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## The Relationship Between the Military and Humanitarian Organizations in Operation Restore Hope

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The principal reason for launching Operation Restore Hope in December 1992 was to relieve the suffering and starvation of the Somali people. To achieve this objective, the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) intervention force was required to work closely with the humanitarian organizations carrying out relief activities in Somalia.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the relationship between the military forces and the humanitarian community evolved, the problems encountered, and the lessons learned by the participants and to suggest how future such operations can benefit from the Restore Hope experience.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the military and the humanitarian organizations during the period of the initial intervention by the U.S.-led Unified Task Force, which extended from December 9, 1992, to May 4, 1993, when the transition to United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) occurred. Although the experiences of UNOSOM II with humanitarian organizations are also worthy of analysis, the focus of the UNITAF mission on humanitarian support as well as the relative stability of the UNITAF period compared to UNOSOM II (where military activities obscured humanitarian efforts) render the UNITAF mandate an optimum period to examine military-humanitarian relationships.<sup>2</sup>

### The UNITAF Mission

When the First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) at Camp Pendleton, California, received deployment orders to Somalia in late November 1992, little

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is written from the vantage point of my service as the director of the UNITAF Civil Military Operations Center for the entire UNITAF intervention. The opinions expressed reflect my experiences and observations and are solely my responsibility.

was known about the situation in Somalia and what the forces would encounter upon arrival. There had been no official U.S. presence in Somalia since the fall of the Siad Barre government in January 1991. U.S. intelligence networks had been dismantled and were just being reestablished. The principal sources of information were media reports and the limited experience of U.S. forces (many from I MEF) participating in Operation Provide Relief, the Somalia airlift that had begun the previous August. Although this experience was helpful, the airlift had delivered to only a few key locations in central and southern Somalia (Baidoa, Bardera, Belet Weyn, and Hoddur) where time on the ground was kept to a minimum for security and efficiency reasons. The airlift had not operated regularly into either Mogadishu or Kismayu, and Americans had had only a temporary presence in Mogadishu airport during the introduction of UNOSOM I troops in September and October 1992. It was well understood that lack of security prevented food deliveries, but the full dimensions of the problem were not known.

During the planning phase for the deployment, there was no contact at the operational level (I MEF) with representatives of the humanitarian organizations working in Somalia. What parties the MEF would be working with, their expectations, and the scope of their requirements were largely unknown to the military forces charged with carrying out the humanitarian intervention.

In this context, I MEF (then called Joint Task Force Somalia and subsequently Unified Task Force Somalia) developed its mission statement based on guidance received from the National Command Authorities and U.S. Central Command. The mission had four principal elements:<sup>3</sup>

- Secure Mogadishu port and airfield.
- Secure lines of communication to the interior.
- Provide security escorts for relief supply convoys and relief organization operations.
- Assist the United Nations nongovernmental organizations in providing humanitarian relief under UN auspices.

The I MEF commander, Lt. Gen. Robert B. Johnston, further elaborated on the missions of UNITAF. He emphasized the creation of a secure environment within which UN and NGO humanitarian organizations could operate. Opening the ports and airfields and securing the routes to the interior as well as distribution sites would improve security and end the famine. Creating this environment would permit transition to a UN force, which was the end goal of the operation.

For planning purposes, it was assumed that arrangements similar to Operation Provide Relief would be established to identify humanitarian organization requirements. During Provide Relief, members of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), were collocated with the headquarters of the Joint Task Force. Requests for airlift support and food and other logistical requests were transmitted directly to the DART team either from humanitarian organization representatives in Kenya or else directly from field sites in Somalia. The DART would validate the requests and pass them

to the U.S. Joint Task Force (JTF) for execution. This system had worked well in the context of the airlift operation, and it was hoped it could do the same on the ground in Somalia.

During preparations at Camp Pendleton, Brigadier General Anthony C. Zinni, the newly assigned J-3 (Operations) for UNITAF, directed that a Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) be formed from J-3 personnel and newly arriving elements of Company C of the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which were joining UNITAF for the operation. The CMOC would coordinate military support for humanitarian operations.

Briefings on the humanitarian situation in Somalia were held at Camp Pendleton for key commanders and staffs. In addition to identifying what was known about major relief players in Somalia (based on the Provide Relief experience), these briefings provided guidance on the operating styles of the humanitarian relief organizations and potential problems. These briefings noted the decentralized and interdependent nature of humanitarian organizations, the need for proactive efforts to overcome any antimilitary sentiments, and the necessity of considering the needs of the humanitarian community before satisfying military requirements if the right atmosphere and working relationships were to be established.<sup>4</sup>

## **Deployment and Establishment of Coordination Mechanisms**

The lead elements of the UNITAF command element arrived in Mogadishu on December 10 after a twenty-two-hour flight from Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California, with only a brief stop for final consultations at U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. Once in Mogadishu, the command element linked up with the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), which had come ashore the previous day. The following day, December 11, a UNITAF representative (Colonel Kevin M. Kennedy, USMC) arrived at the headquarters of UNOSOM I in south Mogadishu where he met with DART representatives (led by Bill Garvelink) to begin putting in place the necessary coordination and liaison arrangements with the humanitarian organizations.

