

The Peace-Enforcement Dilemma

By T. FRANK CRIGLER



Treating the injured in
a make-shift hospital.

Joint Combat Camera Center

The United Nations is conducting a major experiment in Somalia, one whose implications reach far beyond the Horn of Africa. Its aim is to determine whether collective military means can be successfully applied to halt fighting and restore order in countries torn by ethnic conflict, political chaos, or civil

war. If it works, the world community will have a new tool among its multilateral peacekeeping instruments, an approach now being termed *peace-enforcement*.

Unfortunately, the results of the experiment so far are not encouraging and suggest a need to examine the lessons of Somalia carefully before peace-enforcement is attempted elsewhere.

Growing Frustrations

Internal conflicts like Somalia have historically been off-limits to U.N.-sponsored military forces, except when all the parties to the conflict agree to their deployment. In such cases, neutral mediators (U.N. officials

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or others) usually first persuade parties to stop fighting and agree to a truce. Once the situation stabilizes, U.N. observers or peacekeeping forces are asked to monitor cease-fire arrangements to reassure all parties that truce terms are being respected. Rarely have U.N. peacekeepers been expected to preserve the peace or restore order by force.¹

Over the years, lightly-armed U.N. forces have intervened in at least two dozen conflicts, always at the request of the parties concerned or with their tacit consent. Although peacekeeping tasks often placed these troops in the line of fire, force has largely been limited to self-protection. Despite this distinctly passive approach, traditional peacekeeping has for a generation contributed significantly to damping down conflicts and securing peace. Recent successes include deployments in Namibia, El Salvador and Nicaragua, Iran and Iraq, and Mozambique. In 1988 U.N. peacekeepers were collectively awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

But traditional-style U.N. peacekeeping has by no means always succeeded in keeping the peace, much less in bringing an end to fighting when the parties themselves were unwilling to lay down their arms. In an increasingly disorderly and chaotic world, scrupulous respect for national sovereignty and the consent of parties in conflict has grown harder to rationalize. Neat distinctions between international and internal conflicts have become blurred, while the collapse of authoritarian control in many states has unleashed violent ethnic rivalries and pressures for self-determination. Increasingly, frustrated statesmen have called for more robust instruments for applying multilateral pressure on parties in conflict.

Among many frustrating cases, Somalia is a classic illustration of the weaknesses of the traditional approach: when the United Nations attempted in mid-1992 to introduce a peacekeeping force to restore order and safeguard humanitarian relief operations there, its efforts were thwarted largely by the stubborn refusal of one faction to cooperate, namely, the United Somali Congress headed by General Mohammed Farah Aideed. A lightly-armed battalion of Pakistani troops who led the effort promptly became virtual prisoners in their own camp, unable to control food warehouses and key transport facilities and dependent on General Aideed's

troops even for their own security. The ill will between Pakistani soldiers and Aideed's supporters continues to poison U.N. efforts in Somalia to this day.

Similar frustrations encountered elsewhere—most notably in the former Yugoslavia, but also in Cambodia, Angola, Lebanon, and on the fringes of the former Soviet empire—had already led members of the U.N. Security Council to ask Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali early last year to suggest ways of strengthening the organization's ability to intervene in such conflicts, halt fighting, reduce innocent suffering, and promote recovery. The Secretary General accurately gauged the mood of the membership and recommended a tougher, more interventionist approach to peacekeeping. His recommendations were contained in a major report which called for deploying well-armed, combat-ready peace-enforcement units under U.N. command, within the framework of the collective security provisions of chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, if more traditional means failed to preserve international peace and security.² To a large extent the operation in Somalia—in its military as well as civil aspects—embodies these measures advanced by Boutros-Ghali.

