

THE AUTHOR OF SPECIAL FORCES  
IN THE WAR ON TERROR

LEIGH NEVILLE

# DAY OF THE RANGERS



THE BATTLE OF  
**MOGADISHU**  
25 YEARS ON

Foreword by Matt Eversmann of *Black Hawk Down*



OSPREY




# DAY <sup>OF</sup> THE RANGERS

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*“Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country.  
I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better  
trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is  
not a Ranger word. I will never allow a fallen comrade  
to fall into the hands of the enemy, and under no  
circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.”*

**5th stanza of the US Army Ranger Creed**

LEIGH NEVILLE



**DAY  
OF THE  
RANGERS**



THE BATTLE OF  
**MOGADISHU**  
25 YEARS ON



# DEDICATION

To the fallen, their families, friends and units and to the men still suffering the visible and hidden wounds from the battle of Mogadishu.

“When you go home, tell them of us and say

For their tomorrow, we gave our today.”

## **1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (Airborne)**

Staff Sergeant Daniel Busch

Sergeant First Class Earl Fillmore

Master Sergeant Gary Gordon

Master Sergeant Tim Martin

Sergeant First Class Matt Rierson

Sergeant First Class Randy Shughart

## **160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne)**

Chief Warrant Officer Class 2 Donovan Briley

Staff Sergeant William Cleveland

Staff Sergeant Tommy Field

Chief Warrant Officer Class 4 Ray Frank

Chief Warrant Officer Class 3 Clifton Wolcott

## **10th Mountain Division**

Sergeant Cornell Houston

Private First Class James Martin

## **75th Ranger Regiment**

Corporal James Cavaco

Sergeant Casey Joyce

Private First Class Richard Kowalewski

Sergeant Dominick Pilla

Sergeant Lorenzo Ruiz

Corporal Jamie Smith

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not exist without the pioneering efforts of journalist and author Mark Bowden. His account of the October 3–4 mission, *Black Hawk Down*, later filmed as a successful motion picture, was an invaluable resource and even greater inspiration. Later works by participants including Nightstalker pilot Mike Durant and co-author Steven Hartov's *In the Company of Heroes*, and *The Battle of Mogadishu* edited by former Ranger Matt Eversmann and Pararescueman Dan Schilling, were equally important. All three books are highly recommended to all readers.

The aim of this book is to complement Bowden's work. I have had the opportunity thanks to documents that have come to light over the past two decades and access to participants who are now more comfortable talking about the events of October 3, 1993, to provide new detail on the battle through the lens of military history. I have also tried to interview participants who didn't, for whatever reason, feature heavily in Bowden's book to hopefully provide a more rounded account and fill in some gaps, including a significant contribution from former members of Delta Force.

My greatest appreciation must go, in no particular order, to Mike Durant, Gerry Izzo, and Karl Maier, formerly of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment; John Belman, Tom DiTomasso, Matt Eversmann, and Jeff Struecker, formerly of the 75th Ranger Regiment; and Norman Hooten, Gary Keeney, Paul Leonard, Michael Moser, Jim Smith, and Kelly Venden, formerly of the 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta. All of these gentlemen endured hours of personal interviews and rounds of no doubt annoying follow-up questions with both charm and good grace. Without them, this

book simply could not have been written. A very special thanks must go to Matt Eversmann who kindly provided the Foreword to this book.

A number of other members of the Task Force Ranger units have requested anonymity, often due to their continued work in the field of special operations. To these gentlemen I give my profound thanks for their trust in agreeing to speak with me; I hope I have accurately portrayed their views and recollections. I am also deeply indebted to Tom Faust, James Lechner, Larry Perino, Lee Rysewyk, and Kurt Smith for the detailed first-person after-action reviews they wrote soon after the battle, which have proven an important historical resource.

As always, my thanks must also go to my wife, Jodi Fraser-Neville, and my editor, Kate Moore, for their support, patience, and encouragement. Others I must thank include Pete Panzeri and Mike Vining, both US Army veterans; author and journalist Sean Naylor; Bob Mitchell and the US Army Aviation Museum in Alabama; and Dr Nicole Suarez and the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in North Carolina. Both of the latter institutions include some incredible artifacts from the battle and the author strongly encourages readers to visit should they be in the area.

A note on naming conventions. In the case of personnel assigned to Delta I have made the decision upon consultation with a number of former members of the unit to only mention an operator's full name if I have received explicit permission from that operator. In all other cases, including for personnel attached to the Delta squadron, I have chosen to use their first name and the first initial of their surname only, in the interests of personal security.

Former Nightstalker Gerry Izzo sagely told me as I began this book that no matter how accurate I attempted to be, the story of the battle was like a jigsaw puzzle and that at the end there would still be some pieces missing. He was right. As with any historical narrative there are people and information I would have liked to have had access to but for various reasons did not.

All such missing parts, and the inevitable inaccuracies that have crept into the text, are my fault alone. Likewise there are many, many stories still to be told of this important battle. I have tried to tell some which are less well known and provide new perspectives on better-known events but ultimately this book still only provides a snapshot of that horrific 18-hour battle and its aftermath.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The book may also be viewed as slightly skewed toward the Nightstalker, Ranger, and Delta perspectives of the battle. This is purely a result of my contacts within those units and is no slight toward the Navy SEAL or Air Force Special Tactics personnel who performed so admirably and honorably on October 3 and 4. There is also, unfortunately, little depiction of the Somali perspective apart from a number of historical interview transcripts. Somalia remains an active warzone and access to participants, many of whom may have by now passed away, was impossible.

A final word about the *Black Hawk Down* film. There are several instances where the depiction of events in the movie was either fabricated or consolidated for dramatic effect. This is an understandable process and is common in Hollywood representations of historical events – it must be remembered that it was a blockbuster movie, not a ten-part documentary. Where such divergences from the historical record are identified, I've pointed them out in the hope of providing further insight for readers who have seen the film and wondered about particular scenes.

This should not be seen as a criticism of the film itself, which offered the public a surprisingly accurate account of most aspects of the battle and is well worth viewing if the reader has not done so. The extended version including commentary by Tom Matthews, Lee Van Arsdale, Danny McKnight, and Matt Eversmann is particularly recommended.



# FOREWORD

*“That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man’s company”*

**Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene III**

I had never read the play nor heard the famous words until Major General Bill Garrison, the commander of Task Force Ranger, delivered an extemporaneous version of the St Crispin’s Day speech at the memorial service for our fallen comrades. We were still in country and he was the last to speak. I don’t recall what any of the other officers said but I remember him and his speech. It was fitting. When I look back almost 25 years I can still remember standing in the formation with all the members of the Task Force. I can see the podium where the commanders gave their eulogies. I see the boots of the fallen on the makeshift stage, a rifle between them, dog tags hanging off the pistol grips and the headgear on top. Some memories I will never forget.