In mid-December 1992, the humanitarian community in Mogadishu consisted of twenty-one international NGOs, six UN agencies, the ICRC, and the IFRC. The ICRC and a handful of NGOs had remained in Somalia throughout the civil war and ensuing conflicts; many of these organizations had only recently arrived or reestablished operations in Somalia. These organizations not only conducted relief operations in the greater Mogadishu area but also functioned (with a few exceptions) as the country headquarters for their respective operations throughout Somalia. Mogadishu thus represented the nerve center for relief operations and the principal location for coordination between the military and humanitarian organizations.

Within the UNOSOM headquarters was the office of the UN humanitarian coordinator, Philip Johnston, who had initially been posted to Mogadishu in October 1992 as the coordinator of the UN 100 Day Emergency Program.

Johnston had been seconded from his regular assignment as president and chief executive officer of CARE USA. He and a very talented but small team of approximately a half-dozen staff were charged with the enormous task of coordinating relief and assistance efforts throughout Somalia. They had made substantial progress in setting up a coordination structure, but many of their efforts had been frustrated by the insecure conditions prevailing in Somalia and their limited staff resources. Lack of security in Mogadishu, especially in the port, had prevented the import and distribution of food in any significant quantities. Food deliveries to Mogadishu port, difficult under the best of circumstances, had stopped completely on November 14, 1992, when a relief ship had been taken under artillery fire while attempting to enter the port. Since then, the only food arriving in Mogadishu had come by air into Mogadishu airport, which was also insecure due to militia activity. Moreover, without the delivery of food in quantity into Mogadishu, no significant quantities could be forwarded to the interior. The lack of staff also made it very difficult for the humanitarian coordinator's office to respond to the many demands placed upon it in an exceedingly difficult working environment.

Given Lieutenant General Johnston's orders to the CMOC to "Get things going and get it going fast" and the existence of a basic UN humanitarian coordination structure (which fit neatly with the UNTAF mission statement), it was decided to join forces and collocate the UNTAF CMOC with the UN facility. This was not a particularly deliberate decision, but it seemed to be the most convenient place to meet with the humanitarian organizations and support the UN's efforts to coordinate and lead the assistance efforts. There was no additional guidance on command relationships between the CMOC and the UN humanitarian coordinator; the CMOC still reported directly to the UNTAF J-3 (Operations) but also informally "seconded" itself to the United Nations. This rather ambiguous relationship was left deliberately vague and worked for the best interests of all.

OEDA made a similar judgment and assigned personnel to work with the UN humanitarian coordinator on a full-time basis. Initially, Bill Garvelink was the senior representative; his duties were subsequently assumed by Kate Farnsworth, also of OEDA.

The coordination arrangements established at the beginning of UNTAF remained essentially the same throughout the operation and consisted of two structures: the UN Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) and the UNTAF Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC), which became an integral component of the HOC.

The organization of the HOC is in Appendix B. Johnston led the HOC (as the operations coordinator) with a civilian deputy (Garvelink) and a military deputy (Kennedy). Its components included an information management unit, a regional liaison, CMOC, and a sectoral liaison that worked with the sectoral core groups established by the UN-NGO humanitarian staff. Policy oversight was provided by a standing liaison committee composed of various UN, UNTAF, NGO, and ICRC representatives.

The stated mission of the HOC was "to plan, support, and monitor delivery of humanitarian assistance."<sup>6</sup> Conceptually, the HOC was to

- serve as the focal point for all humanitarian relief organizations;
- increase the efficiency of humanitarian operations through planning and coordination;
- gather and disseminate information among all humanitarian relief organizations; and
- provide the link for the humanitarian community to UNTAF and UNOSOM military forces.

The Mogadishu HOC was linked by radio with UN field representatives at key relief sites throughout central and southern Somalia. In these locations, UNTAF forces worked with UN and NGO representatives to form regional HOCs to perform humanitarian coordination functions. Participating military elements were either U.S. Army Civil Affairs teams supporting U.S. forces or designated humanitarian liaison officers from allied UNTAF contingents. These regional HOC arrangements are depicted in Appendix C. The organization of the CMOC is in Appendix D. Throughout Operation Restore Hope, it remained a small and austere organization for several reasons. It was recognized early on that the sheer size and complexity of the military could easily overwhelm the humanitarian community (at its height, UNTAF had a strength of over 38,000; there were never more than 300 international humanitarian relief workers in the whole of Somalia). Within the confines of the HOC, a large uniformed presence was considered inappropriate, particularly while the military-humanitarian relationship was still developing. UNTAF very much wanted to remain in a support role and let the humanitarian organizations take the lead. Accordingly, the CMOC normally comprised about five U.S. Marine and Army officers, several noncommissioned officers, and a few clerks and drivers. It never totaled more than twelve people and normally averaged a strength of ten.

