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**TASK FORCE RANGER
OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA**

3-4 OCTOBER 1993

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**UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
and
UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
HISTORY OFFICES
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PREFACE

~~(S/NF)~~ In late August 1993 Secretary of Defense Les Aspin authorized the deployment of special operations forces to Mogadishu, Somalia, because of increased enemy attacks on United States and United Nations Operations Somalia (UNOSOM) forces and installations. The special operations forces, named Task Force (TF) Ranger, had the mission to capture General Mohammed Farah Aideed and designated others, and to turn over captives to UNOSOM forces. During August and September 1993 TF Ranger conducted six missions into Mogadishu. These six missions were tactical successes, and the cumulative effect of these missions was to impair Aideed's movement and to undermine his authority. On 3 October TF Ranger launched a mission into Aideed's stronghold, seeking to capture two of his key lieutenants. The capture of 24 Aideed supporters was accomplished, but in that process, a TF Ranger MH-60 BLACKHAWK helicopter was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade. The mission then irrevocably changed from one of capturing Aideed supporters to one of safeguarding and recovering American casualties. When the TF Ranger forces finally returned to its compound the next morning, their casualties totaled 99.

~~(S/NF)~~ TF Ranger forces acquitted themselves well during their movement to the downed BLACKHAWK. The subsequent actions to defend this position and to retrieve the dead and wounded reflected credit on their training, courage,

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initiative, soldier skills, and dedication to one another. What follows is an overview of the 3-4 October Battle of Mogadishu, and then there are vignettes reflecting individuals' actions during this long and bloody day in Somalia.

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AN OVERVIEW:
TASK FORCE RANGER OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA
3-4 OCTOBER 1993

~~(S/NF)~~ On 22 August 1993 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, notified General Joseph P. Hoar, Commander in Chief, United States Central Command (USCINCCENT), and General Wayne A. Downing, Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command (USCINCSOC) that Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Les Aspin had authorized the mobilization and deployment of a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) to support US efforts in Somalia. Increased enemy attacks on US and United Nations Operations Somalia (UNOSOM) installations, heightened tensions, lawlessness, and continued hostile acts by Aideed-led factions had strained UN operations. Accordingly, the SECDEF had agreed to deploy additional special operations forces (SOF). GEN Downing was to provide requested forces, with an advance party departing on 22 August and the main body on 25 August 1993. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was also to be prepared to provide follow-on forces as required.

~~(S/NF)~~ This deployment order culminated more than two months of planning and rehearsing for the mission to capture Aideed. In response to Aideed's 5 June ambush that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers, GEN Downing began to work with United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) devising options for the possible employment of SOF in support of UNOSOM II. A number of different package sizes were considered. The SECDEF elected to deploy four AC-130s in June to provide UN forces with additional firepower.

~~(S/NF)~~ At that time, in June, the situation in Somalia was very different from what it was to become in late August. Aideed appeared openly in public and still walked the streets of Mogadishu. During 12-17 June, the AC-130 crews flew four fire missions over Mogadishu. These missions and sweeps through Aideed's strongholds by UNOSOM forces, however, changed the situation drastically in Mogadishu. In July Aideed had gone underground. Because the situation continued to deteriorate in July and early August, GEN Hoar requested USSOCOM to conduct a "zero-based" review of options to capture Aideed and report back to him.

~~(S/NF)~~ On 14 August 1993 GEN Downing sent GEN Hoar the zero-based review. The JSOTF planners defined the mission as "When directed, the commander deploys designated forces to Mogadishu, Somalia, in support of USCINCCENT operations to capture General Aideed and/or designated others, and turn over captives to United Nations Forces." Mission success was defined as the capture of General Aideed and/or designated personnel. This review asserted that Aideed would probably remain underground in Mogadishu, use his lieutenants to

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direct continued attacks on US and UN forces, and employ more lethal weapons in ever increasing numbers. Finally, the planners cautioned that because Aideed would probably expect this type of operation to be aimed against him, special preparations had to be made to ensure operational security and force protection.

