

## BACKGROUND

From 25 August 1993 to 3 October 1993, Task Force Ranger conducted seven combat missions in Mogadishu, Somalia. The seventh and final mission on 3-4 October, known as "The Battle of the Black Sea," was the catalyst for a change in the United States' policy in Somalia. During the battle, which would be the most intense fighting seen by American forces since the Vietnam War, 16 members of Task Force Ranger were killed and 83 Rangers were wounded. The International Red Cross estimated that Somali casualty figures exceeded 1,000<sup>1</sup>. The Rangers were severely outnumbered, but still accomplished their mission. Extensive rehearsals of generic battle drills, a flexible plan, and the personal courage, initiative, and valor of the members of Task Force Ranger contributed to the tactical mission success.

In the summer of 1993, UN forces in Somalia were subject to increased attacks by Somali militiamen affiliated with Mohamed Farah Aideed's Somali National Alliance (SNA). On 5 June 1993, the SNA killed 24 Pakistani soldiers in an ambush. The United States responded to this action by sending AC-130 gunships to Mogadishu, where they conducted several fire missions primarily directed towards the SNA. These missions were only effective in sending Aideed into hiding. The AC-130 gunships to the area still did not create a safe area for UN forces to operate in Somalia. In early August, four Americans were killed when their vehicle drove over a command detonated mine.

Due to the increased threat to American and UN forces in the area, plans were made to employ special operations forces (SOF) in support of United Nations Operations Somalia (UNOSOM). The United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) put together a force package consisting of a company of Rangers from the 75th Ranger Regiment, elements from the 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), and Special Forces

USAIS LIBRARY  
FT BENNING GA  
PROPERTY OF THE  
US ARMY

support personnel. Major General William F. Garrison, commander of the Joint Special Operations Command, was put in command of this task force, dubbed Task Force (TF) Ranger. The mission of TF Ranger was to restore the security in Somalia to ensure the safety of the United Nations (UN) forces conducting relief operations.

USSOCOM determined that Aideed and the SNA were the primary causes of the troubles in Mogadishu. Aideed's capture and or the breakup of the SNA's infrastructure would bring security to UN forces in the city.

TF Ranger conducted a 10 day train-up period before deploying to Somalia on 26 August 1993. The entire Task Force landed at Mogadishu Airport on 27 August 1993 and were fully capable of conducting combat operations the following day. From 28 August to 4 October, TF Ranger conducted seven combat missions. The seventh and final mission of TF Ranger was what is known as the "Battle of the Black Sea", which marked the turning point of US policy in Somalia.

#### PREPARATION

I was the first platoon leader for Bravo company, 3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. My company was on a battalion training exercise in Fort Bliss, Texas when we were put on alert status and sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to prepare for possible combat operations in Mogadishu. This alert notification was different than most notifications in that just one company was sent instead of the battalion. It was also strange because we deployed from Fort Bliss rather than our home station in Fort Benning, Georgia.

Deploying away from our home station created several problems. First, several Rangers still at Fort Benning were had to join the company main body at Fort Bragg. Second, some of our mission essential equipment was at Fort Benning, not with us at Fort Bliss.

Once the entire Task Force assembled at Fort Bragg, preparations began for the deployment. Over a ten day period, TF Ranger conducted several rehearsals under different scenarios. The plan to employ TF Ranger was a simple one. Since the principle target could be in a number of places throughout the city, the plan based off a template. We adjusted the template to fit the situation.

TF Ranger was broken into three separate elements: A heliborne assault element, a heliborne security element, a ground reaction force, and a combat search and rescue (CSAR) element. The assault force and the security force would fast rope (a thick rope used as a means of insertion by sliding down like a fireman's pole) onto an objective. The ground reaction force would then link up with the other two elements and either reenforce the blocking positions, act as a means for extraction, or establish landing zones (HLZ).