A second reason driving the small size of the CMOC was an appreciation for the need to remain as nimble, responsive, and nonbureaucratic as possible in order to best meet the needs of the CMOC's customers, that is, the humanitarian organizations. Given the propensity of large organizations (including military organizations) to spend inordinate time and energy looking after their own needs and the unfamiliarity and misgivings of civilian relief organizations in working with the military, a small and efficient CMOC working as a conduit to higher military headquarters was seen as the best alternative. Last, even when increasing CMOC responsibilities led to a requirement for more personnel, additional staff were not readily provided.

The CMOC was supplemented by liaison officers from the various military contingents responsible for the Humanitarian Relief Sectors (HRSs), which had been established throughout the UNTAF area of operations. The liaison officers were not permanent members of the CMOC but would attend the daily information

and coordination meeting to brief on activities in their HRS, respond to questions, resolve issues, and be available to do detailed planning with humanitarian organization representatives who were seeking military support. Four principal missions were defined for the CMOC at the outset of the operation:<sup>7</sup>

- Serve as the UNITAF liaison to the humanitarian community and UNOSOM headquarters.
- Validate and coordinate requests for military support.
- Function as the UNITAF Civil Affairs Office.
- Monitor military support in the regional HOCs.

The CMOC missions evolved over time as the operation matured. Much of the liaison with UNOSOM (except the humanitarian component) eventually became the responsibility of other UNITAF staff sections as disarmament and transition to UNOSOM II issues came to the fore. The civil affairs function was largely handled within each Humanitarian Relief Sector by unit-level representatives, though CMOC continued to perform civil affairs missions and made regular field visits to supervise the U.S. Army Civil Affairs teams. Additional duties were assumed to include chairing the Mogadishu Port Committee, processing identification cards for relief workers, and functioning as an emergency response team.

### Interactions Between the Military and Humanitarian Organizations

The mix of organizational cultures was a striking feature of the Restore Hope operation. The military and humanitarian communities had different perceptions, expectations, styles, and agendas, and they had the task of cooperating and settling conflicts in the midst of a major humanitarian emergency. The result of their principal objectives of Operation Restore Hope—securing ports and airfields, opening up lines of communication, and safely escorting relief convoys to their destinations—were achieved quickly and professionally. The arrival of UNITAF not only helped relieve the suffering of the Somali people, it enabled humanitarian organizations to carry out their programs with unprecedented scope and efficiency.

Within this framework of general cooperation and good relations between UNITAF forces and the humanitarian organizations, varying patterns of military-humanitarian relationships emerged. To wit, military-humanitarian relations in Humanitarian Relief Sectors outside Mogadishu were generally good, productive, and without major problems; in Mogadishu, support to humanitarian organizations was maintained, but often in a very contentious atmosphere. The unfortunate outcome was that the extraordinary level of humanitarian support provided by the UNITAF force was often overshadowed by conflicts between the military

and the humanitarian community in Mogadishu, which persisted throughout the operation.

#### *Early Stages*

The general attitude displayed by the humanitarian community at the beginning of Restore Hope can best be characterized as wary but hopeful. Most of the humanitarian workers had little experience with the military, and some were very vocal in their opposition to the UNITAF intervention, harboring a basic dislike toward the whole concept of military force, particularly in the context of humanitarian assistance. The intervention was occasionally characterized as a public relations exercise that came too late and would not address the long-term needs of Somalia. Simultaneously, many of the humanitarian organizations had high expectations of UNITAF and what its presence could do for their activities. The initial demand urgently made by the humanitarian community was for an immediate UNITAF presence throughout all of central and southern Somalia and often beyond. UNITAF had planned to take three weeks and more to expand its footprint beyond Mogadishu. This was largely due to the constraints the Mogadishu port and airfield imposed on the force buildup and the desire of UNITAF commanders to achieve force levels capable of meeting any possible threat as they expanded operations. This approach was considered too leisurely by many humanitarian organizations, which argued for near simultaneous troop deployments everywhere.

They were concerned that a "bow wave" of lawless elements retreating into the countryside would seize the opportunity for one last looting spree. Ultimately, UNITAF accelerated its deployment schedule and had forces in place in all principal relief sites by December 26, 1992.

The initial UNITAF approach was to take proactive measures to initiate humanitarian support, such as establishing the CMOC and deploying Civil Affairs teams while devoting the bulk of its efforts to force protection, coalition building, and gradual expansion of the area of operations. Extraordinary logistics were required to deploy, establish, and support UNITAF. Available assets would be provided to support humanitarian operations (the first relief convoy was escorted by the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force on December 12), but primary attention remained focused on force protection and logistics.

Daily coordination meetings with humanitarian organizations were initiated on December 11, 1992. Normally chaired by the humanitarian coordinator, supported by the civilian and military deputies, they became the principal conduit for information, coordination, and liaison. At the initial meeting, the CMOC articulated the UNITAF approach (modeled on those successfully applied in Operation Provide Relief, albeit on a smaller scale) to working with humanitarian organizations.