(S/NF) The review proposed three courses of action. The first course of action called for a force package of 185 personnel. It included a small headquarters element; one Special Forces detachment; two reconnaissance helicopters; eight MH-6 and four AH-6 helicopters from 1st Battalion of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (1/160th SOAR) with crews and support personnel; two AC-130s; six desert mobility vehicles (DMVs); two P-3 REEF POINTs; and two OH-58Ds. Course of action number two was the mid-sized package, consisting of 225 personnel. It added to the small package one Ranger platoon and three MH-60s (and changed the numbers of MH/AH-6s from eight to four, and from four to two, respectively). Course of action number three totaled 440 personnel. In addition to what was proposed in the second course of action, this large package included one Ranger company (+) with eight DMVs, and increased the MH-60s to eight and the AH-6s to four. The review recommended that course of action number three be approved because it provided adequate flexibility, force protection, CSAR, and a reaction force. With this option, no support from the in-country quick reaction force would be required.

(S/NF) On 22 August MG Waldo D. Freeman, Jr., Deputy Commander in Chief, USCENTCOM, released a message directing the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to deploy forces in two phases. Phase I forces, consisting of advance and command (ADVON) elements, were to deploy on that same day, 22 August. Phase II forces, the main body, was to deploy on 25 August. USCENTCOM directed USSOCOM to provide forces as requested (approximately 400 personnel), to provide follow-on forces and SOF-peculiar logistic support as required, and to respond to possible additional requests for support. USCINCCENT had operational control of the commander and deploying forces. This operation was named Task Force (TF) Ranger.

(S/NF) Phase I forces deployed on 22 August and arrived in Mogadishu on 23 August at 1017 (local). Shortly thereafter, the TF Ranger commander, MG William Garrison, met with the commander of US Forces Somalia, MG Thomas M. Montgomery. Other ADVON members received detailed briefings from the quick reaction force commander, staff counterparts, and UNOSOM logistics support command. Special operations aviators discussed lessons learned with the 10th Aviation Brigade and rode on visual reconnaissance flights around Mogadishu.

(S/NF) TF Ranger planners devised a three-phased operation. The first phase, 26-29 August 1993, included the arrival and buildup of the assault forces,

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integration and activation of the intelligence assets, and the conduct of a command post exercise and rehearsal. Phase II, scheduled to last from 30 August to 5 September, was to concentrate all intelligence assets on locating Aideed. If Aideed had not been captured in this time period, Phase III, to be initiated on GEN Hoar's order, was to start around 6 September. Phase III activities were designed to increase Aideed's insecurities and to necessitate a change in his patterns, thereby increasing his vulnerability to capture. These activities included measures to increase pressure on him by attacking his infrastructure--detaining his six key lieutenants, targeting any technology used by Aideed, and destroying his command and control nodes.

~~(S/NF)~~ By 28 August, 441 personnel of TF Ranger had arrived in country, were conducting training exercises, and were setting up necessary liaison and communications networks. The implementation schedule called for a full dress rehearsal on the evening of 29 August, but that night at 1927, mortar rounds rocked the TF Ranger compound. The attack by Aideed's followers lasted about 30 minutes, and a total of nine rounds landed at the airport, injuring four TF Ranger personnel. TF Ranger responded by launching an assault at 0309 on 30 August. The assault force cleared the Lig Ligato house and an adjacent building, both of which were on the UNOSOM priority target list. This operation was conducted professionally and on short notice. The assault force detained nine people who turned out to be UN employees. They also took weapons, drugs, communications gear, and other items from the buildings. The UN employees were not supposed to be there. Though a tactical success, this operation pointed out the absolute criticality of HUMINT and also showed that UNOSOM intelligence was not infallible.