My platoon was split into two separate elements. I was in charge of the lead ranger helicopter, or Chalk 1. My platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Sean Watson, was in charge of Chalk 3. The second platoon was also split into two elements. 1LT Tom Ditomasso was in charge of Chalk 2 and his platoon sergeant, SSG Hardy was in charge of Chalk 4. These four elements made up the blocking force element commanded by the Bravo Company commander, CPT Mike Steele. The mission was different than usual Ranger type missions in the sense that the blocking force was used for crowd control. The third platoon and the anti-tank section of weapons platoon were the vehicle mounted on armored HMMWVs and led by third platoon leader, 1LT Larry Moores. These elements made up the ground reaction force commanded by the Third Ranger Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Danny R. McKnight. The ground force was responsible for a variety of tasks ranging from crowd control to force extraction.

My company began rehearsals with the rest of the Task Force the day after our arrival to Fort Bragg. Training began at a rapid pace. The training plan didn't allow for a walk through period. TF Ranger conducted two full rehearsals on the first day of training and conducted over twelve rehearsals over the course of a week.

The Rangers did not perform very well on the first few rehearsals. This stemmed from a lack of preparatory time given. The other elements of the task force were well read in on the plan where the Rangers were not. The Ranger platoon leaders received a briefing on the concept of the operation only twenty minutes prior to the first rehearsal. By the time they came out of the briefing, they had ten minutes to task organize their platoons and brief their subordinates.

Despite the initial difficulties during the train up phase, the Rangers eventually gained a good understanding of our role in the overall mission concept. They conducted extensive training on crowd control as well as room clearing. During the rehearsals, the Rangers put a particular emphasis on applying the rules of engagement. The task force deployed to Mogadishu well prepared and confident of mission success.

#### **INITIAL MISSIONS**

MG Garrison declared TF Ranger fully mission capable on Sunday, 28 August. That same evening, we were subject to mortar fire from the SNA. Several soldiers were slightly wounded while working on a helicopter, but no one in TF Ranger was seriously injured.

In retaliation to the mortar attack, we launched a raid on the Lig Legato house, a suspected SNA safehouse. The execution of the operation was nearly flawless. However, instead of SNA militia in the building, we found relief workers. The relief workers were set free the following day, but the news of our attack reached the desks of the wire services who immediately accused us of executing a botched plan. TF Ranger was accused by the uninformed media of hitting the wrong target. We did hit the right target, but our intelligence was faulty. The mission was successful in the sense that our execution plan worked.

Over the next two months, TF Ranger conducted five other missions. In each case, TF Ranger proved that its plan was an effective one. On the sixth mission, Osman Atto, Aideed's number one lieutenant and chief financier, was captured while travelling in a vehicle convoy. This mission was viewed as a great success and dealt a severe blow to the SNA.

The Osman Atto mission, although successful, led us to some faulty conclusions. During the mission, Somalis fired multiple rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) at the TF Ranger helicopters. Luckily, none were hit. The prevailing attitude among many members of TF Ranger (myself included) was that RPG fire was ineffective in bringing down helicopters. However, there were several Rangers who felt that it was only a matter of time before one of our helicopters would be hit if we kept them loitering around the target site. Lieutenant James Lechner, the company fire support officer had voiced this opinion on several different occasions. The decision to use helicopters in the target area would eventually prove to be a costly one<sup>2</sup>.

### THE FINAL MISSION

Sunday, October Third started off like any other Sunday in Mogadishu. Sundays were used as a day of rest for TF Ranger. We took a break from our busy six day training schedule to give the soldiers a time to relax and unwind. We were still on call in case we received word of a possible target. I had been a platoon leader in B company for 10 months and was very happy with my platoon's performance in TF Ranger's six previous missions. We were well trained, and I felt that we could accomplish any mission given the right intelligence.

I was playing volleyball with some of my soldiers when I saw my company commander, CPT Mike Steele, head for the Joint Operations Center (JOC). I asked him whether I should alert the other chalk leaders and start alerting the men. He told me to meet him in the JOC with all of the key leaders right away, but not to alert the men

at this point.

I grabbed my platoon sergeant and the other platoon leaders and headed toward the JOC. Along the way, I found Staff Sergeant Charles Elliott, my senior squad leader and told him to be ready to go on alert. When we entered the JOC, the whole room was buzzing with excitement. What was once regarded as a routine tip was turning into solid intelligence. Our intelligence section was in the process of confirming the location of two key members of the SNA.