The military was in Somalia to support humanitarian organizations in carrying out their work, not to take over their responsibilities. Thus the following principles would apply:

- All CMOC meetings would be inclusive, open to all organizations that had a role in humanitarian assistance. Any organization or individual was welcome to make a contribution.
- Information would be shared. All information concerning security conditions and UNITAF and UNTAF support to humanitarian operations would be made public. Humanitarian organizations were encouraged to share their information. The only restriction was on information whose disclosure would compromise military operations.
- UNITAF would respond as quickly as possible to all requests made by humanitarian organizations. If a request could not be met, the organization would be informed as expeditiously as possible.

The UNITAF criteria for supporting humanitarian organization requests were also promulgated:

- The request had to be in concert with the UNTAF mission.
- Sufficient support assets had to be available.
- UNITAF would be as helpful as possible.<sup>8</sup>

The HOC-CMOC meetings rapidly developed into the principal forum for military-humanitarian coordination, information, and problem solving in Somalia. Procedures were put in place for humanitarian organizations to submit support requests that were either answered in the CMOC or forwarded to higher headquarters for response. All outstanding humanitarian support requests were routinely summarized and verified. The security and humanitarian situations throughout Somalia were briefed daily and input solicited from the humanitarian organizations. UNTAF commanders and principal staff officers, visiting senior humanitarian officials from UN agencies and NGOs, and a wide variety of UN and bilateral diplomats and representatives were invited to make presentations on subjects of interest to the humanitarian community. Liaison officers from all contingents controlling a Humanitarian Relief Sector as well as representatives from key facilities of interest to the humanitarian community (port and airfield) were briefed and were available for coordination. UNTAF staff officers from medical, communications and from psychological, legal, and engineering operations provided special briefs on their work and its impact on humanitarian organizations. Questions concerning UNTAF policies (and their application) were addressed. Hundreds of separate meetings to address the needs of individual organizations were organized and conducted.

Due to security and travel concerns of humanitarian organizations located across the "green line" in northern Mogadishu, CMOC representatives went to a separate meeting every other day in order to provide similar briefing and coordination services to northern Mogadishu-based organizations. In sum, the Mogadishu CMOC developed into a humanitarian service center and clearing-house. Equally important, similar patterns of military-humanitarian coordination

and relations developed in interior Humanitarian Relief Sectors within the context of the regional HOCs and their CMOC components.

### *Stabilization and Development of Humanitarian Support*

With the arrival of additional forces and equipment and the lodgment of the UNTAF throughout almost all of central and southern Somalia, UNTAF support to humanitarian organizations increased commensurably. The principal categories of UNTAF direct and indirect support follow.

*Convoy escorts.* During the period from December 12, 1992, through April 15, 1993, 154 long-haul food convoys (averaging twenty trucks and 600 metric tons per convoy) were escorted from Mogadishu and Kismayu to interior distribution centers;<sup>9</sup> hundreds of additional convoys were organized to move the food on to its ultimate destinations. An estimated 100,000 metric tons of long-haul food was escorted. Additionally, the Mogadishu Food Distribution Scheme delivered a total of 350 tons per day six days per week commencing in February 1993 and continuing through April 30 to thirty-five separate feeding sites in Mogadishu City. Hundreds of security escorts for humanitarian fieldwork or vehicle movement were also conducted (237 organized in Mogadishu alone through April 15, 1993). An Indian naval ship served as a transporter for humanitarian cargoes along the Somalia coast and on to Kenya.

*Engineering support.* The poor conditions of the roads required a massive engineering effort by over 7,000 UNTAF engineers. They repaired or improved a total of 1,800 kilometers of roads, thus permitting access to all principal relief sites in central and southern Somalia. Additionally, fourteen wells were dug and nine airfields improved to support heavy aircraft such as C-130s or C-141s.<sup>10</sup>

*Port and airfield management.* UNTAF opened, improved, and operated the ports of Mogadishu and Kismayu, which permitted access for both military and humanitarian cargoes. To avoid conflicts in port priorities in Mogadishu, a shipping committee (chaired by the UNTAF CMOC director) was formed on December 12 with military and humanitarian representatives to ensure that humanitarian organizations had access to the port amidst heavy military usage. Similarly, arrangements and procedures were put in place at Mogadishu airport to ensure humanitarian access.

*Technical assistance and support services.* A whole array of services was eventually made available to the humanitarian community. These services included provision of fuel to run the UNDP-managed Mogadishu City water project; helicopter reconnaissance and escort flights to locate vulnerable populations, make assessments, and escort returning refugees; medevac services and emergency hospital privileges for humanitarian staff; repair of humanitarian organizational equipment; and permission to fly aboard UNTAF aircraft on a space-available

basis. The bulk of these services were coordinated either through the Mogadishu CMOC or a regional HOC.

*Planning assistance.* A variety of ad hoc planning groups were formed within the CMOC to facilitate relief efforts. These were joint undertakings that included representatives from both UNITAF and humanitarian organizations. A notable example was a planning group that developed a matrix—projected road openings, transport and warehouse capacities and shortfalls, and military escort capabilities—to identify needs for food and coordinate deliveries throughout the UNITAF area of operations.