~~(S/NF)~~ TF Ranger performed five other missions during the next month. These included the raid on the old Russian compound on 6 September; the Jialiou House/police station raid on 14 September; the raid on Radio Mogadishu on 17 September; the raid on Osman Atto's garage on 18 September; and the capture of Osman Atto on 21 September. These first six missions were tactical successes. The raid on the police station and subsequent operations were Phase III operations. In each case, the assault and blocking forces landed with no or only minimal opposition, seized their objectives, searched them, detained suspects, and departed the area. Although Aideed had eluded apprehension, his key lieutenants were vulnerable, and the capture of Osman Atto had proven TF Ranger's capability to strike in the heart of the SNA stronghold.

~~(S/NF)~~ After the capture of Atto, TF Ranger continued to seek Phase III targets by identifying the location and movement of other key Aideed supporters, including Colonel Abdi Hassan Awale (Qeydid), the Minister of the Interior, and Omar Salad Elmi, Aideed's principal political advisor. On 30 September HUMINT

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assets verified that Qeydid and Salad were present for the Thursday rally at the reviewing stand, but these assets and TF Ranger reconnaissance helicopters were not successful in tracking these Aideed advisors to their residences. That same day, however, other HUMINT sources reported finding Qeydid's house. TF Ranger requested that a HUMINT asset watch the house to determine when Qeydid was actually there. Even though the house was near the Bakara Market, an Aideed stronghold, MG Garrison thought that the capture of Qeydid was feasible if reliable, current intelligence placed Qeydid at a specific location.

~~(S/NF)~~ On every Sunday Aideed supporters held a rally at the reviewing stand, and Sunday, 3 October, was no different. That morning TF Ranger reconnaissance helicopters monitored the pro-Aideed rally and followed a vehicle, which they suspected was carrying Salad, to a house in the area of Mogadishu known as the Black Sea. This house, not far from the Bakara Market, turned out to be the target for the subsequent raid. Also that morning, a HMMWV with three US Marines and a Somali interpreter aboard hit a mine in the vicinity of the new port, killing the interpreter. TF Ranger monitored the situation and was prepared to launch (but did not) a combat search and rescue package and a Ranger blocking force.

~~(S/NF)~~ At 1324 on 3 October, TF Ranger intelligence personnel received a HUMINT report that had Omar Salad Elmi meeting with other key Aideed supporters, including Issa Mohammed Siad and, possibly, Colonel Abdi Hassan Awale (Qeydid), in the vicinity of the Olympic Hotel. The HUMINT source claimed to have just come from that meeting. (As it turned out, Salad was meeting with Mohammed Hassan Awale, who was going to be Aideed's new foreign minister, and not Abdi Hassan Awale.) Responding to a TF Ranger order, a P-3 REEF POINT, already airborne, began monitoring the area near the reported meeting site at 1335. About one-half hour later, TF Ranger launched three helicopters to provide additional reconnaissance, and the helicopters came on station shortly after 1405. These assets observed considerable Somali activity near the Olympic Hotel.

~~(S/NF)~~ TF Ranger requested that the HUMINT source identify the specific building and confirm the presence of Salad. First, he was to stop in front of the Olympic Hotel and feign car trouble so that TF Ranger helicopters could lock on him, then track his vehicle to the meeting house, and watch him identify the target. By 1415 the source had completed one sequence so quickly that the reconnaissance helicopters never saw him at the hotel; so, the source had to do it again.

~~(S/NF)~~ The second time the reconnaissance helicopters did spot him at the Olympic Hotel and followed him to what everyone thought was the target house. The source got out of his vehicle and gave the visual signal. "Absolutely no doubt in our minds" that the source had identified the target building was how the TF

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Ranger intelligence director (J2) described his thoughts. The TF Ranger J3 also "assumed that he was in front of the target, and we put a plan together and were walking out to get on the helos to launch against this target" when they learned that the source had not stopped in front of the target.