The situation eventually developed and the probability of an actual mission launch increased. Captain Steele told us to assemble our men and have them standing by. Meanwhile, the decision was made to execute the mission. In the span of twenty minutes, we were briefed on the mission and were provided an aerial photograph of the objective area. Each chalk leader briefed their plan back to the company commander and conferred with their pilot. We then sprinted from the JOC toward the hangar to brief our waiting soldiers.

After I left the JOC, I immediately went to my bunk and told the squad leaders to meet me in the war room in two minutes. The war room was an old office inside the hangar where we stayed which contained a large aerial photograph of Mogadishu. I briefed the entire chalk using the large city photograph and the smaller one I had of the objective area. We then moved out of the hangar area and into our waiting MH-60 Blackhawk.

The crew chief, Staff Sergeant Bill Cleveland handed me my radio headset as soon as I climbed into the helicopter. I donned the headset and conducted a radio check with the pilot and co-pilot, CW4 Ray Frank and CW3 Mike Durant. The rest of my chalk packed in the helicopter and the other crew chief, Sergeant Tommy Field, told the pilots that we were "up" and ready to go.

My platoon had flown with the same crew since our train-up period in Fort Bragg. On many occasions,

we prepared for missions like this only to have them scrubbed at the last minute. We listened intently on our radios for the TF commander to give us the code word for launch.

As we lifted off of the ground, I could hear the screams of excitement from my Rangers over the noise of the Blackhawk's engines. The reconnaissance aircraft began sending situation updates of action around the target area. We had just cleared the Mogadishu airfield when the codeword to begin the assault came over the radio. At that point I knew for sure that we were going in.

About two minutes after hearing the codeword, Mike Durant shouted to me, "We're about one minute out." The crew chief shouted the message out to the rest of the helicopter and the men in the doors prepared the fast ropes.

I could see that we were waiting for the assault force helicopters to clear the area. There was dust everywhere, which made it extremely difficult to see the ground. In the haze, I could see that the assault element was in the objective area. I could see the flashes from the concussion grenades thrown by the assault element and hear the sounds of explosions and bullets flying everywhere.

After what seemed like an eternity, our MH-60 Blackhawk maneuvered into position. The crew chiefs yelled at the men in the door to lower their ropes out of the helicopter. The MH-60 began to empty as my chalk descended one after another down the ropes into an intersection adjacent to the target area. Before I took off my headset, I shouted good luck to the crew and began my descent.

Upon hitting the ground, we immediately moved to find cover. The area was still hazy from the dust kicked up by the rotor wash, but I could hear the sounds of shots snapping overhead. It took a few seconds before I could orient myself. I then spotted my forward observer, and ran to the first covered position available.

After a few seconds, the dust cleared. My squad leaders were already shouting orders to their men and putting them into position. Each squad (about six men) oriented down streets coming in to the intersection. Everybody tried to find as much cover as possible, but the open intersection afforded very little. As I radioed to my company commander, I could see that two of the adjacent chinks were moving into position as well. Each chalk leader radioed to the company commander that they were in position.

Suddenly, I heard a frantic call from the leader of Chalk 4, Staff Sergeant (SSG) Matt Eversman. However, Captain Steele wasn't monitoring his radio. I decided to answer SSG Eversman's call myself. One of his Rangers, Private First Class (PFC) Todd Blackburn had lost control of the fast rope and had fallen from a height of about 60 feet. Blackburn was in critical condition. To complicate matters further, SSG Eversman reported that they were under heavy fire. I tried to calm SSG Eversman down on the radio and told him to seek cover, get the casualty to safety and continue treatment until I could notify CPT Steele.

Meanwhile at my own position, small crowds of people began to form. The crowd was mostly men and women curious to find out who had just landed in their neighborhood. We cleared them out of the way by gesturing and throwing flash bang grenades.

Gradually, the fire around the area began to increase. Shortly after scattering the curiosity seekers, my blocking position began to receive sporadic fire from the south and the west. I diverted my attention from the radio and concentrated on the fight at hand. No one in my chalk could identify exactly where the fire was coming from, but I could see that the AH-6 Little Bird helicopters were engaging targets to the south with their 7.62 caliber miniguns.