### Areas of Military–Humanitarian Organization Conflict

Amidst all the successful joint efforts conducted by UNITAF and the humanitarian organizations, a series of recurring conflicts surfaced, centered in Mogadishu, that negatively affected the tone and spirit of military–humanitarian relations. These conflicts came about due to frictions created by the overlapping issues of institutional differences, divergent views of security, and application of weapons-control policies.

#### *Institutional Differences*

Although the potential for conflict between military and humanitarian institutions is a constant feature of military–civilian humanitarian operations, the two communities in Somalia generally got along well. Over time, teamwork developed and each partner came to appreciate the contributions and strengths of the other. This *modus vivendi* especially applied in the Humanitarian Relief Sectors outside Mogadishu. Because each unit operated in a relatively sparsely populated area with usually just one military contingent and a limited number of NGOs and UN agencies, problems were more easily identified, addressed, and resolved. Commanders and their HOC-CMOC representatives had the opportunity to work closely with and get to know their humanitarian counterparts. Issues relating to convoys, access to and use of military assets, security for humanitarian facilities, and control of Somali NGO security guards and their weapons were usually worked out in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence.

This degree of friendly cooperation was not attained in Mogadishu. It was admittedly a far more challenging situation. Mogadishu's large population (estimated between 700,000 and 1 million people, many of whom were internally displaced); the presence of several clans; the existence of key facilities such as the port and airfield (which attracted more than their share of troublemakers); and the fact that the city was the headquarters and logistics hub of eventually over fifty international humanitarian organizations, UNITAF, UNOSOM I, and the large variety of military contingents all worked to create a complex environment, particularly for the military commanders, who were charged with both maintaining security and supporting humanitarian operations.

Within the Mogadishu environment, the relative differences between the humanitarian community and the military forces tended to stand out. Humanitarian organizations had a large and visible physical presence (approximately 105 office and residence buildings alone), and members enjoyed the relative freedom to move about the city accompanied by armed Somali guards, lived in austere but far better conditions than the military, and even had access to a modest social life. In their dealings with the military, humanitarian organizations were usually supplicants, but this did not prevent some from adopting a confrontational, critical approach that implied a belief that humanitarian workers permanently occupied the moral high ground in all discussions. This behavior was a distinct exception to the generally cordial approach that prevailed, but it tended to reinforce anti-humanitarian attitudes held by some military personnel.

The military personnel in Mogadishu were either restricted to their compounds (it was not uncommon for many UNITAF personnel, for either security or transport reasons, to never leave their cantonment) or else patrolled the streets in an environment that was dangerous and unpredictable. Among some elements of the military (particularly the U.S. Marines [MARFOR], responsible for the largest portion of Mogadishu), the humanitarian organizations came to be viewed with a combination of suspicion and contempt. This was a minority view, but it was held by sufficient numbers of commanders and staff officers to magnify its impact. The humanitarian organizations were seen as a somewhat undisciplined, disorganized lot whose operations were often counterproductive to achieving the high level of security they demanded that the military establish. For example, they extensively employed suspect Somali guards and lived in personally convenient, comfortable, and dispersed residences but at the same time were quick to call upon the military if danger loomed. A belief frequently expressed was that the humanitarian organizations did not appreciate the magnitude of the military efforts on their behalf or the challenge of maintaining security in Mogadishu. These feelings tended to blend with a latent anti-UN sentiment that increased over time: The food crisis had subsided and UNITAF personnel felt they had accomplished their mission; they blamed their continued presence in Somalia on the slow buildup of UNOSOM. The net effect was an atmosphere characterized by sustained and substantial military support to humanitarian organizations coupled with an often contentious approach that created conflict rather than cooperation.

#### *Security Expectations*

Despite the presence of a heavily armed and vigilant UNITAF presence throughout Somalia, security could not be guaranteed. Lawless elements still existed and continued to operate. Newly reestablished local police forces, despite major efforts to facilitate their rebirth, never achieved the ability to carry out much more than minimal traffic control or public presence missions. Military forces, while aiming to establish a "secure environment," did not see themselves as either equipped or tasked to carry out police functions. The military focus was on presence, provision

of convoy escorts, force protection, a reduction in level of violence, and transition to the United Nations. This security policy vis-à-vis the humanitarian organizations was interpreted differently among the Humanitarian Relief Sectors in UNITAF. For the most part, the UNITAF security umbrella in interior HRSS was routinely extended to include the relief organizations. This included launching emergency response units if the organizations were threatened or providing UNITAF military guards for their residences and warehouses. For example, in Baidoa, the Australian contingent provided permanent security to ten NGO or UN agency locations; in Kismayu and Jilib the Belgian forces guarded twelve sites.<sup>11</sup>

In Mogadishu, UNITAF was reluctant to respond to requests for site security or emergency assistance.<sup>12</sup> The heavy concentration of humanitarian facilities, particularly in southern Mogadishu, and the extensive patrolling requirements in a large city made provision of troops for humanitarian site security impractical; relief organizations generally understood this and usually requested a permanent UNITAF presence only when they felt directly threatened.