The deployment to Mogadishu was a scary time; it was chaotic, it was exciting, and of course it was sad; but all those feelings and emotions, while

very human, pale in comparison to the deep-rooted pride of being in the fight with this group of soldiers. I realized under the hot Mogadishu sun that we had the stomach for the fight. It was ugly. It was a brawl, but we, like the soldiers of King Henry, though outmanned and outgunned by a force estimated to number 10,000, stuck it out when everything went south. We stayed and we fought. The stories of those fights are extraordinary. Leigh Neville brings them to life in *Day of the Rangers: The Battle of Mogadishu 25 Years On*.

For many of the men from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment this was the first combat deployment. The men from the other units, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta and the Task Force 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, had more operational experience. It was in some regards an odd mix of talent, yet despite all that happened in the fight against Aideed's militia, this team of teams accounted for itself well. The lessons learned, both good and bad, impacted the way our forces have fought ever since. It may not have been textbook, but give credit to the men who "figured it out" on the battlefield. These stories deserve to be told and are very worthy of repeating.

It is hard to believe that the Battle of Mogadishu took place almost 25 years ago. The event on that day, October 3, 1993 has been called many things, some of them not all that nice. I still cringe when the newscasters or politicians recall "the disaster in Somalia." Or, even worse, "the debacle where American soldiers died on the streets of Mogadishu." In some regards I suppose it is true. It was a strategic failure. Our foreign policy changed overnight and it would haunt American policy for the next two and a half decades. It seems such a disservice to use words like those in the same breath as we honor the men who lost their limbs, spilled their blood, and made the sacrifice of sacrifices. Not a failure, any of them. Foreign policy is tough to understand and yet, in the end, when diplomacy does fail, they must turn to men like these to right a wrong. Aideed and his thug militia were bad men doing atrocious things and literally no other force in the world would go after him.

Eight years after this battle the United States itself was attacked and launched what has become the longest war in American history. For the past 17 years the stories from the battlefield have been everything from tragic to inspiring. We have a generation of citizens who have never known peace. I am

hopeful that they will read this book. I wonder though, if we have learned the lessons from Mogadishu at the most senior level of politics. I am inclined to say no, we haven't, as witnessed by the 2016 battle for Mosul, again. We left Mogadishu in 1993 and 25 years later al-Shabaab occupies and kills with ease. Much like in Mosul, American forces in Somalia are walking through bloody sand. The politicians of the new millennium need to read these stories before they send America's sons and daughters to the four corners of the globe to fight. But politics is not for the soldier. The men of Task Force Ranger willingly said, "send me."

At the tactical level though, at the place where soldiers roam, these stories are a lens to the warrior DNA, the ethos that leads average men to do extraordinary things in the crucible. Leigh's investigation and follow up to Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down* is timely and well written. This isn't *Black Hawk Down 2.0*. It is another chance for incredible tales of valor to be told for the first time, as soldiers who did not have the opportunity to share their experience with Mark have the chance now.

For the past 25 years, war stories have become obviously more routine. But there is a common denominator and for a generation of warriors the similarities are profound. The faces and names of the heroic men and women who stand in harm's way change like the geography but their actions are very much the same. They put the needs of others first, they act courageously and they fulfill their duties, without exception. These are very much the stories from Task Force Ranger.

I retired in 2008 and ten years of business life has certainly made me softer than I was back then. Even though the acuteness of combat has faded I still know that war is ugly. Movies and TV shows make it look so sexy, but the reality of combat hurts. However, it is often necessary and because of this we need young men and women who are ready to stomach the fight and stand in the furnace. *Day of the Rangers* tells their story.

**Matt Eversmann**  
West Palm Beach, FL



## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

**Mohamed Farah Aideed**, warlord of the Habr Gidr clan and target of Task Force Ranger. Killed in August 1996.

**Les Aspin**, US Secretary of Defense.

**Osman Atto**, Aideed's Finance Minister, targeted and captured by Task Force Ranger on September 21, 1993.

**Abdi Hassan Awale**, Aideed's Interior Minister, targeted and captured by Task Force Ranger on October 3, 1993.

**Sergeant John Belman**, 75th Rangers, Squad Leader, deployed on Super 68 CSAR.

**Staff Sergeant Ray Benjamin**, USAF Combat Controller, deployed on Super 63 C2 helicopter.

**Private First Class Anton Berendsen**, 75th Rangers, deployed with Chalk 4. Wounded in action at Chalk 4 blocking position.

**Private Todd Blackburn**, 75th Rangers, deployed with Chalk 4. Wounded in action after falling from fast rope.

**Colonel William "Jerry" Boykin**, Delta, Commander of Delta Force.

**Boutros Boutros-Ghali**, UN Secretary General.

**Staff Sergeant Jeff Bray**, USAF Combat Controller deployed with Assault Force. Passed away in October 2016.

**Chief Warrant Officer Class 2 Donovan Briley**, 160th SOAR, pilot of Super 61. Killed in action October 3, 1993 in the crash of Super 61.

**Staff Sergeant Daniel Busch**, Delta, member of 3 Troop (Sniper), deployed on Super 61. Killed in action October 3, 1993 after defending the Super 61 crash site.

**Corporal James Cavaco**, 75th Rangers, deployed on GRF #1. Killed in action October 3, 1993 whilst manning a heavy weapon during efforts to reach the Super 61 crash site.

**Staff Sergeant William Cleveland**, 160th SOAR, crew chief on Super 64. Killed in action October 3, 1993 after the crash of Super 64.

**Lieutenant Colonel Bill David**, 10th Mountain, Commander of 2-14 Infantry and Quick Reaction Force.

**Lieutenant Tom DiTomasso**, 75th Rangers, Commander 2nd Platoon, deployed on October 3 in command of Chalk 2.

**Staff Sergeant Ray Dowdy**, 160th SOAR, crew chief on Super 61. Wounded in action during Super 61 crash.

**General Wayne Downing**, Commander US Special Operations Command (SOCOM).

**Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Durant**, 160th SOAR, pilot Super 64. Shot down and captured on October 3, 1993.

**Major General Carl Ernst**, Commander US Forces, Somalia from October 15, 1993.

**Staff Sergeant Matt Eversmann**, 75th Rangers, Squad Leader, deployed on October 3 in command of Chalk 4.

**Master Sergeant Scott Fales**, USAF Special Tactics Pararescueman Jumper, deployed on Super 68 CSAR. Wounded in action at Super 61 crash site.