The situation became even more intense when a woman stepped out into the street south of our location and began walking toward us with her arms outstretched. Behind the woman was a man with an AK-47 apparently

using her as a human shield. Private First Class (PFC) Heard cried out, "I can see him. Right behind her. He's got an AK (AK-47)." PFC Heard fired a long burst from his M60 machine gun, sending the two Somalis sprawling out into the street.

A couple of minutes later, several children walked out and began pointing out our locations. Not wanting to take any chances, I placed several well aimed shots at the feet of the children and sent them running for cover. Bullets began cracking over our heads from the east and my other M60 Gunner Specialist (SPC) Hawley fired in the general direction of the enemy fire. Another burst of fire impacted mere feet from SPC Hawley, but he still continued to fire at targets down the street.

By this time, almost everyone in my chalk began to engage armed Somalis as they ran out into the streets. Somalis firing RPGs at us and the helicopters overhead from every direction. Out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a woman carrying an RPG across the street about 150 meters away. I pulled up my CAR-15 and fired three rounds. The first shot was behind her but the next two found their mark and the woman fell down in a heap.

Inside the target area the assault element was busy rounding up all of the Somalis inside the target house. The ground reaction element under LTC McKnight linked up with SFC Watson at Chalk 3's position and immediately sent two armored HMMWVs and a cargo HMMWV to Chalk 4's position to evacuate PFC Blackburn. The remainder of the ground reaction force halted along National Street waiting for the assault force to complete their mission.

CPT Steele alerted us over the radio that the prisoners were loading up and that we were to be ready to move to one of the 5 ton trucks for extraction. I looked at my watch, it was around 1630 hours. We had been at the target area for 45 minutes. I began to tell my squad leaders to get ready to move when I heard a loud roar overhead. Forward observer, SGT Mike Goodale shouted, "Sir, a Blackhawk was just shot down." I suddenly

realized that we weren't going anywhere anytime soon.

At this time, our mission changed from a raid to a rescue mission. 1LT Tom Ditomasso could see where the Blackhawk crashed, so he reported the location of the crash and immediately moved his chalk to the site. I briefed the new situation to my squad leaders and moved out a few minutes later with my chalk in the lead, followed by the assault force and my platoon sergeant's chalk bringing up the rear. The ground reaction force followed us initially, but moved along another route toward the crash site as the roads became more and more restricted.

Meanwhile, another helicopter flown by Chief Warrant Officer Mike Durant (the same helicopter that inserted my chalk in the intersection) was sent to the target area from his orbit over the Indian Ocean to provide covering fire. Prior to reaching the target, the helicopter was hit and crashed about a mile from the target area. Large crowds began to form and headed toward the second site. Since our force was already committed to the first crash site and no other forces were available, two snipers, Master Sergeant Gary Gordon and Sergeant First Class Randy Shugart fast roped onto the ground and attempted to secure the helicopter. The two snipers fought valiantly until they ran out of ammunition. They were soon overwhelmed and killed by the angry Somali mob. (Both Gary Gordon and Randy Shugart were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions.)

We had not moved more than a hundred meters when we were subjected to harassment fire from the Somalis. We moved in two columns on each side of the road and leapfrogged from one building to another. Suddenly, there was a loud explosion across the street from where I was walking. When the dust cleared, I became fearful when I saw both SSG Elliott and SGT Williamson rolling around on the ground. SGT Williamson was screaming in pain from a shrapnel wound in his leg. SSG Elliott, who had jumped on Williamson to protect him was unhurt. I sent my medic across the street to work on Williamson with two other soldiers, to help move Williamson back toward the ground reaction force, which was still following us.

We continued to move up the street, but more carefully this time. We travelled a short distance when CPT Steele called me on the radio and told me that I was about 100 meters from the crash site and to turn left (north) at the next intersection. We moved forward until we reached the intersection. We immediately encountered intense enemy fire. We quickly returned fire and continued to move. Somalis with weapons were shooting at us from every direction. It seemed like we had run into a wall of lead. The fire was too intense to merely walk down the street. We began to bound from wall to wall and low crawl to any available cover.

I briefly paused outside a courtyard with Sergeant Goodale and tried to call 1LT Tom Ditomasso on the radio to get him to guide us to his location. He answered me, but I couldn't understand him from all of the firing going on around us. I began to move down the street and as I got up a hail of bullets landed where I had been kneeling. One of those bullets had hit SGT Goodale. He began yelling, "I'm hit! I'm hit!" I looked down, I saw a pool of blood gathering underneath him.