Emergency response was a more difficult issue and was complicated by the presence of armed Somali guards at every humanitarian agency residence, warehouse, or facility. The relief agencies had little choice in the matter. They could not rent a facility (or a vehicle for that matter) without the landlord either providing guards as part of the rental package or insisting the relief organization supply guards in order to protect his investment. In a city with many bandits and no police or phones to summon them if a credible police capacity had existed, relief agencies were well advised to look after their own basic security requirements. The military viewed these guards with disdain. They did not consider them to be reliable and took the view that if the relief agencies were willing to employ the guards, they should look to the guards for their security. An additional complicating factor was that an emergency response, particularly at night, could easily end up in a firefight between "frendlies."

The NGOs in Mogadishu were incredulous at the reluctance of the military to respond when they were in trouble. They saw this as a natural part of the military's mission in Somalia; they failed to see how the establishment of a "secure environment" that didn't include response to relief organizations in trouble could be supportive to humanitarian efforts. This fueled a growing belief among Mogadishu-based NGOs that security was actually deteriorating for humanitarian workers.<sup>13</sup> The working compromise adopted while the security policy was sorted out was the assumption by the CMOG of emergency response duties for humanitarian organizations in southern Mogadishu. Sixteen such missions were carried out without major incident, though the CMOG was neither equipped nor staffed to handle major emergencies. Eventually, in mid-March 1993, military forces began routinely responding to emergencies after a major incident at the CARE USA and World Food Program headquarters, which had been blockaded and threatened by Somalis claiming back wages. This change in policy in Mogadishu came about in the wake of prolonged discussions at the most senior military and civilian levels.

### *Weapons Control and Humanitarian Identification Cards*

Easily the most contentious issue between the military forces and the humanitarian community was the control of weapons used by the relief organizations' Somali guards. This issue was raised soon after UNITAF deployed to Somalia and remained, at least in Mogadishu, a source of conflict and friction for the entire operation.

The initial problem concerned access for humanitarian workers, accompanied by vehicles with Somalia security men, into UNITAF-controlled facilities such as the port and airfield. A system was devised whereby international humanitarian personnel were issued identification cards by the CMOG that permitted access to the port and airfield for them and their security personnel, who left their weapons at the gate. The serialized cards, pink in color, were modeled on an existing UNITAF internal access card but had neither the picture nor name of the holder.

As weapons policies in Mogadishu and elsewhere were changed to emphasize vice control by means of confiscation, the problem for relief organizations increasingly became retention of their weapons in the midst of progressively tightened and rigorously enforced weapons-control programs. Weapons control was focused on removing weapons from the streets in order to reduce the level of violence. The large humanitarian organization armed security presence (an estimated 1,100 vehicle and facility guards in Mogadishu alone) ended up bearing the brunt of the policy; other Somalis quickly learned to keep their weapons out of sight and avoid UNITAF checkpoints. Several abuses of "pink cards" reduced their credibility with military forces.

The weapons-control policies were generally welcomed by Somalis and the humanitarian organizations alike. They had a positive impact on the level of violence as measured by the numbers of Somalis admitted to hospitals with gunshot wounds.<sup>14</sup> However, the humanitarian organizations still needed protection, which the military was often not willing or able to directly provide, and the military viewed the relief organizations' security guards as part of the problem and not part of the solution. This was particularly true for vehicle guards who worked for relief organizations during the day but were left to their own devices at night. Although incidents with relief organization security personnel were rare, those few incidents that did occur fueled military distrust of the security personnel and, by extension, the relief organizations.

Hundreds of weapons were taken from relief organizations throughout December and January, especially in Mogadishu, and often despite the presence of a UNITAF identification card. The relief organizations bitterly complained that the weapons confiscations were seriously affecting their security and ability to work; it was unsafe to move without protection, and their guards and drivers would not normally consider traveling unarmed. Their complaints usually resulted in CMOG personnel retrieving the weapons from the confiscating unit and returning them to the relief organization. This round robin, dysfunctional system often resulted in ironic and almost comical situations: Meetings for the purpose of arranging support for humanitarian programs were dominated by discussions



focused on the nuances of UNITAF weapons policies, and relief workers departed burdened with recovered AK-47s and M-16s.

As complaints from the humanitarian community mounted, UNITAF adopted a new identification card<sup>15</sup> that had the bearer's photograph and weapons serial number. Somali security personnel, vouched for by their employers, were issued cards. Although not a foolproof system, it resolved any remaining conflicts in UNITAF's HRSs outside Mogadishu, which in any event had experienced relatively few problems. In Mogadishu, at least in the MARFOR sector, the new cards had little lasting positive effect, partly because the card program was poorly supported by UNITAF (only two clerks were provided to issue several thousand cards, and the film and lamination materials were mostly obtained from NGO sources because of military supply problems) but largely because weapons policies were increasingly subject to a variety of ever stricter interpretations by the units enforcing them. These included confiscating weapons for being "visible." Visible often meant just being seen on the floor of a vehicle when passing a UNITAF checkpoint. Weapons confiscations (and returns)<sup>16</sup> escalated, and the frustrations of the humanitarian organizations rose.