**Lieutenant Colonel James “Tommy” Faust**, JSOC, J-2 Cell.

**Staff Sergeant Tommy Field**, 160th SOAR, crew chief on Super 64. Killed in action October 3, 1993 after the crash of Super 64.

**Sergeant First Class Earl Fillmore**, Delta, member of 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Killed in action October 3, 1993 during foot movement to Super 61 crash site.

**Chief Warrant Officer Class 4 Ray Frank**, 160th SOAR, crew chief on Super 64. Killed in action October 3, 1993 after the crash of Super 64.

**Major General William “Bill” Garrison**, Commander Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and Commander, Task Force Ranger.

**Chief Warrant Officer Class 3 Mike Goffena**, pilot Super 62. Passed away in February 1998.

**Private First Class Marcus Good**, 75th Rangers, medic assigned to Chalk 4.

**Master Sergeant Gary Gordon**, Delta, member of 3 Troop (Sniper), deployed on Super 62. Killed in action October 3, 1993 defending the Super 64 crash site.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

---

**Master Sergeant Jon Hale**, Delta, A-Team Leader, 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Passed away in January 2016.

**Lieutenant Colonel Gary Harrell**, Delta, Commander of C-Squadron and deployed in Super 66 C2 helicopter as Ground Mission Commander on October 3.

**General Joseph Hoar**, Commander US Central Command (CENTCOM)

**Sergeant First Class Norman Hooten**, Delta, F-Team Leader, 2 Troop, deployed with Assault Force.

**Admiral Jonathan Howe**, United Nations Special Representative for Somalia.

**Chief Warrant Officer 3 (P) Gerry Izzo**, 160th SOAR, pilot Super 65.

**Chief Warrant Officer Dan Jollota**, 160th SOAR, pilot Super 68.

**Chief Warrant Officer Keith Jones**, 160th SOAR, co-pilot Star 41.

**Chief Warrant Officer Randy Jones**, 160th SOAR, pilot Barber 51.

**Sergeant Casey Joyce**, 75th Rangers, team leader, deployed with Chalk 4 blocking position. Killed in action October 3, 1993 during GRF #1 movement toward Super 61 crash site.

**Sergeant First Class Gary Keeney**, Delta, member of 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Wounded in action on GRF #1 convoy.

**Private First Class Richard Kowalewski**, 75th Rangers, deployed on GRF #1. Killed in action October 3, 1993 during GRF #1 movement toward Super 61 crash site.

**Lieutenant James “Jim” Lechner**, 75th Rangers, B Company Fire Support Officer, deployed with Chalk 1. Wounded in action during foot movement to Super 61 crash site.

**Sergeant First Class Paul Leonard**, Delta, member of 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Wounded in action on GRF #1 convoy.

**Chief Warrant Officer Karl Maier**, 160th SOAR, pilot Star 41.

**Doctor John “Rob” Marsh**, Delta, surgeon and commander of JSOC Joint Medical Augmentation Unit.

**Master Sergeant Tim “Griz” Martin**, Delta, member of 2 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Killed in action October 3, 1993 during GRF #1 movement toward Super 61 crash site.

**Lieutenant Colonel Tom Matthews**, 160th SOAR, Commander 1st Battalion, 160th SOAR, deployed in Super 63 C2 helicopter as Air Mission Commander on October 3.

**Lieutenant Colonel Danny McKnight**, 75th Rangers, Commander 3rd Battalion, deployed to lead GRF #1 on October 3. Wounded in action on GRF #1 convoy.

**Colonel David “Dave” McKnight**, JSOC, J-2 Cell. Passed away in 1997.

**Staff Sergeant Jeff McLaughlin**, 75th Rangers, Forward Observer deployed with Chalk 4. Wounded in action at Chalk 4 blocking position.

**Captain Drew Meyerowich**, Commander of QRC, 2-14 Infantry.

**Captain Austin “Scottie” Miller**, Delta, Assault Force and Ground Force Commander, deployed with Assault Force.

**Major General Thomas Montgomery**, Deputy UN Force Commander and Commander US Forces, Somalia.

**Lieutenant Larry Moores**, 75th Rangers, Commander 3rd Platoon, deployed on October 3 with GRF #2 and Task Force David.

**Staff Sergeant Michael Moser**, Delta, member of 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Wounded in action during foot movement to Super 61 crash site.

**Chief Warrant Officer Jeff Niklaus**, 160th SOAR, pilot of Super 67.

**Lieutenant Larry Perino**, 75th Rangers, Commander 1st Platoon, deployed on October 3 in command of Chalk 1.

**Sergeant Dominick Pilla**, 75th Rangers, deployed on GRF #1. Killed in action October 3, 1993 during GRF #1 MEDEVAC of wounded Ranger.

**General Colin Powell**, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**Sergeant Randy Ramaglia**, 75th Rangers, deployed with Chalk 3. Wounded in action during the “Mogadishu Mile.”

**Sergeant First Class Matt Rierson**, Delta, C-Team Leader, 1 Troop, deployed with Assault Force. Killed in action October 6, 1993 in mortar strike on Task Force Ranger hangar.

**Major Herb Rodriguez**, 160th SOAR, co-pilot of Super 68.

**Technical Sergeant Pat Rogers**, USAF Combat Controller, deployed on Super 68 CSAR. Passed away in November 2001.

**Sergeant Lorenzo Ruiz**, 75th Rangers, deployed on GRF #1. Killed in action October 3, 1993 whilst manning a heavy weapon during efforts to reach the Super 61 crash site.

**Captain Lee Rysewyk**, 75th Rangers, Executive Officer, B Company.

**Omar Salad**, Aideed’s principal political adviser, targeted and captured by Task Force Ranger on October 3, 1993.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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**Technical Sergeant Dan Schilling**, USAF Combat Controller, deployed with McKnight command element on GRF #1.

**Sergeant First Class Randy Shughart**, Delta, member of 3 Troop (Sniper), deployed on Super 62. Killed in action October 3, 1993 defending the Super 64 crash site.

**Corporal Jamie Smith**, 75th Rangers, deployed with Chalk 1 blocking position. Killed in action October 3, 1993 after foot movement to Super 61 crash site.

**Sergeant First Class Jim Smith**, Delta, member of 3 Troop (Sniper). Wounded in action defending the Super 61 crash site.

**Staff Sergeant Kurt Smith**, Delta, 2 Troop, deployed with Assault Force.

**Captain Mike Steele**, 75th Rangers, Commander B Company, deployed with Chalk 1 on October 3.

**Sergeant Jeff Struecker**, 75th Rangers, deployed on October 3 with GRF #1, led Blackburn MEDEVAC and returned to the city on GRF #2 and Task Force David.