~~(S/NF)~~ Thus, only minutes before launching the assault and blocking forces on the wrong location, TF Ranger personnel learned at 1447 that the target was at the other end of the block, on the opposite side of the street. That caused the TF Ranger war room to call a halt to the operation and to bring the planners back in. In the words of TF Ranger's J2, "we refocused our eyes" on the new target, which was the same house where the reconnaissance helicopters had tracked the vehicle from the reviewing stand earlier that morning. And, within the courtyard the reconnaissance helicopter saw yet another vehicle, which they had tracked several days earlier, that belonged to Omar Salad. While the helicopters monitored the target, the operational planners reworked the "template" to take into account the changed location.

~~(S/NF)~~ During the planning sequences, the joint operations center (JOC) personnel were busy alerting the UNOSOM liaison officer as to the site of the mission in order to confirm that no non-government organizations were located in that area and to deconflict the airspace. The route of the ground reaction force was checked against known roadblocks and mine locations. MG Garrison informed MG Montgomery of the mission location and targets. The JOC personnel informed other governmental agencies of the pending mission and requested such support as jamming of Aided's communications networks.

~~(S/NF)~~ The TF Ranger plan was based on a template developed during rehearsals before the August deployment. The use of the term template¹ referred to two crucial aspects of the plan--the infiltration of the force into the target area, and the structure and responsibilities of the forces once on the ground. The US forces were inserted on the target by MH-60 BLACKHAWK and MH-6 LITTLE BIRD helicopters from the 1/160th SOAR. Two AH-6 "gunbirds," vectored by the reconnaissance helicopters, led the air convoy--the "chalks"--into the area, followed by the assault force command and control element on a BLACKHAWK. Next came the four MH-6s carrying the assault teams. For the 3 October mission, two MH-6s

¹ ~~(S/NF)~~ Before deployment, two operational templates--for a "strong point" assault and a moving convoy assault--were developed to facilitate rapid planning for any situation. A set combat organization was used for both strong point and convoy assaults. After insertion, the assault and blocking forces were to execute actions on the objective tailored specifically for each situation.

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set down in the alley in front of the target, and the other two set down on the street to the west side of the target. At almost the same time, five BLACKHAWKS hovered around the perimeter of the target area, allowing the blocking forces and assault force command and control element to fast rope into their positions. One BLACKHAWK and two more AH-6s trailed the formation, providing rear security. A combat search and rescue (CSAR) package was aboard another BLACKHAWK orbiting at a distance from the target area. And finally, a command and control BLACKHAWK circled overhead the target area. The target was to be "taken down" by inserting an assault force near the house and by fast roping in a blocking force into positions to seal off the target area. The mission of the blocking force was to cordon off the city block to prevent individuals from escaping the target area and to protect the assault force from individuals trying to enter the area.

(S/NF) A separate ground reaction force (approximately 56 personnel) in nine HMMWVs and three 5-ton trucks were to move to a major intersection near the target and wait to extract the detainees and the assault and blocking forces. The lack of suitable "pickup zones (PZs)" precluded using exfiltration by helicopter as the primary option. TF Ranger planners calculated that helicopter exfiltration would be slower than ground extraction and would be used, therefore, only if the ground option was no longer available.

(S/NF) Before launching on the mission, all concerned were briefed on the nature and location of the target. It was in the "heart" of Aideed's stronghold, very close to Bakara Market. But, the previous mission, the capture of Osman Atto, had been successfully completed in Aideed's "backyard," and the 3 October plan, for the most part, replicated its proven tactics--infiltrate to the target quickly, remain on the ground a minimum time, and (and this was a change) extract by ground convoy. The BLACKHAWKS again were to fly the "close in" fire support orbit, because their miniguns had suppressed RPG fire during the Atto capture, and the AH-6s were in a "holding," "far" orbit.

(S/NF) At 1532 the helicopter armada launched and carried the assault and blocking forces into the SNA stronghold. The vehicle convoy with the Ranger ground reaction force departed the airport compound at 1535. The surgical assault went according to the plan, as the helicopters started inserting the assault and blocking troops at 1542. The ground reaction force reached its holding point near the Olympic Hotel at 1545.