Repeated efforts were made to resolve the problem. There was a series of meetings between senior UNITAF and MARFOR officers with representatives of the humanitarian community. UNITAF belatedly published a brochure in English and Somali that delineated the weapons policies in words and pictures. Briefings for Somali security personnel and security assessments of relief organization compounds were provided upon request. These measures had some positive impact, but as late as the week of March 25 to 31, fifty-four weapons were confiscated from humanitarian organizations for various infractions, real or perceived, of weapons policies.

The net effect of the continuing controversies over weapons was the diversion of much of the military-humanitarian dialogue in Mogadishu from issues of humanitarian assistance and mutual cooperation to weapons policies and differences between the military and relief organizations. The problem, which was resolved only with the departure of the marines from Mogadishu, cast a pall on overall military-humanitarian relations. Given the prolonged nature of the problem, the inability to reach a successful resolution despite numerous efforts at the most senior levels, and the generally compliant nature of the humanitarian organizations, one is led to the conclusion that the sustained confrontation represented more than just the vigorous application of weapons policies and was based on a fundamental antagonism toward humanitarian organizations from some elements within UNITAF.

### Reasons for Military-Humanitarian Conflict

A basic question to be answered is why military-humanitarian relations were often difficult in much of Mogadishu as compared to the largely positive relations achieved in other UNITAF Humanitarian Relief Sectors. The humanitarian

organizations present in Mogadishu were usually the same organizations that were working effectively with UNITAF elsewhere in Somalia; though not without their own problems, the relief organizations were in the main cooperative and compliant with UNITAF policies. Whereas the environment in Mogadishu was the most challenging, military forces in other urban areas with similar challenges (for example, the Italian forces in northern Mogadishu or the U.S. Army and Belgian forces in Kismayu) managed to achieve a satisfactory relationship with humanitarian organizations that eluded the marines in southern Mogadishu. Nor does the problem appear to have been one experienced solely by U.S. Marines, as marine forces in Bardera had a very positive relationship with relief organizations. Three factors may explain the reasons for the differences in the quality of military-humanitarian relations in Mogadishu as compared to elsewhere in Somalia and perhaps point to larger lessons for future operations.

#### *Interpretation of the UNITAF Mission*

Was the mission of UNITAF solely to escort convoys and create a secure environment or did it envision a more active role in providing security to humanitarian organizations and supporting their assistance efforts? There was a fundamentally different interpretation of the mission among different military contingents within UNITAF and often differences within the same contingent. Most would readily support requests from humanitarian organizations on a fairly automatic basis; some, notably the U.S. Marines in Mogadishu, were often reluctant to take on additional requests. This attitude reflected in part the heavy demands already placed upon marines personnel within Mogadishu. Also, the essential mission was seen by some as the maintenance of a secure environment; this mission, other than the primary responsibility of providing convoy escorts, was not interpreted as automatically including humanitarian agency security.

#### *Military View of Humanitarian Organizations*

The various military contingents in UNITAF adopted one of two basic approaches toward the humanitarian organizations. Most took the view that the humanitarian organizations were natural allies whose success would support the success of the military unit. These contingents sought out relief organizations, (even those who were not initially keen on the military presence), mixed well with them, and generally received full cooperation and more from the humanitarian community. In a second approach, the relief organizations were treated as just one more element to contend with and certainly one that did not warrant special treatment. This was often the approach demonstrated in southern Mogadishu, where open hostility toward relief organizations was frequently displayed in a "we versus you" context. This attitude created impressions that sporadic positive overtures to relief organizations could not overcome.



### *Organizational Arrangements*

In Mogadishu, unlike in the other Humanitarian Relief Sectors in Somalia, the contingents responsible for the city (U.S. Marines and Italian forces) did not run the CMOC but relied on UNITAF headquarters staff to do so. The Mogadishu CMOC coordinated on both local and national levels. Thus, the UNITAF contingents in the city were somewhat removed from direct dealings with the relief organizations; perhaps if arrangements similar to those existing in outlying HRSS had been established in Mogadishu, military-humanitarian relations would have improved, if only because the cushion between the two parties would have been removed. It should be noted, however, that this arrangement did not appear to affect the Italian forces in their relations with humanitarian organizations, and both the marines and the Italians maintained a liaison presence in the Mogadishu CMOC with frequent visits from commanders and staff of both contingents.

## **Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Operations**

Based on the Restore Hope experience, effective relations between military forces and humanitarian organizations may be achieved if the following measures are adopted.

### *Mission Clarity*

Many of the problems in Operation Restore Hope stemmed from different interpretations of the UNITAF mission. Commanders will always retain the latitude to interpret their mission based on professional judgment, assets available, and the current situation, but a definitive statement on what minimum support humanitarian organizations could expect from the military, conditions permitting, would go a long way toward clarifying relations and adjusting mutual expectations.

### *Joint Mission Planning*

The presence of representatives from the humanitarian community (OFPDA, NGOs, UN agencies) at all levels during the planning process, and particularly with the units who will actually perform the mission, would have a positive effect on subsequent military-humanitarian relations. Although each institution has its own unique requirements and missions, sufficient mutual interests exist to create a functioning partnership prior to operations in the field.

