

Transporting wheat
for the World Food
Program aboard
C-130s.

A CINC's PERSPECTIVE

By JOSEPH P. HOAR



The humanitarian assistance operations undertaken in Somalia by the Armed Forces during the last year have brought relief to millions of people who faced famine or even starvation. They have also presented a number of challenges that are likely to confront the commanders of similar nontraditional military operations in the future.

U.S. activities in Somalia fall into three phases. Operation Provide Relief began in August 1992 as an emergency airlift of food and other urgently needed materials through Kenya to supply starving Somalis. By November, it had become apparent that the magnitude of the task, coupled with

U.N. organizational deficiencies and a lack of security within Somalia, precluded delivery of sufficient supplies. Hence the United States offered to lead a U.N.-sponsored operation, Restore Hope, which ultimately involved contributions by more than thirty nations. The final objective of that effort, to transition to a U.N.-led operation, was subsequently realized in May 1993, when the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), commanded by a Turk, Lieutenant General Bir, assumed control of military activity in central and southern Somalia. Each phase has required innovative solutions by commanders and their staffs, both in CONUS and deployed. This account offers some insights into both Operation Provide Relief and UNOSOM II, but primarily focuses on Operation Restore Hope which had the most extensive U.S. involvement.

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) began preparations for nontraditional operations in earnest four years ago in the aftermath of a lengthy search to locate Congressman Mickey Leland and his party who were lost when their aircraft crashed en route to visit a refugee camp in Ethiopia. The effort underscored the need to get a commander on the scene with the requisite equipment and staff to assess the situation quickly and initiate action. Toward that end the CENTCOM standing plan for conducting humanitarian assistance in an austere environment was revised to include a Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team (HAST). CATEX 92-3, an exercise designed to evaluate the concept in 1992, was developed with the Agency for International Development (AID) and the Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance of the Department of State. The First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), the CENTCOM Marine component, was designated a Humanitarian/Peacekeeping Joint Task Force (JTF) for future operations and was tasked to conduct an exercise in California simulating bare-base conditions in a nonpermissive environment. Just as Internal Look 90 helped prepare for Operation Desert Shield, CATEX 92-3 ended shortly before the deteriorating situation in Somalia required U.S. action. The lessons learned and the validated HAST concept allowed us to rapidly react to President Bush's

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order to commence Operation Provide Relief in August 1992.

Operation Provide Relief

Numerous private international relief organizations had attempted to provide aid to Somalia in the wake of the 1991 fall of the Siad Barre regime despite a tenuous security situation in which bands of armed gunmen preyed on each other and innocent civilians in a struggle for dominance. Recognizing the need to stabilize a country where anarchy and starvation were rampant, the United Nations passed Resolution 751 in April 1992

which provided for the presence of fifty observers in Mogadishu to be followed by additional peacekeepers to maintain order. In an effort in September 1992 apart from Provide Relief, the United States supported this new UNOSOM by transporting a security

force of 500 Pakistanis and their equipment to Mogadishu. The Pakistani battalion was the first increment of what was to be a larger force, but it was soon clear that peacekeeping forces were not the answer.

Provide Relief was set in motion on August 16, 1992 with the dispatch by CENTCOM of a HAST which became the nucleus for a JTF which was established within days to both organize and operate the airlift of humanitarian relief supplies. The operation set an important precedent for U.S. military involvement in relief operations in a semi-permissive environment and not pursuant to a natural disaster. It also surfaced problems in several important areas. The need for a host-nation agreement to provide bases for the airlift immediately became apparent. Initial reluctance by Kenya to support the staging of the operation from Mombasa was overcome by assurances that the efforts would be limited in scope, that the JTF would withdraw on completion, that relief

efforts would start with flights to refugee camps at Wajir in Kenya, and that there would be appropriate reimbursement for use of or damage to facilities.

Early efforts on the part of governmental agencies and the country team were key to making our intentions clear to the host government to allay misunderstandings. Additionally, working in concert with AID and other agencies was essential to success. For future operations the integration of the full range of political, humanitarian, and security efforts needs to be planned and exercised. Even today, after more than a year in Somalia, full integration has not been achieved.