**Sergeant Keni Thomas**, 75th Rangers, Squad Leader, deployed with Chalk 3.

**Lieutenant Colonel Lee Van Arsdale**, JSOC, deployed in command of Task Force Ranger element on GRF #2 and Task Force David.

**Sergeant First Class Kelly Venden**, Delta, deployed with A-Squadron to relieve C-Squadron after October 3.

**Staff Sergeant Charlie Warren**, 160th SOAR, crew chief on Super 61. Wounded in action during Super 61 crash.

**Sergeant Sean “Tim” Watson**, 75th Rangers, Squad Leader, deployed in command of Chalk 3.

**Captain Michael Whetstone**, Commander C-Company, 2-14th Infantry.

**Chief Warrant Officer Class 3 Clifton Wolcott**, 160th SOAR, pilot of Super 61. Killed in action October 3, 1993 in the crash of Super 61.

**Technical Sergeant Timothy Wilkinson**, USAF Special Tactics Pararescueman Jumper, deployed on Super 68 CSAR.

**Captain Jim Yacone**, 160th SOAR, co-pilot Super 62.



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# CHAPTER 1

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## GOthic SERPENT

*“If you think the National Rifle Association has a fixation regarding weapons, it’s nothing compared to the Somalis. It is part of their manhood. And they learn how to use them. Like the Chechens, if there’s nobody else to fight they fight amongst themselves. But if there’s a foreigner who comes in, everybody is perfectly happy to fight him and fight even harder because he’s from the outside.”*

**Ambassador Robert Oakley, former Ambassador and  
Special Envoy for Somalia**

In 1993, the East African nation of Somalia was the very definition of a failed state. Situated on the Indian Ocean, Somalia had suffered years of civil war leading to the downfall of President Siad Barre. Barre had come to power in a military coup in 1969, installing himself as head of a socialist Supreme Revolutionary Council, aligning himself closely to the Soviet Union and brutally suppressing all dissent.

Somalia had only gained independence a scant nine years earlier. Before 1960, it had been two separate nations under United Nations trusteeship: British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. The concept of a central government had always faced struggles in Somalia. Much like Afghanistan, the society was heavily clan-dominated. Six major clans had shared power whilst the country see-sawed through various iterations of colonial rule. Barre manipulated these clans, setting them against each other, outlawing some whilst bringing others into the fold to maintain his power base.

The beginning of the end for Barre was the disastrous conflict with Ethiopia in 1977 known as the Ogaden War, which saw the Somalis defeated largely due to their Soviet benefactors switching their support mid-flow to back the Ethiopians. Many in the Somali military lost faith in Barre in the aftermath and a failed coup ended in bloody reprisals and executions amongst the leaders of the clans responsible for the uprising.

This crackdown led to the eventual formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM), an insurgency based in the northwest of the country with the aim of overthrowing Barre's junta. The Somali leader sought to crush the SNM, establishing what he termed Mobile Military Courts to try suspected insurgents and sympathizers. These trials were perfunctory, typically ending in the execution of the unfortunate defendant. From these kangaroo courts, the Barre regime soon escalated to mass slaughter, attempting to literally wipe out the clans that made up the SNM.

The United States, which had stepped in as Barre's benefactor after the Soviets withdrew their sponsorship, also withdrew their support in the wake of this attempted genocide. With widespread international condemnation of the regime, clan-based militias emerged rivalling the SNM and attempting to wrestle control of regional centers from Barre's forces. The largest, the Italian-backed United Somali Congress (USC), was established in 1989 by the Hawiye Clan. This emergence of multiple armed rivals placed pressure on the increasingly fragile dictatorship of Barre.

After the USC conducted a major offensive against the capital Mogadishu in 1991, Barre saw the writing on the wall and fled the country in the time-honored fashion of the dictator. A factional war soon broke out within the USC itself as sub-clans vied for control. Former general Mohamed Farah Aideed, who had been sentenced to six years in jail by Barre, violently contested the USC's choice of president to replace Barre, Ali Mahdi Mohammed.

Aideed had been educated in Italy and served as Mogadishu's Chief of Police before attending military staff college in Russia. He progressed rapidly through the ranks in Barre's regime although, in the Stalinesque atmosphere, Aideed's popularity brought him under suspicion and he was imprisoned, only to be released to serve during the ill-fated Ogaden War. Following the defeat of Somali forces, Aideed served as Ambassador to India.

Aideed was from the Habr Gidr, a sub-clan of the powerful Hawiye. Mohammed was from another Hawiye sub-clan, the Abgaal. Arguments soon turned to violence and bitter fighting broke out between the factions in Mogadishu. In the power vacuum after the fall of Barre's regime, other clans who held territory outside of the capital soon joined the fighting that turned at least a fifth of the country's population into internally displaced refugees.

The civil war coupled with a crippling famine – itself a by-product of the war – and drought resulted in a burgeoning humanitarian crisis with more than two hundred thousand Somalis dying from malnutrition in 1992. Global television coverage spurred an international effort to relieve the suffering. Initially nongovernment agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) took on most of the task.

The United Nations Security Council established a number of resolutions which called for an arms embargo on all warring factions and an end to hostilities but lacked any scope for the deployment of international peacekeepers to enforce such measures. A token security force – UNOSOM or United Nations Operations in Somalia – was added in a later resolution to monitor an early UN-brokered ceasefire and ensure aid shipments were delivered to those in need. The UN were working toward an ambitious goal, the so-called “100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance,” aiming to end the famine and subsequent humanitarian disaster in Somalia within months.

Whilst Aideed initially supported humanitarian efforts, or at least allowed them to proceed, the game changed on October 28, 1992. Aideed pronounced

that the Pakistani battalion providing security for the UN operations in Mogadishu was no longer welcome. He also railed against what he saw as outside control of the airport. In reality, his position as powerbroker within Mogadishu was threatened by the arrival of the United Nations. Aideed's militias began firing mortars and artillery at both the airport and at cargo ships delivering the much-needed aid.