(S/NF) At 1542 the assault force began to enter and secure the compound, and the assaulters next penetrated the target building from three sides. Various teams began to clear rooms in this large building and to secure Somalis. In the main part of the target building, one team had detained 11 Somalis, and other teams helped to "flex cuff" them and clear the remainder of the building. Eight

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minutes after insertion, at 1550, a reconnaissance helicopter filmed some of these assault team members on the roof of the target house. One other team entered the small shops along the west side of the target building and quickly ascertained that the Somalis in there were either the owners or customers. So the assaulters ordered them to lie on the floor and to remain prone. Another team had entered a warehouse adjoining the north side of the target. It contained foodstuffs, bags of grain, and "bales of Somali money"; the assaulters detained approximately nine Somalis. Three members of this team then crossed to the west side of the street, cleared some "cubbyhole" shops, and detained a few more Somalis. With 13 Somalis in tow, this assault team linked up with the others in the courtyard on the southern side of the target.

(S/NF) While the assault teams were securing and clearing the target building, the four Ranger blocking elements had fast roped into their positions and had immediately come under much heavier small arms and RPG fire than on previous missions. The intensity of fire increased as the alarm spread to Aideed's forces. Barricades were erected, tires were set afire, and Somali militiamen grabbed their weapons and hurried to the area. The reaction was, in the words of one Ranger, "like kicking over an ant hill." From above, the reconnaissance helicopters filmed the increasing activity, and therefore, the mission commander in the TF Ranger war room monitored the battle on real-time video.

(S/NF) By 1555 the AH-6s had begun to fire on armed Somalis as they approached within one block of the target area. The presence of women and children in the area required disciplined fire from TF Ranger forces. The ground reaction force had started moving to link up with the assault force. At 1558 a Somali scored a direct RPG hit on one of the 5-ton trucks that was passing in front of the Olympic Hotel. One Ranger suffered shrapnel wounds. And, the situation was not getting any better as armed militiamen were reported moving toward the target at 1600.

(S/NF) The assault force commander reported at 1602 that the first group of detainees, including one possible principal, was in the courtyard. All the ground forces began to collapse on the target house at 1604 for link up and exfiltration. The second group of 13 detainees from the warehouse arrived at the courtyard. Because of the large number of detainees and the destroyed 5-ton truck, assault team members prepared a possible helicopter "PZ" on the rooftop of the target building. If necessary, a portion of the ground forces could be extracted from the rooftop.

(S/NF) At 1613 the ground reaction force commander reported that one critically wounded Ranger, who had fallen off a fast rope, had to be evacuated immediately. He ordered two gun HMMWVs and one cargo HMMWV, with

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helicopters providing fire support, to evacuate the wounded. The assault force at the target house was now ready to load the detainees aboard the ground reaction convoy. Just minutes later, however, the situation changed irrevocably, as the lead BLACKHAWK (Super 61) was hit by an RPG round at 1620 and crashed three blocks northeast of the target house. Other helicopter crews reported seeing survivors climbing out of the wreckage, but they also radioed back that Somalis were approaching the crash site.

(S/NF) Word of the crash reached the ground forces almost immediately. Rangers at one of the blocking elements (R#2) had seen the BLACKHAWK crash and had dispatched some Rangers to the site. The assault force commander directed one assault team to load the detainees aboard the ground convoy and to accompany them to the airfield. He next decided to move to the crash site on foot because it would have been too hard to sort through the detainees, only keeping the most important ones, and maneuver the convoy through the narrow alleyways to a crash site some 200 meters to the northeast. After loading the detainees and casualties into available vehicles, the assault and blocking forces commenced movement to the crash site.