Testing Peace-Enforcement

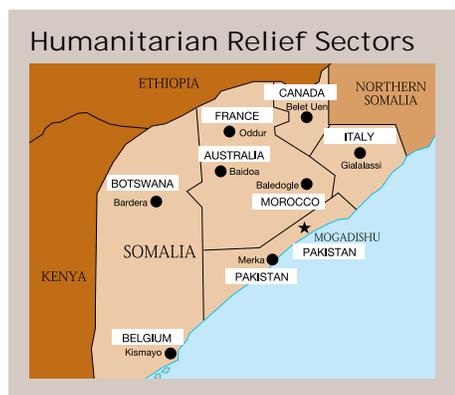
Circumstances combined to make Somalia the obvious test case for the Secretary General's more assertive and muscular approach to multinational peacekeeping for a variety of reasons:

▼ Its collapse into anarchy had been so complete that the usually vexing issue of national sovereignty seemed irrelevant.

▼ Traditional peacekeeping had already proven inadequate as a means of restoring order and alleviating human suffering (the parallel crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina had exacerbated the sense of urgency and frustration which the Security Council felt about the traditional approach).

▼ America had taken matters into its own hands with Restore Hope which showed that a massive deployment of force could halt factional fighting and safeguard relief operations, thereby saving thousands of innocent lives while suffering almost no casualties.

▼ Some 19 other nations, recognizing the success of the U.S.-led humanitarian operation, eventually offered to contribute contingents, and most were prepared to leave them in place when the United Nations took charge.



▼ The Clinton administration came to office determined not to be distracted from domestic economic issues by foreign crises where vital U.S. interests were not at stake, and it was anxious to find ways of sharing responsibility with other nations for managing nuisances like Somalia.

This resulted in intense negotiations during February and March 1993 between the Clinton administration and the U.N. Secretariat over the terms and timing for handing over responsibilities in Somalia. Ultimately it was agreed to seek a Security Council mandate for the successor U.N. operation (UNOSOM II) in order to give it unprecedented peace-enforcing authority to intervene, halt fighting, and impose order that the U.S.-led forces had enjoyed during Restore Hope. There was also insistence that the Security Council provide UNOSOM II with the weapons, equipment, and personnel needed to exercise that authority.

In addition Washington and New York agreed that America would remain directly engaged and fully committed to the success of the operation, by providing senior officers for UNOSOM II, a logistic capability with some 1,500 personnel to provide vital support, and a quick-reaction force of 1,200 troops to intervene in emergencies.

The Security Council unanimously approved the plan (Resolution 814) on March 26, 1993, and the new doctrine of peace-enforcement was scheduled to be put to the test beginning on May 1.

UNOSOM II: Dramatically Different

The transition to U.N. authority represented not only a change in command and the rules of engagement, but also a major transformation in the world community's stated purposes in Somalia. Fundamentally, it marked the successful end of Restore Hope, with its narrow focus on saving innocent lives, and the start of a much bolder

and broader operation intended to tackle underlying social, political, and economic problems and to put Somalia back on its feet as a nation.

With strong U.S. backing the Security Council had approved an ambitious, experimental, and virtually open-ended mandate for UNOSOM II that would inevitably plunge the international community far more deeply into Somalia's internal affairs than any previous case since the Congo. In addition to humanitarian relief UNOSOM II was to assist in "rehabilitating political institutions and the economy and promoting political settlement and national reconciliation. . . ." Its sweeping agenda for Somalia encompassed:

- ▼ economic relief and rehabilitation
- ▼ national and regional institutions
- ▼ police and law and order
- ▼ international humanitarian law
- ▼ refugees and displaced persons
- ▼ the clearing of land mines
- ▼ public information programs to support U.N. activities.³