### *Education and Training*

Neither humanitarian organizations nor military forces in Somalia knew much about the other prior to Operation Restore Hope. Acquiring this information on the ground in the midst of a crisis, with many other competing priorities, is difficult at best. Incorporation of information on military and humanitarian organization

methods, operations, and capacities in each community's respective training programs and exercises will better prepare each component.

### *Institutionalization of the Civil Military Operations Center Structure*

The CMOC structures in UNITAF were created largely on the spot without benefit of a doctrine on missions, procedures, staffing, or equipment. They were effective but would have benefited greatly from a more organized, coherent approach with respect to their establishment and responsibilities. Military forces, in consultation with the humanitarian community, need to develop CMOC doctrine that serves as the basis for specific operational planning. Significant progress is being made in this area. Joint U.S. doctrine on CMOCs is being prepared by the J-7, Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Within the United Nations, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) are developing CMOC doctrine.

### *Definition of Security Responsibilities*

Barring an effective peace-enforcement, Chapter 7-style operation, which assumes all security responsibilities, civilian and military planners need to better delineate the extent of their security responsibilities. A military presence in an environment where the local police force is nonexistent or discredited creates a security vacuum for those outside the military's security umbrella. Whereas security vacuums may impact humanitarian organizations, they are particularly problematic for the local population. It cannot turn to the humanitarian intervention force for security or police services and is simultaneously restrained from providing for its own security due to security policies of the same intervention force. There are no easy solutions, but increased use of military police forces (vice regular infantry), particularly in urban settings, may be an effective approach.

### *Strengthening of Humanitarian Coordination Capacity*

Increasing the capacity and effectiveness of humanitarian coordination mechanisms will lead to the adoption of more coherent humanitarian plans and policies and provide for improved representation of humanitarian views to the military. Recent decisions have been made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (which includes the undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, the heads of UN humanitarian agencies, NGO and ICRC-IFRC representatives) to define and strengthen the role of the UN humanitarian coordinator in humanitarian emergencies.

## **Summary**

Military-humanitarian relations in Operation Restore Hope were generally effective and helped both the humanitarian organizations and the military accomplish

their respective missions. Problems between the two communities did occur, particularly in Mogadishu. Whereas these problems did not diminish overall military support or prevent mission accomplishment by either the military or humanitarian organizations, they persisted throughout the operation.

Most important, many valuable lessons were learned for the long term in this landmark operation and have already benefited both military and humanitarian organizations. For example, the UN Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) has established a model support relationship with UN agencies and NGOs. Available military support services have been clearly identified, and little friction between the military and humanitarian communities has developed. Liaison at the working level has been supplemented by regular meetings between the UNAMIR force commander, the UN humanitarian coordinator, and the heads of UN agencies and NGOs.

Similarly, during the U.S. intervention in Haiti there was a marked increase in preoperation joint planning as well as establishment of a CMOC during the very first days of the operation. The preparation and planning for Haiti directly benefited from lessons learned in Somalia, as many of the soldiers (drawn from the 10th Mountain Division) and humanitarian personnel had served together in Somalia.

#### Notes

1. Humanitarian organizations include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN humanitarian agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). Collectively, they are often referred to as humanitarian relief organizations (HROs).
2. It is not at all clear that effective military-humanitarian relations can be maintained when the environment changes from peacekeeping to peacemaking. During UNOSOM II, hostilities in the Mogadishu area diverted military assets and created great strains between the military and humanitarian communities. Simultaneously, in other areas of Somalia where the thrust of military activity remained in the peacekeeping mode, military-humanitarian relations continued to be effective.
3. Joint Task Force Somalia, briefing, Camp Pendleton, California, December 8, 1992.
4. Observations on Somalia relief, I MEF, Camp Pendleton, California, December 8, 1992.
5. Lt. Gen. R. B. Johnston, USMC, verbal orders to Col. K. M. Kennedy, USMC.
6. UNITAF Somalia Humanitarian Operations Center, briefing, Mogadishu, December 20, 1992.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. CMOC convoy update, April 16, 1993.
10. UNITAF, briefing for chair, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Mogadishu, April 7, 1993.
11. UNITAF and humanitarian relief organizations, briefing, Mogadishu, March 22, 1993.
12. The Italian forces in northern Mogadishu were an exception. They routinely responded to humanitarian agencies in difficulty and provided a permanent presence at several ICRC offices and residences when they were under pressure.

13. Humanitarian personnel often pointed to the killings of three international staff (none in Mogadishu) in the first three months of 1993 as compared to no deaths in 1992.
14. UNITAF, briefing for CJCS, April 7, 1993.
15. *UNITAF Identification and Weapon Policy*, February 5, 1993.
16. UNITAF briefing for CJCS, April 7, 1993. Confiscated rifles nationwide for the period December 10, 1992, to April 3, 1993, totaled 4,621, of which 710 had been returned to relief organizations. CMOC experience indicates that most of the confiscated weapons returned were in Mogadishu and that the numbers of returned weapons eventually exceeded 1,000.