Dealing with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the principal donors of relief aide, proved challenging. NGOs are staffed by spirited frontline relief workers, many of whom are true heroes of humanitarian assistance. To minimize fear expressed by NGOs over the involvement of the Armed Forces in humanitarian operations, JTF leadership must ensure that NGOs understand the military mission. It was also crucial that the military appreciated the culture and central role of NGOs and establish a team effort built around a Relief Coordination Committee and a Centralized Airlift Coordination Committee. Once operational both committees soon demonstrated the added value of the JTF in organization and efficiency, plus much improved throughput offered by 14 C-130 aircraft.

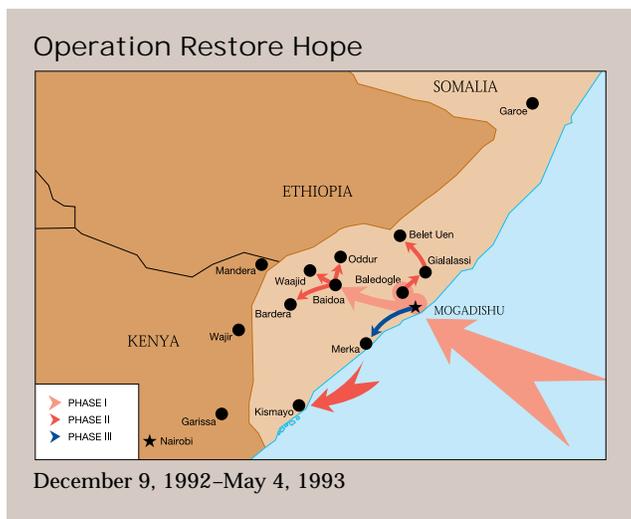
Security was also a complex problem, requiring both arrangements for U.S. forces and the added dimension of security for relief supplies—the most valuable commodity in Somalia and the target of bandit gangs. Providing adequate security for C-130 delivery missions was complicated by a firm policy of the International Committee of the Red Cross prohibiting weapons on aircraft transporting relief cargo. The solution was an airborne reaction force to accompany each flight and be available *in extremis* if conditions on the ground deteriorated. In addition to providing security in Somalia, a threat assessment was made and appropriate precautions were taken at both airfields and JTF headquarters in Kenya. Future operations will likely face similar security conditions, and force protection must remain among the commander's top priorities.



USS Tripoli.

Joint Combat Camera Center

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Finally, media coverage of the spreading famine in Somalia had an impact on the operation, though not as great as reports may lead one to believe. The news media influenced public opinion which resulted in a largely favorable response to the airlift. An open media policy encouraged the full participation

of journalists by providing logistic support per DOD guidelines.

Operation Restore Hope

Although shipments of food vastly increased—Provide Relief ultimately delivered 28,000 metric tons of supplies or 112 million meals—the magnitude of the famine and breakdown in order meant that the airlift alone could not ameliorate the widespread starvation in Somalia. The problem was addressed by the United Nations in December 1992 with the passage of Resolution 794 which authorized U.N. military action in response to the President's offer to assume leadership of a U.N. coalition to establish a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The First Marine Expeditionary Force was the choice to establish Joint Task Force Somalia with Lieutenant General Robert Johnston as its commander. This was a logical step since this unit had exercised for this type of operation. Organizationally, the plan was for the Marines to fill most of the task force slots, with the other services providing augmentation to be sure that all joint and combined requirements were addressed. This

was the same approach used in standing up JTF Southwest Asia (SWA) some months earlier. In both cases designating a component or element headquarters as the foundation of the mission—in JTF SWA it was CENTAF/9th Air Force—allowed an established service staff to transition quickly to a JTF with little need for start-up time.

With Restore Hope additional challenges arose. CENTCOM and the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), as it was later known, had to face three basic types of issues: operational, logistic, and coalition. The initial operational requirement was for a clear mission statement. Great care was taken to develop an approved, well-defined mission with attainable, measurable objectives prior to the operation commencing. Disarmament was excluded from the mission because it was neither realistically achievable nor a prerequisite for the core mission of providing a secure environment for relief operations. Selective “disarming as necessary” became an implied task which led to the cantonment of heavy weapons and gave UNITAF the ability to conduct weapons sweeps.