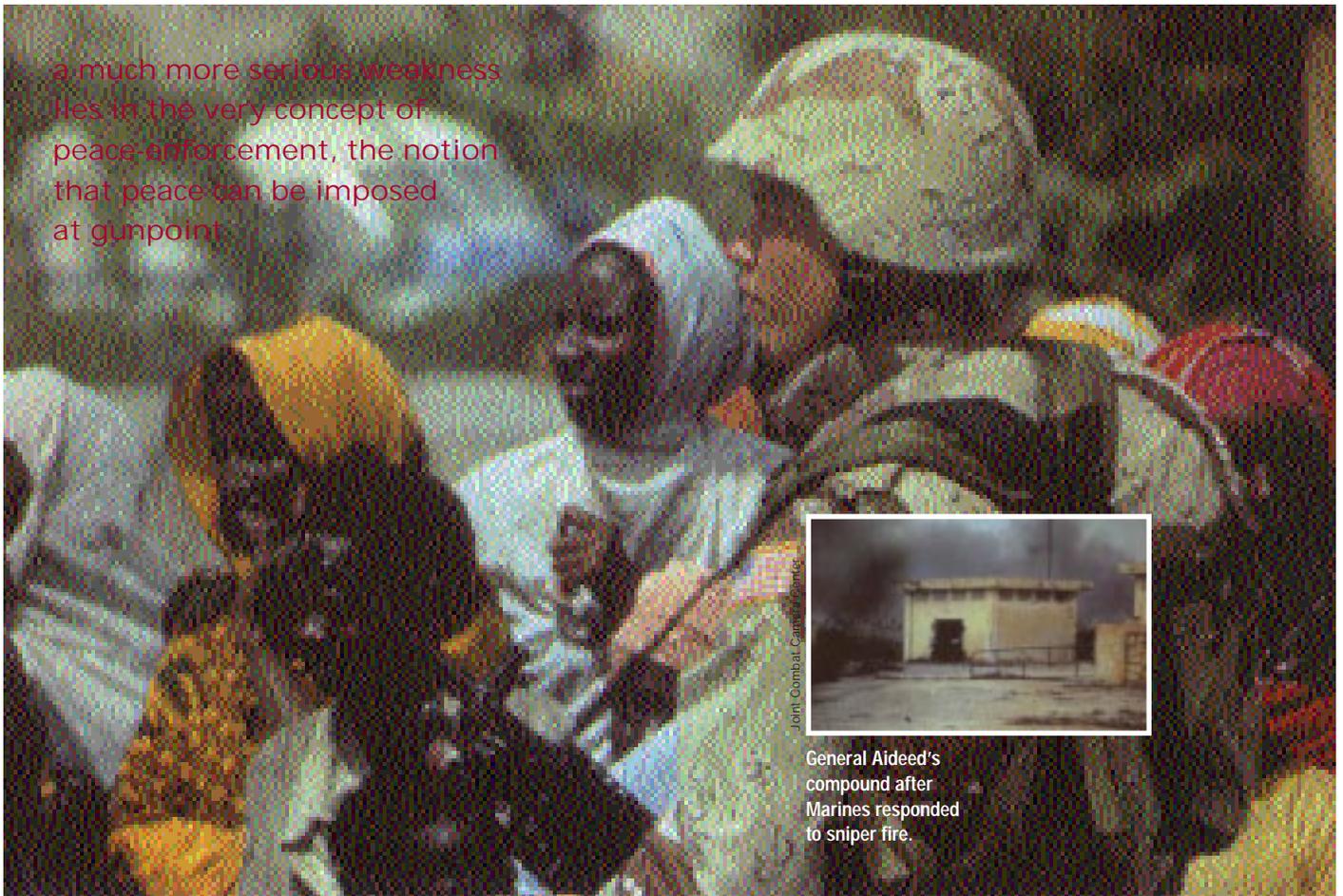
To the point of recent incidents, the resolution authorized, even expected, UNOSOM II to accomplish its goals by force if necessary. By declaring the Somali crisis "a threat to international peace and security," it explicitly opened the way for applying forcible collective security measures provided for in chapter VII of the Charter. Accordingly, the Security Council voted to increase troop levels, tighten the arms embargo, and strictly enforce cease-fire and disarmament measures that Somali faction leaders had agreed on at the Addis Ababa peace conference earlier in the year.⁴

Restore Hope had indeed left much undone that both Somalis and many others hoped it would do to correct the country's ills and repair the damage done by two years of fighting. But the key to the operation's obvious success may have been its very limits: it was explicitly *not* intended to pacify the country, disarm the warlords, demobilize armies, restore civil government, or solve the country's accumulated political and social problems.