UNOSOM faltered in its efforts as most factions roundly ignored the ceasefire and Aideed stepped up his attacks. The United States under President George H. W. Bush offered to provide much-needed additional manpower, an offer readily accepted by the UN. The mission was known to US forces as Operation *Restore Hope*. Bush had recently heralded the arrival of a "New World Order" following the end of the Cold War and was keen to place the United States at the forefront of forging that new world. One official explained: "The intent is to allow the food deliveries to continue, to allow Somalia as a nation to kind of come together."<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations saw the US role as one of providing physical security for the humanitarian mission: "The United States has undertaken to take the lead in creating the secure environment which is an inescapable condition for the United Nations to provide humanitarian relief and promote national reconciliation and economic reconstruction, objectives which have from the outset been included in the various Security Council resolutions on Somalia."<sup>2</sup>

United States military forces first deployed to Somalia in numbers on December 9, 1992. Some readers may recall the images of Navy SEALs (Sea-Air-Land), their faces caked in camouflage cream, making a covert landing onto the beaches of Mogadishu, only to be met by the full glare of the world's press. Such press attention would continue to dog, and at times undermine, US military efforts in Somalia.

Aideed, a Machiavellian strategist of the first order, at first publicly supported the US efforts, hoping to drive a rift between the Americans and the United Nations. His Finance Minister and second-in-command, Osman Atto, produced leaflets extolling the US whilst decrying the UN. "USA is Friend – UN is Invader" read the leaflets.

The UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had supported Barre in his former role as Egypt's Foreign Minister and was particularly hated by Aideed, who believed that Boutros-Ghali had a secret agenda to undermine Aideed. Indeed Boutros-Ghali did nothing to dissuade Aideed of this opinion,

arguing that only a complete disarmament of the clans, including the Habr Gidr, would solve the humanitarian crisis facing Somalia.

Aideed instead saw the chaos as a means to an end and positioned himself to become the kingpin of the Somali warlords, refusing to join the UN's negotiated solution with the other warlords, and continuing his war with the rival Abgaal as he felt the presidency was his right. The USC and Aideed maintained close relations with yet another armed militia, the Somali National Alliance (SNA) that also soon began attacks against UN forces, typically in the form of mortar harassment fires, sniping, and the laying of landmines.

Food distribution centers were still being hijacked by clan militias who stole the aid to re-sell on the black market or simply to deny relief to rival clans. Those who controlled the food, controlled Mogadishu. Security around the centers also became problematic with the distribution of aid resulting in food riots, which led to US Marines being deployed to guard the shipments. The militias, however, would simply wait for the Marines to leave for the night before seizing the shipments. A US State Department spokeswoman noted at the time: "The appalling and intolerable slaughter results from selfish attempts by clan-based factions to gain or maintain an advantage over one another."<sup>3</sup>

UNOSOM, and the US Operation *Restore Hope*, ended in May 1993 and both organizations transformed into UNOSOM II in May 1993 under the new American administration of President Bill Clinton. Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 814, signed by the UN Security Council on March 26, 1993, UNOSOM II was given an exceptionally broad mandate to secure humanitarian supplies and bring peace to Somalia, including the deployment of combat troops to actively target the troublesome warlords. In that month, the most brazen and brutal of attacks on United Nations forces occurred, one that would lead directly to the deployment of an American special operations task force to target Aideed.

On June 5, 1993, Pakistani peacekeepers had deployed to inspect one of the Authorized Weapons Storage Sites (AWSS), cantonment areas set up by the UN that held surrendered heavy weapons and technicals, the ubiquitous armed pick-up trucks. By chance, the AWSS was located near Aideed's radio station from which he transmitted self-serving Habr Gidr propaganda against the United Nations' presence. The Pakistanis found convincing evidence of

significant numbers of missing technicals and of crew-served weapons including heavy machine guns and recoilless rifles. As the poorly equipped Pakistani troops returned to their base after the inspection, they were ambushed near an old cigarette factory deep in Habr Gidr territory. Their soft-skinned trucks offered little protection.

A US Army history detailed the ambush:

A Pakistani escort unit ran headlong into an ambush on 21 October Road en-route to the stadium [the Pakistani forces were based at a former soccer stadium to the northeast of the city]. Delayed at hastily erected barricades, UNOSOM vehicles came under intense fire not only from small arms but also machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades ... Calls went out for reinforcements, but the relief column, in a scenario that foreshadowed the events of 3 and 4 October, immediately came under attack. In the ensuing chaos, Italian helicopters inadvertently sprayed fire at the very personnel they came to aid. At the same time, scattered roadblocks appeared around the city to hinder relief forces' movement, and additional ambushes ensued.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrently, another group of Pakistani soldiers detailed to provide security at a food distribution site on National Street, the main thoroughfare that bisected downtown Mogadishu from east to west and one of the only paved roads in the city, came under attack. American Major General Thomas Montgomery, then commander of all US forces in Somalia and Deputy UN Force Commander, commented:

At one of those sites, Pakistanis ... were overwhelmed by women and kids, which was a typical way the Somali militia operated. They put women and children at the front and just sort of let the crowd press in, and they pressed in around them and then disarmed them and then there were shooters in the crowd and they shot a couple of them. A couple of them were literally taken apart by hand.<sup>5</sup>

A SEAL who was later assigned to Task Force Ranger remembered the event in graphic detail: "Aideed's people, including women and children, celebrated by dismembering, disemboweling, and skinning the Pakistanis." In all, some 23 Pakistani soldiers were killed in both incidents and more than 50 wounded.

Six were also captured during the ambush, one of whom later died whilst in captivity. Aideed believed that he could force the United Nations to withdraw from Mogadishu and thus eliminate the greatest threat to his power by inflicting casualties on the UN forces. Perhaps recalling the effect of press coverage of casualties during the Vietnam War, he knew that such mounting casualties would naturally play poorly in their home countries and lead to calls for disengagement and withdrawal from Somalia.<sup>6</sup>

Retired US Navy Admiral Jonathan Howe who served as Boutros-Ghali's Special Representative for Somalia, for all intents and purposes the face of the United Nations in Somalia, remarked:

I don't think he liked the US being there. He opposed it until the last minute, and I don't think he liked the UN or any other international force being there. I don't think he liked what representative government would mean, because he didn't have the votes. I think this really meant a loss of power to him.

My feeling is that [it was] probably the fact that the UN was actually starting to implement the Resolution 814 [nation building and power sharing within Somalia under UNOSOM II] and the Addis Ababa accords [to develop a representative government with all clans participating], even though he'd signed them.