Restore Hope was conducted in that twilight area between peace and war—an environment of political anarchy, with no Somali government or normal state institutions, and an unprecedented U.N. chapter VII mandate authorizing peace-enforcement by all means necessary. This required rules of engagement tailored to allow the on-scene commander maximum flexibility to determine what constituted a threat and what response was appropriate, including first use of deadly force. Near-universal acceptance by coalition partners of the U.S.-crafted rules of engagement helped to minimize casualties on all sides by clearly demonstrating U.S. and U.N. will to restore order.

Another operational issue was the development of an appropriate force structure for the mission. Naval forces already in-theater were first on the scene. An Amphibious Ready Group with its embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit provided the initial building block for constructing the JTF, which required a sufficient U.S. capability to go it alone and the flexibility to accommodate coalition contributions as they materialized. Elements of both deliberate and crisis action

planning were incorporated into an iterative process to produce the operations order. Face-to-face contact at both the commander and the staff level was useful in arriving at a balanced, joint force structure matched to the operational requirements. It included elements from the First Marine Expeditionary Force, 10th Mountain Division, Air Force and Navy units (such as critical support from reconnaissance-capable, carrier-borne F-14 aircraft), a team from the Joint Communications Support Element, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) including both Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs (CA) units.

Detailed discussions were held with the commanders being committed, component commanders, chiefs, the Chairman, and National Command Authorities, plus senior representatives from the Department of State and other governmental agencies as well as the President's Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador Robert Oakley.

With an approved mission, rules of engagement, and force structure, the focus shifted to the execution of Restore Hope. The concept of operations designated Mogadishu as the center of gravity; the city had to be relatively secure prior to expanding to the interior where the humanitarian need was most acute. In view of difficulties experienced by the outnumbered Pakistani battalion at the Mogadishu airport, the application of overwhelming force was prescribed to intimidate lawless gangs and rival clans, force their cooperation, and ensure the rapid seizure of all key terrain.

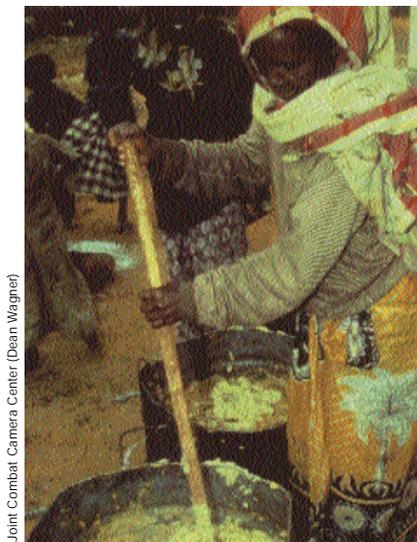
Another element critical to overall success was the integral role of Ambassador Oakley in the political preparation of the humanitarian battlefield. He preceded the military into each planned relief sector to confer with the elders and reassure them of the neutrality and strictly humanitarian intentions of the U.S./U.N. forces about to arrive, but left no doubts about the consequences of failing to

cooperate. This courageous personal political campaign was key to turning the tide in the psychological contest for the respect and confidence of the Somalis, and it began the process of breaking the strangle hold of the warlords and bandits.

Also crucial was the effective application of other information-related resources, including intelligence, PSYOP and CA expertise, and the public affairs effort. Embarking on an operation in a locale which had previously been a low priority intelligence target required an all hands effort by the intelligence community. A shift in resources to focus rapidly on Somalia was required to both create new architecture and build a detailed database. Initially, a lack of human intelligence forced reliance on technology-based systems; the speed with which the intelligence apparatus was formed reflected lessons learned from the Gulf War.

CA personnel established links with local leaders and gained information on the needs of the Somalis. This was useful in addressing those needs and tailoring PSYOP campaigns, efforts that combined leaflets and radio broadcasts to spread the message that UNITAF was there to help. The public affairs effort was also essential to success. Working closely with the media in Somalia the military publicized the good work being done by UNITAF forces. Media coverage is virtually real-time, driving public opinion on the critical issues of the day. Thus the attention to the media was crucial not only for success on the ground in Somalia, but to sustain public support for the operation in the United States and internationally. The combined information effort contributed significantly to the virtually unopposed UNITAF occupation of all sectors, and helped to maintain firm control in southern Somalia.