Everyone understood, of course, that fundamental problems—notably the root problem of guns in the hands of warlords and their followers—would have to be faced at some point down the road. U.N. officials

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General Aideed's compound after Marines responded to sniper fire.

Standing guard at Mogadishu Airport.

in particular, embarrassed by the failure of their initial attempt at peacekeeping in Somalia (and increasingly disturbed by General Aideed's hostile behavior and rhetoric), hoped that his and rival factions would be disarmed and the country pacified before U.N. forces took over from the Americans. A great many Somalis echoed that hope and warned that the country would fall back into chaos if root problems were not addressed. But in its waning days, the Bush administration had been content to leave the longer-term problems to others.

UNOSOM II, on the other hand, was mandated to go directly to the causes of conflict and seek solutions that would optimize chances for real recovery. Not surprisingly, it was immediately challenged by the very warlord who had earlier adamantly opposed U.N. intervention. Predictably it has been plagued by command and control problems, organizational confusion, administrative weaknesses,

funding shortfalls, and national policy differences that one might expect in such a novel multinational operation. But it has proven to be seriously weak just where Restore Hope was strong: its objectives were vaguely defined, its reach is exceedingly ambitious, and its results are difficult to measure.

A Flawed Concept?

Many of the difficulties that UNOSOM II has encountered to date are workaday operational problems that the U.N. experiment can help resolve. A much more serious weakness—perhaps a fatal flaw—lies in the very concept of peace-enforcement, the notion that peace can be imposed on a reluctant and notoriously proud people at gunpoint and that the social fabric of their nation can be rewoven at the direction of outsiders.

Despite carefully laid transitional plans, UNOSOM as an experiment in peace-enforcement got off to a rocky start. Well before the transfer of responsibility in May,



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Marine talking with Somali children.

teams of civilian experts began deploying to implement a series of agreements that Somali faction leaders had concluded at U.N.-sponsored conferences in Addis Ababa earlier in the year: committees were convened to draft an interim governing charter, groups assembled in towns and villages to organize local governing bodies, plans were drawn to create community-based police forces, and individuals were identified to be judges in a temporary court system.

But discord quickly arose when U.N. officials attempted to impose their views on how the Addis agreements should be implemented, what form the new governing charter should take, and how best to disarm and demobilize the factional militias. The reasons for the dispute are not entirely clear to outside observers. U.N. officials charge that General Aideed, after signing the agreements reluctantly, torpedoed them deliberately because he correctly feared his political power would be eroded. Habr Gedir supporters of Aideed, on the other hand, claim that it was U.N. officials who refused to honor the agreement terms or applied them unfairly, and who attempted to disarm Aideed's militiamen more quickly than others.

Disagreement also broke out over whether the factions were compelled to conform to the UNOSOM program of meetings and negotiations or were free to deal among themselves. Early in June, in what now seems to be a watershed event, Aideed and some 200 representatives of rival clan factions met

in Mogadishu to sign a peace agreement ending months of skirmishing between Habr Gedir and Majertain militias along territorial borders in central Somalia. At least on paper their agreement appears to reflect a commitment to peace and national unity—but it also proclaimed the intent by allied factions to work outside the UNOSOM framework, and it called for the speedy departure of the United Nations from Somalia. UNOSOM labeled the conference unauthorized and stigmatized the peace agreement as illegitimate.

Almost immediately thereafter shooting erupted in Mogadishu when U.N. forces acted to neutralize the radio station from which Aideed followers had ballyhooed the peace conference and previously had broadcast vitriolic attacks against UNOSOM. Before dawn on June 5 Pakistani troops together with American peacekeepers were dispatched to inspect depots where the forces of Aideed were to have deposited weapons for eventual U.N. safekeeping. Shooting broke out—it is not clear (or even material now) who fired the first shots, or where—and in the course of the day's fighting 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed, along with an undetermined number of Somali fighters.