Luckily, Sergeant Goodale's wound didn't seem to be too bad, so I immediately grabbed him under the arms and dragged him into the courtyard. Almost immediately, one of our medics ran into the courtyard and began to administer first aid. I checked with Goodale and made sure that he was going to be alright. The medic assured me that the wound wasn't serious, so I headed out into the street to catch up with my lead element. They I quickly reached their location and spotted American soldiers about a block ahead. I figured that the soldiers were probably from either the CSAR or from Chalk 2. We picked up again and crossed a small alleyway. As the first man crossed the intersection, a large volley of fire came towards him from the east and the west came toward him. Luckily, he was able to dive out of the way, and crawled to safety. The next few people crossed and took up covering positions for the rest of the chalk to cross. I waited for the signal from the man ahead of me and began to sprint across the intersection. I got halfway across the alley when bullets began kicking up dirt around me. The man covering me, CPL James Smith, fired a 40mm high explosive round from his M203 grenade launcher toward the unknown assailant and the firing ceased by the time I crossed the alley.

We were about thirty meters from LT Ditomasso's platoon but I still could not see the downed aircraft. I knew that I had to be close to the helicopter, so I radioed CPT Steele and told him that we were linked up at the crash site. (In fact, the helicopter was around the corner of an alley about ten meters away.) SSG Boorn and SSG Elliott began to position their men to secure the western portion of the perimeter around the aircraft.

The volume of fire seemed to increase every minute that we were there. The Somalis began volley firing RPGs at our locations and bullets began to ricochet off of the walls over our heads. My M60 and M249 machine gunners were engaging targets of opportunity and met with some success. The moment any Somali with a weapon would pop out, they were immediately cut down in a hail of bullets. Our M203 grenade launchers were also very effective in neutralizing Somalis firing at us from building windows. Despite numerous by the Somalis to overrun is, we were effective in stopping wave after wave of SNA gunmen.

I found cover in the street behind some stairs leading into a small courtyard. CPL Smith was just ahead of me behind a tin shack. All of a sudden, I heard the sound of bullets as they cracked over my head and slammed into the wall. I peered around the steps and fired my CAR-15 at a group of Somalis about 150 meters away who were firing at my location. I couldn't get a good shot at the Somalis from where I was, so I moved a few feet toward Corporal Smith and began to tell him to lob a few high explosive M203 rounds at them. Suddenly, another burst of enemy fire landed all around us, and Corporal Smith began howling in pain. I yelled at the men behind me to help me move Corporal Smith and that I needed a medic immediately.

We dragged Corporal Smith up the stairs where I was taking cover moments before and moved him into a small courtyard. A medic arrived at my location almost immediately and began to treat Smith. I radioed to Cpt Steele that I had another casualty and was down to 10 men out of 13. I left the courtyard and ran into SSG Elliott. I told him that Smith was hit and that a medic was working on him in the courtyard behind me. At that moment, another burst of machine gun fire landed directly between us. I will never forget the little conversation between

myself and SSG Elliott.

SSG Elliott said, "Uh, sir, I think that it would be a pretty good idea if we go into that courtyard."

The only reply that I could think of at the time was, "Do you really think so?"

SSG Elliott answered my reply by grabbing me by the arm and we both dove into the courtyard. The medic was frantically working on Corporal Smith. Smith had two IVs running out of his arms and another soldier had two hands buried in Smith's inner right thigh attempting to stop the bleeding. Smith wasn't doing too well. A bullet had severed Smith's femoral artery and the wound was too high on the leg to put on a tourniquet. The only way to stop the bleeding was by direct pressure. I informed my commander about the seriousness of the situation and moved to the entrance of the courtyard to see how my soldiers were doing on the other side of the street.

By this time, we were receiving extremely heavy fire from the north and the west. I watched helplessly from across the street as four more of my soldiers were wounded within four minutes. They were all pulled to safety into a courtyard directly across the street from my location. I then radioed CPT Steele and informed him that I had two critically wounded soldiers and only three able bodies left in my chalk including, myself.