In the long term, representative government wasn't really in his interests because he was occupying a lot of territory that he'd gotten through guns, and he didn't have the vote nor did his clan have the votes in a totally representative national assembly. And so I think he saw this as a threat to his power probably, this whole international force. So he would be very happy to have all the international people pack up and leave. And I think he saw that striking a blow to the Pakistanis who had replaced the Americans in South Mogadishu, which was his territory, was a way to get the UN to leave.<sup>7</sup>

The response from the United Nations, however, was uncharacteristically fast and bold. On the following day, it passed Security Council Resolution 837 calling for Aideed to be held responsible for the attacks on the Pakistanis and allowing for military means to effect his capture:

The UN Secretary of the Security Council went into emergency session. This had happened on a Saturday, and [by] Sunday New York time had passed

Resolution 837, which basically said three things: arrest the perpetrators of these crimes against the Pakistanis, disarm this city (obviously you've got way more weapons than you possibly anticipated because of all this shooting that went on against the Pakistanis), and put a stop to this vitriolic propaganda that is coming through various media means of the Somalis, obviously aimed at Aided's [sic] radio station.<sup>8</sup>

A \$25,000 reward was later placed on Aided's head by Howe in the hope of incentivizing rivals to sell out the warlord to the United Nations. With the support of Boutros-Ghali, the Admiral believed that key to stopping the bloodshed and bringing about some kind of peace was the capture and trial of Aided as a war criminal. Aided and the Habr Gidr took the bounty as nothing short of a declaration of war on the Habr Gidr and immediately retorted with a tit-for-tat bounty of \$1,000,000 for Howe's head announced via Radio Aided.

It is important to note that at no time was Aided targeted for assassination. Although clearly a significant thorn in the side of UNOSOM II and Boutros-Ghali, Security Council Resolution 837 called explicitly for the "arrest" rather than the targeted removal of the warlord. Aided likely did not appreciate the difference with ground raids and airstrikes conducting missions against his clan infrastructure. Further events would only reinforce his belief that his nemesis, Boutros-Ghali, was carrying out a personal vendetta to eliminate him.

Four US Air Force AC-130 Spectre gunships based in Kenya were deployed to target Radio Aided and an Osman Atto-owned workshop which built and repaired their technicals. The strikes caused some collateral damage to surrounding buildings and a number of civilian casualties that would return to haunt US forces in the months to follow. A Pentagon spokesperson claimed that the AC-130 strikes were "by any measure ... a very significant military setback for Aided."<sup>9</sup>

On the following day, June 17, a multinational force of American, French, Italian, Moroccan, and Pakistani peacekeepers surrounded Aided's headquarters compound and the homes of two of his chief lieutenants, attempting to capture the warlord and his cronies. Not surprisingly, and likely given advance warning of the impending operation by his network of spies and informers, Aided managed to escape before the cordon was in place.

Somali militia and civilians flocked to the location. Combat soon escalated from random shots to a protracted firefight with Moroccan forces.

The close proximity of Somali militia to the Moroccans meant that circling American Cobra attack helicopters could not provide direct support without running the risk of inflicting friendly fire on their allies. Instead French armored vehicles engaged gunmen firing from the nearby Digfer Hospital with main gun rounds. Five United Nations military personnel were killed and some 46 were wounded. Both Somali militia and civilians were also killed in the exchange with some estimates placing the death toll at over a hundred.

Aideed cannily took to CNN to argue his case against the United Nations-sanctioned strikes and was shown visiting hospitals treating those claimed to have been wounded in the operations. An unnamed US official commented at the time: “The United Nations, having deprived Aideed of his voice, is now giving him an international stage to act on. He’s always wanted to be the George Washington of his country, when in fact he is more like the Caligula.”<sup>10</sup>

The June 17 operation also led to a fracturing of resolve amongst the multinational force with most of the partner nations refusing to again conduct operations in Aideed territory, inadvertently strengthening the warlord’s position by creating “no-go zones” that Aideed could trumpet as a victory over the “imperialists” of the United Nations. Largely because of these “national caveats,” by July the mission to capture Aideed had fallen to the in-country assets of the US Army’s 10th Mountain Division and its 2-14 Infantry under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bill David. The 2-14 manned the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for the multinational forces, acting as a rescue force should a UN unit be ambushed or attacked. By this time, however, Aideed knew full well he was being actively hunted and had largely disappeared from radar; US officials called it “doing a Saddam Hussein.”

The QRF maintained a significant standby force should Aideed surface. A US Army history noted its composition:

“Team Attack” was comprised of one UH-60 [Black Hawk] helicopter with sniper[s] and three [Cobra] attack helicopters. “Team Snatch” was made up with the [infantry] scout platoon, two UH-60s, one UH-60 MEDEVAC [medical evacuation], and one EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] with surgeon. A rifle platoon and two UH-60s made up “Team Secure.” Special Operations Forces initially provided the sniper and the “snatch” element, but handed over these taskings to the QRF.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of operations was for the QRF's "Team Secure" to land and establish blocking positions around the target location once Aideed's presence had been confirmed. "Team Snatch" would assault the location from the air and detain the targets whilst "Team Attack" would provide security overwatch from the air with its snipers and attack helicopters. "Team Attack" would also be responsible for stopping vehicle convoys containing Aideed. As we shall soon see, these mission templates would be used again in little-modified form by Task Force Ranger, the eventual special operations force (SOF) dispatched to capture Aideed. Unfortunately, intelligence gathering in Mogadishu would prove problematic in the extreme and the QRF could never confirm Aideed's location. The capture force was never launched.

On July 7 a half-dozen local United Nations workers who distributed a UN-funded newspaper were murdered, and as a result the US launched what many saw as a United Nations-sanctioned "decapitation strike" on July 12, attempting to kill the key leaders of the Habr Gidr in one targeted operation. Moderates who supported working with the international community and Aideed hardliners were meeting at the so-called Abdi House, owned by Abdi Hassan Awale, Aideed's Interior Minister and located in the center of Habr Gidr territory. As they sat down to debate the clan's response to United Nations-brokered peace initiatives, the first TOW (Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided) anti-tank guided missile struck the building.

Although the Americans denied the operation was an overt assassination attempt against Aideed, both the warlord's supporters and clan elders alike were killed by a fusillade of missiles and 20mm cannon fire launched from American Cobra attack helicopters that had encircled the Abdi House. "It was an armed helicopter attack with consequences we would pay for later," noted US Army Major General Carl Ernst who went on to command US forces in Somalia from October 15, 1993.<sup>12</sup>

The raid on the Abdi House on July 12 again played into Aideed's hands, increasing his stature amongst friend and foe alike. After a broadcast warning to those inside, the mixed aviation element of Cobras and OH-58 Kiowa reconnaissance helicopters began to bombard the building with missiles and cannon fire. In another mirror of future operations, the QRF landed ground forces by Black Hawk helicopter that stormed the compound, taking two prisoners, whilst a ground convoy in trucks and Humvees deployed in

blocking positions around the building. Somali casualty numbers ranged (wildly dependent on source) from 20 to 73, some of whom, however, were undoubtedly noncombatants. These included the spiritual leader of the Habr Gidr, Sheikh Aden Mohamed.