The Security Council response to the "premeditated armed attacks" on U.S. peacekeepers was swift and extraordinarily stern. Unanimously, its members embraced the preliminary version of events as reported by Boutros-Ghali (although he was instructed to investigate the incident and the faction leaders' role in it). In angry terms, the Security Council:

- ▼ condemned the attacks as "part of a calculated and premeditated series of cease-fire violations to prevent by intimidation UNOSOM II from carrying out its mandate"

- ▼ demanded that all parties "comply fully with the . . . agreements they concluded" at Addis Ababa, in particular the cease-fire and disarmament agreements

- ▼ stressed the "crucial importance [of] neutralizing radio broadcasting systems that contribute to the violence and attacks against UNOSOM II"

- ▼ authorized the Secretary General to arrest and detain "for prosecution, trial, and punishment" persons responsible for the attacks, and to take "all necessary measures . . . to establish the effective authority of UNOSOM II throughout Somalia."⁵

Sobering Reports from Somalia

Media reports have amply covered the fighting and tension that have plagued Mogadishu since June. Aideed has not been apprehended, but scores of his Habr Gedir followers have been detained and dozens killed or wounded in punitive UNOSOM attacks on his headquarters and in other confrontations. More than fifty peacekeepers also have died with others wounded in what has become daily urban warfare in the streets and neighborhood around the UNOSOM compound.

Whatever else is said about the performance of UNOSOM, it is clear that its chief, Admiral Jonathan Howe, has done no more or less than what the Security Council authorized and expected him to do by attempting to capture Aideed and destroy his command structure.

How UNOSOM would in fact carry out its mandate to try and punish the warlord if he were apprehended—and on what legal grounds—are unanswered questions in the context of Somalia's anarchy.

Unfortunately, the UNOSOM preoccupation with neutralizing Aideed and his followers has distracted attention and resources almost completely from the rest of its vast agenda for Somalia. Despite UNOSOM claims to the contrary, continued fighting in the streets of Mogadishu between militiamen and peacekeepers has rendered them unsafe for normal civilian life, and there is ample evidence that the feud is delaying recovery in much of the rest of the country as well.

Admittedly, it is difficult to judge from afar the circumstances that led to the present

feud between UNOSOM and Aideed's Habr Gedir subclan. Media reports are sketchy, and accounts by both U.N. officials and Aideed supporters are influenced by self-interest. Certainly Aideed, who makes no secret of his political ambition or contempt

for the United Nations, had long been a thorn in the side of U.N. commanders. But reports of unprovoked attacks and terrorist ambushes by Aideed loyalists leave many unanswered questions. Why, for instance,

did UNOSOM attempt to take over Aideed's radio station and inspect arms depots on June 5—the day after the controversial peace conference concluded—with only a few lightly-armed forces when it might have anticipated an angry reaction from Habr Gedir?

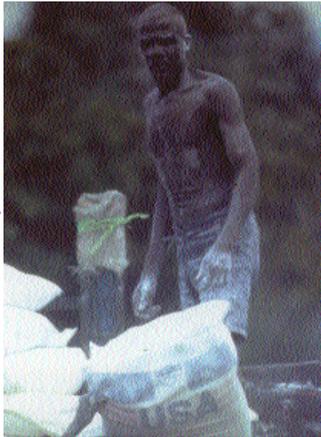
In the absence of independent clarification, one is forced to ask whether the heavy-handed response mandated by the Security Council and forcefully carried out by UNOSOM has not been out of proportion to the threat posed by Aideed. At a minimum, the campaign to punish him has been counterproductive in at least some respects: it has unquestionably made Aideed a hero among fellow clan members, who had grown tired of his antics and might have abandoned him; and it has seriously undercut prospects for achieving political accommodation between those factions allied with Aideed and their rivals.⁶

Worrisome Implications

The UNOSOM attempt to impose peace by force on recalcitrant Somalis has also shaken the coalition that provides U.N. manpower and resources. The Italians, who have historic reasons to understand Somalis better than most, strongly differ with UNOSOM over its predilection for using force against a people notorious for their stubborn national pride. The Germans, concerned about being drawn into combat on what was to have been a humanitarian mission, are also having second thoughts. Governments of smaller nations that traditionally supply troops for peacekeeping duties are meanwhile questioning whether peace-enforcement could spell problems at home.