CPT Steele then told me that we had become separated from the ground reaction force and that they were unable to find our location. To make matters worse, the ground reaction force was also under heavy fire and breaking contact to bring their wounded and the prisoners back to the airfield. I looked down at my watch, it was 1730 hours. We had been on the ground for two hours and it was getting dark fast.

As my chalk and the forces following me attempted to secure the western portion of the crash site, Chalk 2 and the CSAR team were frantically attempting to pull out the pilots of the MH-60. The frame of the helicopter

collapsed around the pilots, leaving their bodies stuck inside. The pilots had probably died on impact. The rest of the crew survived the impact and assisted the efforts in recovering the bodies of the pilots. To protect themselves from the bullets and shrapnel of RPG rounds flying through the alley, Sergeant John Belman with the help from others, pulled up the kevlar blankets on the floor of the helicopter and used them as shields. After much effort, the body of Chief Warrant Officer Donovan Briley was pulled free. The other pilot, Chief Warrant Officer Clifton Wolcott still remained in the aircraft and couldn't be pulled free of the wreckage.

The Rangers continued to try pull the body of Clifton Wolcott free. Chalk 2 and the CSAR team's began to suffer casualties to the extent that 1LT Ditomasso decided to move what was left of his element and the CSAR team to a building adjacent to the courtyard where I was. 1LT Ditomasso reported his situation to CPT Steele over the radio and began the task of posting security around his position and the treatment of casualties as darkness spread over Mogadishu<sup>3</sup>.

Back at my position, Corporal Smith's situation was not getting any better. He was losing blood at an alarming pace. We were running critically short of IVs and I realized that Corporal Smith would die if he wasn't evacuated immediately. I requested for a MEDEVAC on three separate occasions, but each time I was denied. The reason for the denial was that the enemy fire at the objective area was too great and that three helicopters had already been shot down or damaged beyond repair. All we could do was pull security from our location and wait for the relief force to eventually arrive. A Blackhawk resupplied us with ammunition and IVs at 1900 hours ensuring our ability to fight throughout the night. As it hovered over my position, I could see bullets from Somali gunmen hitting the large aircraft. All I could think of at the time was that the helicopter was going to crash right on top of me.

Despite the attempt to keep my soldier alive, Corporal Smith died at 2027 hours. Fortunately, all my other casualties were stable thanks to the work of our medics and combat lifesavers. I informed Captain Steele that

on the way. I could hear heavy fighting in the distance. Several hours passed and a large volume of fire seemed to be moving closer and closer to our location. I began to see tracer fire ricochet off of buildings to our south and hear the loud booming noise of a tank's main gun.

At 0155 hours, the relief force linked up with us at CPT Steele's position. Malaysian APCs stopped at our location and soldiers from the QRF secured the perimeter. SSG Elliott and I helped load our casualties on an APC. I then moved with the two remaining men from my chalk to link up with Chalk 3 and the remainder of my platoon. When I reached SFC Watson I was shocked to find out that out only seventeen of my rangers out of twenty six were remaining. Eight of my Rangers had been wounded and one killed in action.

What was left of my platoon sat inside a building while the relief force secured the area and attempted to pull Clifton Wolcott's body out of the helicopter. It took some time, but the body was pulled free of the wreckage at 0530.

Ten minutes later, our force began to withdraw on foot. AH-1 Cobras and our AH-6 Little Birds began to strafe the streets parallel to us. The whole force moved from building to building, using doorways and the APCs for cover. Each time a Ranger would reach an alleyway, he would fire down it while another Ranger would leapfrog around him.

We continued travelling down the street for about a half mile until we reached a section of road blocked off by a Pakistani tank. Waiting for us were approximately five HMMWVs and three APCs. We packed into these vehicles as best we could and moved about five miles to a large soccer stadium which had turned into a large aid station. Our fifteen hour ordeal was finally over.

Corporal Smith was dead and that my other casualties were stable.

By this time, all of our forces were secure in four different locations near the crash site. We ensured that every alleyway leading to our positions was covered by someone and I felt fairly confident that we could hold out until some form of relief force could arrive to get us and help pull Chief Wolcott's body out.

