinton Sending Reinforcements After Heavy Losses in Somalia,” *The New York Times*, 5 October 1993, section A, p. 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Public Papers of the Presidents, *William Jefferson Clinton: Vol. II – August 1 to December 31, 1993* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1994), 1703.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1704

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1704-1705.

⁶⁴ United Nations Document, *Security Council Resolution 954* (United Nations Security Council Document, 1994).

indigenous rebel armed force who would easily succumb to the power of the highly trained, highly organized United States armed forces. The United States, along with the United Nations, needed to recognize first that the Somali people had been fighting their neighbors and themselves for centuries. They were a highly motivated, dangerously armed group of people with nothing to stop them. The Somali people also had the strength of belief in the cause, a power that the American people had themselves over two hundred years ago. At the point when the United States lost the support of the masses of Somalia, their mission failed. The United States should have made regaining Somali support a priority, because no longer did they appear to be acting in the interests of the people. Instead, they appeared to be conquerors with little interest or consideration for the wishes of the Somali people.

The United States should never have withdrawn forces from Somalia after the Bakara Market incident. The message that they delivered to other countries that were facing the same situation as Somalia, was that all they needed to do was kill a few American troops and the United States would withdraw its forces. The United Nations, with the aid of the United States, needed to add to their initiative that they would not withdraw from Somalia until the political crisis was resolved. Administering humanitarian relief is useless if the country remains in a constant state of civil war with a lack of an operating government.

The Somalia intervention had a profound legacy on the United States' further response to humanitarian efforts. Initially, the mission that was employed by the United States in Somalia set a new standard in American intervention in the post-Cold War world. William G. Hyland notes that ". . . Bush's intervention in Somalia contained the seeds of a new doctrine: that Americans would fight for human and moral values, in contrast to the Cold War, when it was willing to fight only for its strategic interests."⁶⁵ Humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping missions were supported by President Clinton who felt that the post-Cold War world demanded such missions. However, the American people quickly felt that the costs of such missions were simply too high for their continued support. The devastating genocide of Rwanda in 1995 went virtually ignored by the United States government. Africa continues to take a back seat to other concerns, while the people of one of the world's most populated continents suffer. The message that the United States sent to Africa at the conclusion of Somalia was that the lives of the western world were more important than the lives of Africans who are continually dying from starvation, disease, and civil war.

⁶⁵ Hyland, 54.