The final operational concern was the need for close coordination with relief agencies for which we were tasked to provide security. Necessary coordination with the agencies was achieved by the Civil-Military Operations Center which was manned by UNITAF personnel from both U.S. and coalition forces. A similar organization, the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center in the Central Command Plans and Policy Directorate, was comprised of a representative from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Reserve augmentees. Both centers paid big dividends



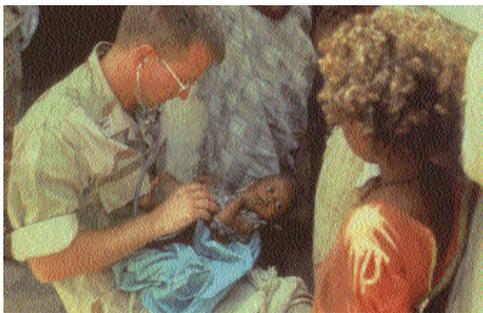
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Refugee worker in Baidoa mixing mazimeal.

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in facilitating the information flow and keeping operations in tune with the needs of the humanitarian relief community.

Deploying 28,000 people 8,000 miles to an austere environment was as formidable as the operational challenge. Somalia had primitive airfields, barely usable sea-ports, disintegrating road networks that did not link population centers, and roadways rendered impassable by fallen bridges and washouts. There was no electricity, no water, no food, no government, and no economy. Additionally, our forces had to provide security for NGOs which were attempting to save millions of Somalis from starving. Deploying to Somalia was like going to the moon: *everything* needed had to be brought in or built there. Every scrap of lumber, drop of fuel, drink of water, and slice of bread had to be brought in from outside. From a logistics perspective, Somalia was a nightmare. The ultimate bare-base environment created four primary logistics challenges: projecting major force, establishing the airbridge, building an expeditionary infrastructure, and managing coalition logistics support.



Doctor examining a Somali child.

Somalia was the first major force projection in an operation other than war. To meet this logistical challenge, we had to rely on a variety of resources. In selected cases, critical life support equipment and materiel handling equipment prepositioned in the CENTCOM area of responsibility was drawn on to reduce time and cost of deployment. Air Force prepositioned materiel was used at en route basing sites and in Somalia. The Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force provided initial unit equipment and sustainment for forces ashore. Army materiel prepositioned afloat also contributed although pierside offloading was prohibited by ship size and draft. Another challenge was the high sea state which precluded in-stream offload. The Offshore Petroleum Distribution System provided immediate and continuing

fuel storage and distribution capability otherwise not found in Central Somalia.

Establishing the airbridge to Somalia also presented some unique problems. Strategic air flow was slowed by an extended 8,000-mile transit, limited availability and capability of en route basing sites, and poor in-country airfields. All this was compounded by maintenance difficulties and weight restrictions that plagued our aging strategic airlift fleet. The shortage of ramp space at Mogadishu, the deterioration of the runway at Baledogle, and lack of lighting and navigational aids (with the need for FAA airfield certification), exacerbated the problem in the initial phases.

Sealift was similarly hampered by problems such as a harbor that had not been dredged for more than two years, limited berthing space, sunken vessels in and near the port, a near absence of port services (operational cranes, lighting, electricity, etc.) and high sea states. A lack of proper handling equipment restricted cargo flows to 20-foot containers and only permitted self-sustaining vessels to make port calls. Nevertheless the expert management of the port of Mogadishu by the commander of the Maritime Prepositioning Force and the 7th Transportation Group from the Army avoided the disastrous bottlenecks some had predicted and maximized cargo throughput.

Austere conditions required the deployment of nearly four thousand engineer personnel to provide expeditionary infrastructure to support the operation. They opened main supply routes and airfields as well as constructing such facilities as fixed tents, heads, showers, kitchens, and wells. Mission-related necessities were given priority over nation building. Nevertheless much of the construction served both purposes. Many other needs were satisfied early in the deployment when other sources were not yet available through the extensive use of the Logistics Contract Augmentation Program, an Army-managed program that centralizes contracting with single sources to streamline the process and reduce response time.

Some logistic issues were endemic to the nature of coalition operations. Legal restrictions prohibit giving away DOD supplies and services, even to coalition members. Yet



Marines escorting relief workers.

many coalition members required logistical support. To meet this need we pieced together a system that relied on a variety of techniques, including foreign military sales cases, cross-servicing agreements, and special agreements under the Foreign Assistance Act. Although this system ultimately worked, the streamlined system embodied in the draft legislation submitted by CENTCOM, supported by DOD, and now working its way through Congress would be invaluable in future coalition operations.