Adding to our security, the AH-6 Little Bird helicopters circled overhead constantly, firing their 2.75 inch rockets and 7.62 caliber miniguns at enemy positions all around us. The Little Birds fired at targets as close as 25 meters from our positions. On several occasions the fire was so close that the brass from spent 7.62mm cartridges bounced off my kevlar helmet and the concussion of the exploding rockets shoved my body against the wall. In my opinion, the AH-6 Little Birds kept us from being overrun.

The Somalis became bold when the Little Birds had to leave to refuel and rearm. But we would cut them down the minute they came near our positions. The Somalis were not trained to fight at night and several times they walked towards our perimeter into the open. Time and time again they were cut down in a hail of bullets.

Back at the airfield, the commander of TF Ranger realized that a relief force with armored support was needed to punch through the enemy roadblocks around our position. A relief force consisting of the remainder of the ground reaction force, the quick reaction force (QRF) from the 10th Mountain Division ( 2-14th Infantry), two companies of Malaysian Armored Personnel Carriers (APC), and Pakistani tanks. The mission of this ad hoc task force was to recover our force and to recover anyone left at the second helicopter crash site. The ground reaction force and the QRF departed the airfield at 2130 hours and linked up with the Malaysians and the Pakistanis at the New Port at 2200 hours. Final coordination was made and the entire relief force departed at 2323 hours.

Back at the crash site, I was relieved to hear that the relief force was enroute. Word spread that help was

## ANALYSIS

In the days and months following this deployment, I have had a lot of time to reflect on the battle on 3-4 October and the events leading up to it. The plan to rehearse a plan based of a generic template enabled us to plan and execute quickly. Despite the rough start that my platoon had during the train up period, I feel that the soldiers were able to quickly adapt. My rangers were able to understand the fluid nature of the operation and react quickly to changing situations.

I should take a moment at this time to point out that the battle was fought at an individual level. Fighting in urban (MOUT) terrain is hard to command and control and is very decentralized. The training done prior to the conflict and individual soldier discipline is what carries the day. I feel that my noncommissioned officers were directly responsible for our success in this area.

The operation was not without problems. As evidenced in all of our operations, our intelligence was not perfect. For example, I really didn't have any idea that the SNA actually had that many RPGs at their disposal.

The battle of 3-4 October was a tactical success. TF Ranger captured exactly who we wanted in the target area and turned them over to the United Nations. The mission changed from a raid to a rescue mission once the first helicopter was shot down. The men of Task Force Ranger fought tenaciously for fifteen hours because they refused to let an American fall into the hands of the enemy. The courageous actions by the men of Task Force Ranger enabled them to accomplish their mission and prevent a massacre during "The Battle of the Black Sea."

NOTES

1. Akinson, Rick. "The Raid That Went Wrong; How an Elite U.S. Force Failed in Somalia," The Washington Post. January 30, 1993. pp. 1
2. Lechner, James. Interview. 27 August 1994.
3. Ditomasso, Tomas. Interview. 13 August 1994.

Atkinson, Rick. "Firefight in Mogadishu: The Last Mission of Task Force Ranger", The Washington Post: 30-31  
January 1994.

This is the best account of the action of 3-4 October that I have read so far. Rick Atkinson interviewed many members of Task Force Ranger as well as the Somali militia for this article. He even walked the actual battleground in December 1993 to get an actual feel for the battle. This article helps me keep the battle in the proper perspective.

Ditomasso, Thomas. Interview. August 13, 1994.

Cpt Ditomasso was a platoon leader with me who served in Somalia. He was at the crash site itself and offered insight into what his element was doing and what the combat search and rescue team was doing during the battle. During the interview, we discussed at length about the problems encountered during the train-up period.

Lechner, James. Interview. August 27, 1994.

Cpt Lechner was the fire support for B Company during its deployment to Somalia. He provided me with good insights on the crash of Mike Durant's Helicopter. He was also very helpful in clarifying the use of fire support.

by Mike Keefe for USA Today

FIG A.



FIG A. -AN EDITORIAL COMIC published in the USA TODAY after Task Force Ranger's initial mission.

FIG B.

FIG B. Shot taken during an overflight of Mogadishu. Note the narrow streets making the city a difficult place to land a helicopter