Events since June have also raised doubt about the new, more activist role of the Security Council itself—composed of less than one-tenth of the U.N. member nations, with five members permanently occupying seats—in overseeing the test application of peace-enforcement in Somalia. By exactly what legal or moral authority, for example, is the United Nations entitled to exercise force in Somalia or anywhere else?⁷ In addition, are sufficient checks and balances operating to govern Security Council actions and decisions?

Experience to date with peace-enforcement thus suggests the need to be skeptical



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Workers unloading flour in Wajir, Kenya.

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about the approach and extremely cautious about applying it elsewhere. Most obviously for Americans, who overwhelmingly supported Restore Hope, it casts our Armed Forces in a far more controversial role as law enforcement agents, in an environment where law has ceased to exist, courts have collapsed, police are powerless, and standards of behavior are purely arbitrary. In the process, it has made them party to the underlying clan conflict while disrupting humanitarian relief efforts, short-circuiting attempts to rebuild Somali civil institutions, discouraging political dialogue among contending factions, and seriously delaying attempts to rebuild the ravaged economy.

These are not encouraging signs for a new approach to multilateral peacekeeping. If the United States and United Nations are to avoid becoming endlessly mired in the swamp that many predicted Somalia represented last year, the peace-enforcement experiment must be reformulated to meet the realities of the country, its people, and their problems. Here, by way of conclusion, are steps that UNOSOM could take to redress the dilemma of peace-enforcement in Somalia:

- ▼ Institute a unilateral cease-fire and appeal by radio to all Somali faction leaders to do the same; this could serve to make clear that the United Nations is not just another warring faction but in fact opposes the use of force to solve the country's problems.

- ▼ Suspend efforts to arrest General Aideed and release the scores of Habr Gedir clan members detained as his followers pending restoration of an authentic Somali judiciary and penal system that might more credibly prosecute the case.

- ▼ Abandon, at least for now, unilateral attempts to enforce the Addis Ababa cease-fire and disarmament agreement, and instead encourage the faction leaders to meet and work out modalities and a timetable for disarmament to include an agreement on a verification role for UNOSOM.

- ▼ Call the attention of faction leaders to the renewed humanitarian problem that fighting in

Mogadishu is causing and appeal for cooperation to move relief supplies to those who need them; declare an intention to escort relief convoys and warn that fire will be returned if the convoys are impeded or come under attack (thereby applying traditional peacekeeping rules of engagement).

- ▼ Schedule a new round of political talks among faction leaders, elders, politicians, and intellectuals at a neutral location, with a view to putting the political process securely back on track.

- ▼ Invite a neutral intermediary to visit Somalia immediately, investigate the circumstances surrounding recent incidents involving hostilities, interview all parties concerned, and then report the findings to the General Assembly and the Security Council. Such a mission would not only help to clear the air but would provide a cooling-off period to reopen a dialogue. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ The most dramatic exception occurred in the Congo during the early 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, when U.N. troops succeeded in preventing the secession of mineral-rich Katanga province. That controversial and costly experience nearly shattered the organization, however, and set a more modest tone for peacekeeping that prevailed until the collapse of the Soviet empire.

² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, a report to the United Nations Security Council (New York: United Nations, June 17, 1992).

³ U.N. Security Council Resolution 814, March 26, 1993.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ U.N. Security Council Resolution 837, June 6, 1993.

⁶ The UNOSOM attempt to corner and arrest Aideed is reminiscent of the British frustration during the period 1898 to 1920 with the so-called "Mad Mullah," Mohammed Abdulle Hassan, a charismatic renegade and troublemaker (now a Somali folk hero) who repeatedly eluded colonial pursuers for more than two decades and finally died in bed of pneumonia.

⁷ See Resolution 837 which reaffirms the Secretary General's authority under Resolution 814 to "take all necessary measures . . . to establish the effective authority of UNOSOM II throughout Somalia," although the earlier resolution asserts no such authority.



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Greeting the arrival of relief supplies.