The success of coalition logistics relied heavily on the roles of defense attachés and liaison officers from contributing nations in

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relating specifics on capabilities and support requirements that deploying forces would bring to the effort. They coordinated operational preferences through CENTCOM, relieving the JTF commander of some administrative burdens. Coalition attachés and liaison officers played other important roles as well. Attachés assigned to coalition embassies in Washington were invited to CENTCOM headquarters for orientation briefings

and liaison officers were able to remain with the headquarters and operational staffs in Somalia. Also, SOF Coalition Support Teams were initially fielded to help participating forces facilitate liaison with UNITAF. These measures maintained coalition involvement and provided a smooth flow of information.

Coalition operations raised other concerns. Although willing to take the lead and provide the bulk of forces and logistical support, the United States recognized that the operation would be conducted under U.N. auspices and that only with the involvement of the international community would it seem legitimate and successful. Accordingly, the participation by Somalia's African neighbors with similar regional interests as well as by both Middle East and Southwest Asian countries with cultural and religious affinities was a necessary ingredient. This mixture of forces was further strengthened by several of our Western allies with advanced equipment and valuable experience in both NATO and U.N. operations.

The large number of countries offering immediate deployment of military forces presented further challenges such as how best to employ varied resources, organize such a force and maintain unity of command, and deal with logistic support requirements and varying levels of interoperability. To handle an almost overwhelming number of potential coalition offers, CENTCOM headquarters retained approval authority and screened each offer in order to lift some of the administrative and coordination burden from UNITAF. The capabilities of contributors—including self-sufficiency, mobility, and willingness to adhere to American operational control and rules of engagement—were weighed against the operational requirements of the mission. Political considerations were also taken into account. In order to screen international offerings CENTCOM developed a questionnaire which was disseminated by the Department of State via defense attachés. Nations wishing to participate returned the completed questionnaires through diplomatic channels. After deployment approval, requirements for strategic lift, support, and funding were completed.

The unique problems of Restore Hope demanded an effective command structure. Unlike the coalition during the Gulf War, potential contributors were asked to place their

forces under the operational control of the U.S. commander. National representation was done through contingent commanders to UNITAF and a full-time liaison section which was part of a larger collective cell. Consequently, throughout Restore Hope, unity of command and unity of effort were retained. In addition, an effective and reliable communications network at all echelons of command greatly enhanced command and control of deployed forces.

From the outset the mission remained to provide a secure environment in which to deliver relief supplies to break the famine

and to establish conditions for a rapid transition to U.N. control. By March 1993 UNITAF forces had succeeded in the assigned mission. Starvation was no longer an overriding problem and security was sufficient to allow transition to the U.N.-led UNOSOM II phase of the operation.

In planning for that transition, the United Nations accepted Turkey's offer to provide a commander, and American and Canadian offers to provide the deputy commander and chief of staff, respectively. The United Nations secured commitments for an international staff to replace the U.S. UNITAF staff and for longer-term troop contributions which eventually totalled 28,000. The United States agreed to commit a logistics support command for the general support of U.N. forces. In addition, for added stability during the transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM, the United States would provide a quick-reaction force and information support to the UNOSOM staff. These forces would support the United Nations but remain under CINCCENT operational control, with tactical control delegated to Commander, U.S. Forces Somalia (COMUSFORSOM), who is also the deputy commander, UNOSOM II.

Terms of reference between CINCCENT and the UNOSOM II commander were developed for participation of the quick reaction force and information cell. Specific guidance for the use of these U.S. forces was spelled out to preclude confusion.

Efforts to effect an expeditious and seamless turnover were delayed by differing views that arose in part over the UNITAF success. Fortunately the unambiguous UNITAF mission statement precluded "mission creep" and clearly demarcated the difference between UNITAF and UNOSOM II roles. Longer-term U.N. efforts to promote national reconciliation and the desire to establish a presence in northern Somalia were appropriately left to UNOSOM II with its broader political and economic rehabilitation mandate. CENTCOM, however, raised concerns from the beginning with regard to the U.N. ability to logistically support a Somalia-wide operation, since the U.S. logistic support package was designed only for forces in southern Somalia and could not expand its role to other parts of the country without substantial augmentation.