The US operation received widespread criticism in the international press with statements from Aideed and his clan decrying the “wanton slaughter” of their fellows by the Americans. Now their ire was directed at US forces and any who were deemed to be in their employ. Four journalists covering the story of the July 12 attack were attacked and murdered by Aideed supporters near the Abdi House. The warlord and the SNA began to up the ante, specifically targeting US forces. On August 10, a command-detonated mine, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) by today’s definition, detonated under a US Army Military Police Humvee, killing four American servicemen. This would prove to be a turning point for American resolve.

A September 9 ambush of a combined Pakistani and US route-clearance mission resulted in further press condemnation after Cobras were forced to engage crowds with cannon and rocket fire to protect the encircled forces on the ground, inflicting numerous casualties including against civilians who flocked to watch the spectacle. Admiral Howe could see the method behind the attacks:

We found what Aidid [sic] was doing, which was pretty clever, is that he was starting to increase the number of roadblocks and the number of ambushes that were occurring. We had a big incident that occurred in September where our people – the Pakistanis – were simply clearing a road, one of the primary access roads, and people fired [at them] from all sides. A favorite Aidid tactic was to bring women into the mix, so you have women and children in front; he even joked about this, it perplexes the soldier in terms of, “Well I can’t shoot a woman, and I can’t shoot children” and the gunmen are firing [from] behind [them] ...<sup>13</sup>

Only days later, the American QRF itself was ambushed after attempting to seize a stock of SNA crew-served heavy weapons. Only the timely arrival of ground reinforcements and Cobras overhead forestalled a tragedy and allowed the QRF to withdraw safely. Meanwhile, the White House was beginning to pressure the United Nations and Boutros-Ghali to instead pursue a negotiated

settlement with Aideed and the Habr Gidr. At the same time, Admiral Howe was conversely using his every contact within the Pentagon and White House to request the deployment of elite US special operations forces to hunt down Aideed. This two-track strategy would end in disaster.

Major General Thomas Montgomery agreed with Howe: “I supported getting Special Forces for this operation; it didn’t have to be our special operations forces, it could have been the British SAS.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, according to one account, the Americans requested a team from 22 Special Air Service, Britain’s own fabled Special Forces, to be deployed to snatch Aideed. The British went as far as deploying an SAS officer on a fact-finding mission to Somalia to gauge the chances of success for such a hazardous mission. The officer returned, stating that the mission was likely to fail as Aideed was already only too aware of the manhunt, and SAS units were consequently not deployed to Somalia.

By mid-August, however, the CIA’s Chief of Station in Mogadishu was arguing that his agency could pinpoint Aideed and was adding to the call for the deployment of US special operations forces.<sup>15</sup> Howe, a longtime proponent of just such a measure, was adamant:

One, it would help us if we had a chance of arresting Aidid [sic] [to do so] without a lot of [civilian] casualties. These [SOF] were the people that could do it for us.

Secondly, it would add leverage that would make peaceful negotiations perhaps possible [with Aideed]. They [the QRF] just didn’t have the troops that were trained to do that; unless he fell into our hands by some miracle, [they] weren’t really capable of accomplishing that mission. That’s why so very early on we asked for that kind of a force to have that capability, and also to deal with kidnapping which was a standard Somali way to dealing with things, to kidnap a relief worker or kidnap a UN person, and take them off and then hold them hostage. We wanted to have a response for that, so we asked very on early on, as early as the 8th of June, for that kind of capability to come to us.<sup>16</sup>

The then head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), General Joseph Hoar, with overall responsibility for US forces in the region disagreed fundamentally with Howe. Hoar was naturally wary of “mission creep” and further entangling US forces in the Somali quagmire. After noting the lack of actionable intelligence

available on Aideed, he strongly doubted the prospects of such a force actually being able to capture Aideed. He predicted only a 25 percent chance of success, even with the deployment of US special operators.

Clinton's Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, along with the outgoing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, shared in Hoar's skepticism. Hoar was also skeptical of the CIA's claims that they could locate Aideed based on Somali human intelligence (HUMINT) sources: "My view was that these agents, who were being paid for information, would not finger Aideed because once they did and we snatched him, they would be out of a job."<sup>17</sup>

Powell was particularly concerned about "personalizing the conflict and getting deeper and deeper into ancient Somali clan rivalries."<sup>18</sup> A later 1995 report by the United States' Senate Committee on Armed Services agreed with his misgivings, adding that the decision "clearly put the US on one side in a civil war." Such an action would also further reinforce Aideed's stature amongst the Habr Gidr, the SNA, and the wider Mogadishu community in what Hoar reportedly called "unintended consequences." Aideed enjoyed widespread support. Even a rival clan elder commented at the time: "What we cannot agree to is to lose the rights for which we fought the previous regime. We don't want anyone to come and put his feet on top of our heads ... As long as they say they want to arrest Aideed, we will fight."<sup>19</sup>

The requested deployment of special operations forces came at a time when the White House and Pentagon were attempting to actively reduce the US footprint in Somalia whilst trying to convince its reluctant United Nations allies to take on a greater share of the task. Senator John McCain articulated what many in the Senate and Congress believed: "the winds have blown us from a narrow well-defined humanitarian mission to taking sides in a prolonged hunt for a Somali warlord ... we now seem to be on the edge of moving towards nation building."<sup>20</sup> This was in Hoar's view the very definition of "mission creep."

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was up against Boutros-Ghali and Howe, the Special Envoy for Somalia Robert Oakley, the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM), and its component command, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), who were all loudly lobbying for the mission. In the end Powell acquiesced to the request: "In late August, I reluctantly yielded to the repeated requests from the field and

recommended to Aspin that we dispatch the Rangers and the Delta Force. It was a decision I would later regret,” noted Powell in his memoir.<sup>21</sup> On August 22, Powell notified Hoar at CENTCOM and General Wayne Downing of SOCOM that “Secretary of Defense Les Aspin had authorized the mobilization and deployment of [JSOC] to support US efforts in Somalia.”<sup>22</sup>

JSOC had not been resting on its laurels. The mission had been brewing for several months, time that the command used wisely by running joint training exercises with the component units likely to be called upon for any future task force. The mission had also grown in size over the preceding months. At first the Aideed capture mission was envisioned as capable of being conducted by a small element of two teams of operators totaling no more than a dozen from the Army’s secretive Delta Force, who would carry out a low-profile capture and use the in-country QRF for transportation and security.