(S/NF) At 1624 an MH-6 helicopter landed at the crash site, and amid a firefight, the co-pilot assisted two wounded snipers onto the LITTLE BIRD for extraction to the 46th CSH. Six blocking force personnel reached the site and assisted in securing the area. At 1628 the combat search and rescue (CSAR) BLACKHAWK (Super 68) arrived at the crash site, and the 15-man CSAR package began to fast rope to the roadway. An RPG round hit the helicopter, but somehow its pilot held steady while the last two Rangers slid safely down the ropes. At 1630 Super 68 safely landed at the airport, and its crew quickly transloaded to the spare BLACKHAWK and rejoined the battle.

(S/NF) Unfortunately, the situation did not stabilize. Another two BLACKHAWKS (Super 64 and 62), providing air cover at the crash site, were hit by ground fire. At 1641 Super 64, hit by an RPG, crashed less than one mile to the south in a "shanty town" area strewn with debris. An AH-6 team (with two AH-6s per team) orbited over each crash site. The AH-6 team at the second site observed survivors amidst the wreckage, reported increasing small arms and RPG fire, and watched as two Super 62 snipers jumped to the ground. The same MH-6 crew that had picked up two of the wounded at the first crash site landed in the "shanty town" area but was unable to locate the Super 64 wreckage. In a short time, a Somali mob overran the crash site, and despite a heroic defense of the position, the pilots, crew, and snipers were killed or, in the case of CW3 Mike Durant, captured. RPG fire continued to increase throughout the objective area. At least 10 RPGs were fired at Super 62 before one hit it broadside at 1727. Its

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crew somehow managed to do a controlled crash landing in the safety of the new port area. A "medevac" helicopter was dispatched to the new port at 1730.

(S/NF) Meanwhile, the assault force and blocking elements had started moving east and had come under heavy fire. All elements returned fire, but the TF Ranger soldiers had difficulty identifying the sources of the fire. Once they turned north, the volume of fire increased as they moved to the wreckage. The blocking and assault forces occupied buildings to the south and southwest of the crash site, established defensive positions, laid down suppressive fire to hold the Somalis at bay, treated their wounded, and worked to free the pilot's body. The fighting around the northern (first) crash site was fierce--so fierce in fact that the assault force commander realized that some sort of "heavy" vehicles would be needed to extract the casualties from this area. Moreover, the body of one of the pilots could not be extracted without specialized emergency equipment because the BLACK-HAWK was laying on top of him. He also reported that numerous soldiers had been wounded during the movement from the target building to the crash site.

(S/NF) The ground reaction force attempted to reach the site from the north, but unable to find it amongst the narrow, winding alleyways, the convoy came under withering small arms and RPG fire. The ground reaction force commander reported at 1723 that they had taken numerous casualties, lost a second 5-ton truck, sustained substantial damage to the other vehicles, and had to return to the compound with the casualties to regroup and rearm.

(S/NF) At the same time, the TF Ranger staff at the airfield had prepared another ground reaction force, assembling all able-bodied Rangers still at the TF Ranger compound. By 1703 this second force of seven HMMWVs and 27 Rangers had left the compound and was headed to the second crash site. This force encountered numerous roadblocks and received heavy gunfire. Moving west to bypass the militia roadblocks, this force encountered the returning ground reaction force near the K-4 circle. Upon seeing the condition of the first reaction force, the second element loaded casualties into its vehicles and escorted the first ground reaction force to the airfield. The combined force returned to the TF Ranger compound at 1740.

(S/NF) In the meantime, the quick reaction force (QRF)--a company of the 10th Mountain Division in support of UNOSOM II--arrived at the compound at 1710. The QRF was briefed on the situation and departed for the southern crash site with a TF Ranger liaison officer at 1735. It, however, experienced the same fate that the ground reaction forces had, and at 1745 the QRF was engaged in a firefight near K-4 circle. Two AH-6s were sent from the main battle to K-4 circle to provide fire support so that the QRF could break contact. This force remained pinned down until they broke contact and returned to base at 1830.

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