UNOSOM II

The long-term solution for Somalia requires a fully developed humanitarian, economic, and political effort in addition to the military requirement. The seeds for these were sown in UNITAF, but their success depends on the necessary vision, commitment, coherent planning, and resources to follow through under UNOSOM II. CENTCOM facilitated the transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II in several ways. Operational and logistics planners were at work in New York as early as January 1993 to assist the unmanned U.N. Military Staff Committee in developing its concept of operations and list of logistics requirements. These planners remained available to the United Nations while it stood up a functional staff in Mogadishu in April.

Within CENTCOM headquarters, the Somalia working group shifted its focus to support interagency efforts, including working to resolve issues related to the transition and drawdown of U.S. forces. At the same time the Central Command Personnel Directorate assisted in assembling and rapidly deploying the U.S. contingent to UNOSOM II where the 47 Americans provided critical skills in the early days when the fledgling staff was operating at 30 percent strength—which emphasizes the need for new procedures to people U.N. military staffs in contingency situations.

Since the official turnover to UNOSOM II on May 4, 1993, CENTCOM has continued



Joint Combat Camera Center (Kevin Thomas)

10th Mountain Division advancing into Baledogge, Somali.

retaining a U.S. combat force presence was critical to keeping several contributors in the coalition

to play a pivotal role in the ongoing operation. The maintenance of security and continuation of relief operations within Humanitarian Relief Sectors created under Restore Hope required self-sufficient brigade size units or equivalent combinations. Thus a seamless transition to the U.N. operation depended on the active recruitment of international support to provide forces which would operate

under UNOSOM II in accordance with a chapter VII mandate. Most nations with forces committed agreed to remain through the transition, and several new contributors were identified. Retaining a U.S. combat force presence was critical to keeping several contributors in the coalition. To some, only U.S. combat troops symbolize American resolve. The presence of the quick-reaction force, along with U.S. leadership in some key UNOSOM II positions, has not only done that but also encouraged other countries to follow through on their pledges of support. Efforts by CENTCOM, as executive agent for UNOSOM logistics support, to facilitate strategic lift and to outfit potential contributors have also helped to hold the coalition together. Another vital role for CENTCOM in the UNOSOM II operation has been to maintain close communications with COMUSFOR SOM to ensure that the support needs of U.S. forces are being met.

A U.S. force of approximately 4,000 was tailored to stay in Somalia to support projected UNOSOM II needs. However, unanticipated shortfalls caused by the changed security situation, coupled with the slower than anticipated arrival of coalition forces and contributor support, have required adjustments. The challenge has been to modify the composition of our force to meet these new needs without significantly increasing its total size. Raising the profile of the Armed Forces in Somalia would undermine the perception of U.N. military forces as truly international and capable of meeting the task at hand. A highly visible American presence is not in the best interests of the United States or the United Nations.

Several important lessons have been validated through our experiences in Somalia over the past year that are key to success in humanitarian assistance operations. Their

application is far-reaching in today's volatile world. In the operational area there are three key lessons. First, the formulation of a clear and precise mission statement which defines measurable and attainable objectives is paramount. Second, the application of decisive, rather than just sufficient, force can minimize resistance, saving casualties on all sides. Finally, developing a comprehensive strategy that coordinates all instruments of national power—not just the military—greatly enhances the probability of achieving the stated objectives.

Equally important to humanitarian assistance is the logistical capability of the Armed Forces—a capability unmatched by any other military in the world. Prepositioned stocks and equipment afloat and ashore, along with strategic lift, constitute a unique capacity to support the massive force projection that future international actions may require. As fiscal realities result in a smaller force, we will need to exercise and refine our logistics capability to be sure that it does not atrophy. At the same time the United Nations must be encouraged to develop its own ability to rapidly contract logistics support for U.N. operations.

As seen in the central region over the last few years, we are unlikely to have the option of going it alone. A significant military action in support of humanitarian assistance will require an international coalition with each country contributing within its means. Then there will be a need to organize and maintain that coalition during operations.

Finally, the mission to Somalia has reaffirmed the unparalleled professionalism, dedication, resiliency, and valor of men and women from many nations who once again rose to a challenge and performed magnificently under trying conditions. These heroes, serving in or out of uniform, Americans as well as their coalition partners, are the reason that hundreds of thousands of Somalis were saved from starvation and that the foundation has been laid to restore their country.

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