Delta Force or more correctly the 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (SFOD) is the US Army’s special mission unit (SMU), known within the special operations community as simply “the Unit.” Delta had been formed in 1977 as a purely counterterrorist unit as a direct result of the 1972 Munich Massacre and following the wave of bombings and hijackings that had plagued Europe and the Middle East during the 1970s.

They were specialists in hostage and prisoner recovery, conducting such missions in Grenada and Panama, but had expanded to conduct covert reconnaissance and strike operations, often in what were termed non-permissive environments. They had deployed as part of Operation *Desert Storm* in 1991, hunting Iraqi Scud launchers in the Iraqi desert and, at the time of the Somalia mission, were also heavily deployed to Colombia, assisting the authorities in their manhunt for the notorious drug baron Pablo Escobar.

Delta was structured along the British SAS model, an organization its founder Colonel Charlie Beckwith had served with on secondment and much admired. In 1993, the unit had three squadrons of operators, a term invented by Beckwith to differentiate his men from the operatives of the CIA. These squadrons were supported by a number of other specialist units within the command. The Operational Support Troop, often known as F or Funny Troop, for instance conducted clandestine advance force operations, often undercover, and uniquely at the time included women operators.

Another element, the Combat Support squadron, housed the Unit's heavy breachers (tasked with breaking into heavily fortified locations such as nuclear bunkers or silos), Delta's military dog handlers and their Weapons of Mass Destruction specialists. Delta also had their own covert helicopter unit known as Echo Squadron and a Special Missions Cell based at SOCOM's Combat Developments Division to research and develop specialist weapons, equipment, and techniques for the operators.

At the lowest level, Delta teams were composed of between four and six operators depending on manpower levels, although a six-man team was the standard. Sergeant First Class Paul Leonard, who joined the unit in 1991, commented: "There were times we had four guys, other times we had six." The minimum for an assault team was four because that was the standard package carried on an MH-6 Little Bird, the nimble light helicopters that often ferried Delta operators to their targets, perched on external plank benches. There were three such teams to a troop, led by a troop sergeant major. Three of these troops – two of assaulters and one designated as snipers – along with a small headquarters element formed a squadron commanded by a colonel who had typically served as team and troop leader previously in his career.

Delta's A-Squadron initially received the call for the Somalia deployment. As more intelligence was received and the difficulty inherent in snatching Aided became clear, the scope of the deployment grew. Sergeant First Class Norman "Norm" Hooten of C-Squadron remembered:

That mission grew from one or two teams. A-Squadron had the mission and they gave the mission up because they couldn't take their whole squadron. They were on Aztec I think at the time [Aztec was the on-call Delta squadron originally tasked with aircraft hijackings but later encompassing all types of short-notice counterterrorism missions] and there was some other stuff going on at the time, missions that were developing over in northern Africa so they didn't want to split their squadron as it would make them ineffective for any other operation. So it went to Charlie 1 Troop of C-Squadron and it grew and grew until it was a whole squadron plus.

Kelly Venden, then a Sergeant First Class with Delta's A-Squadron, agreed: "Colonel [Gary] Harrell [then commander of C-Squadron] said, 'Hey we'll

take it,' but he wanted to make sure it was the whole squadron and not a squadron minus." What was originally a deployment of a dozen operators or less had expanded into a troop and finally to a squadron. Some 50 Delta operators and support personnel were eventually earmarked for the mission.

As the Delta component expanded, elements from the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment were added to provide security around the target site and to crew the light vehicles that might be needed to extract the Delta contingent once they had completed their mission. When Lieutenant Colonel Danny McKnight, 3rd Battalion commander, was first notified of the upcoming deployment he hoped to take his entire battalion with him, a force of some 850 Rangers. Instead he was instructed to select just one company as his primary unit with an additional platoon drawn from another company as his theater reserve and to act as the Task Force's own QRF.

The Ranger Regiment, an elite parachute-capable light infantry unit with a storied history dating back to the French–Indian War, specialized in short-duration raids behind enemy lines and the opposed seizure of airfields, classic special operations tasks. At the time, the Regiment comprised three infantry battalions. Within each battalion were four companies: three rifle companies and a battalion headquarters company. Within these rifle companies, there were four rifle platoons. Each of these platoons was further divided into four squads: three rifle squads and one heavy weapons squad. These squads were finally broken down into the smallest tactical element: the fire team. There were two of these fire teams in each Ranger rifle squad, two teams of four soldiers and one squad leader.

After considering the abilities and length of service of key leadership personnel within the battalion, Colonel McKnight selected Bravo or B-Company under Captain Mike Steele as his primary maneuver element and a platoon from Alpha or A-Company as his reserve along with his own headquarters element. The Ranger contingent would initially number some 240 personnel.<sup>23</sup> They arrived at Fort Bragg, the home of Delta Force, on August 11 for build-up training with the other components of the task force: the operators of Delta, attached Air Force Special Tactics, and elements from the 1st Battalion of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), widely known by their nickname "the Nightstalkers."

Ranger Lieutenant Tom DiTomasso recounted:

Around the 10th of August, Captain Steele called all the Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants into the company planning tent. We were told that we were deploying to Fort Bragg to rehearse with special mission units in preparation for a real-world mission. The mission was classified, and the cover story would be an Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE). We were not to discuss anything about the exercise until we reached Fort Bragg.<sup>24</sup>

According to a book McKnight later wrote, the Task Force trained solely to effect the capture of Aideed. Killing the warlord would undoubtedly have been the simpler course of action; however, as noted previously, United Nation Security Council Resolution 837 was clear that capture, rather than assassination, was the objective. The training at Fort Bragg saw the development of a template approach to targeting Aideed that unconsciously resembled those being planned by the QRF in Somalia. The Task Force worked on the two most likely scenarios; assaulting a building where Aideed was present, perhaps for a meeting, or halting a vehicle convoy carrying the warlord. Both were bread-and-butter missions to Delta.

Staff Sergeant Kurt Smith with F-Team, 2 Troop of Delta's C-Squadron confirmed:

The training was realistic, challenging, and almost exclusively live-fire (at least for the main effort). When it wasn't live-fire, there was ample support from outside units providing noncombatants to test our ability to manage hostile crowds with non-lethal munitions. Our operation was based on a template plan that would apply to any scenario encountered. The two scenarios we focused on were the convoy takedown and the stronghold takedown.

We conducted these types of rehearsals for approximately ten days before the National Command Authority seemingly lost interest in deploying the TF [task force]. This was not unusual. We frequently "spun up" and began mission rehearsals for a lot of missions that would never take place. If a mission had the slightest chance of happening, we would conduct rehearsals for it. Most of these missions never took place, but it all chalked up to good training.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed after more than a week of intensive drills, it appeared that the Somali mission would join that same fated category.