

CAPTAIN STEPHEN MICHAEL

The 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, was alerted on 1 December 1992 and deployed to Somalia two weeks later, in support of the United Nations humanitarian effort in that nation. The immediate reaction company, reinforced with the TOW platoon, had deployed seven days ahead of the main body.

In Somalia, the battalion task force was involved in operations other than war, which included both combat and humanitarian missions. The task force had to be flexible enough to shift rapidly from one mission to another, or to conduct both missions simultaneously. Success required a large, well-coordinated logistic effort and logisticians who were capable of initiative and versatility. As task force S-4, I was responsible for the battalion's logistics planning and execution.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Somalia in 1991, organized government, law and order, and the existing social

structure had been totally destroyed. The Somalis' ability to survive was based on their ability to exert power over one another. Consequently, the local war lords and petty bandits were the ruling force. The Somali people were virtually hostages in their own land. Bandits controlled the distribution of food and other necessities of life, and thousands of Somalis perished from disease, hunger, or violence.

Initially, the mission of the UN force was to provide security and humanitarian aid. Security involved restricting the movement of the bandits, securing the towns, and returning the cities to the control of the elders. In addition, it included securing the ports and clearing and establishing food routes. The humanitarian effort involved getting the food to the people and providing a secure environment in which the humanitarian agencies could operate. The task force was responsible for the 400 square kilometers of the entire lower

Shebelle region, along Somalia's eastern coast.

At the outset, the task force was stationed in Baledogle and for 30 days was the only Army infantry unit in the country. Later the 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry, one of our sister battalions, deployed to Kismayu in southern Somalia.

At Baledogle, our task force was the UN's major force projection unit. Our chief missions were site security, convoy security, and quick reaction. Within the first two weeks, one of our first missions involved securing the Belet Weynen air strip to the north so the Canadians could fly in C130s to establish their base of operations in that sector.

With the arrival of a UN military presence, the bandits went into hiding, with some of their elements pushing farther south and west toward Ethiopia. Our mission then shifted toward bandit interdiction.

In late December, the task force was informed of heavy bandit activity in the major port facility at Marka. Apparently, the bandits had seized the port and were intercepting humanitarian relief supplies. As a result, most of the supplies that came into the city never found their way to the people. Our task force conducted an air assault into Marka, seized the port, and reestablished the flow of humanitarian supplies. The air assault was conducted on 30 December with two companies and a combat service support (CSS) tail on a mission of three to seven days. After we were on the ground and had assessed the situation, it appeared very grave. Marka was a bandit stronghold, one that spread throughout the lower Shebelle region.

Accomplishing the mission in Marka would require a protracted military presence. The task force seized the port and established the "Four Nos": No visible weapons; no technicals (armed Somali vehicles); no Somali road blocks; and no crew-served weapons in the entire area.

With the port under military control, humanitarian supplies were once again able to flow freely to the regional kitchens and humanitarian centers. To facilitate this flow of supplies, we also provided convoy and route security.

As the situation evolved, it became apparent that Marka would be a permanent site for the task force while it was in Somalia. From Marka, the task force could affect the surrounding area and, being centrally located, could also react to changing situations in the north toward Mogadishu and in the south toward Kismayu.

From Marka, the task force area of responsibility extended into the entire lower Shebelle region. To maintain an active presence, units ran continuous missions into the outlying areas. The intelligence we received showed that most of the small villages were under bandit control. Consequently, the task force would conduct cordon and search missions, sweeping through from house to house, enforcing the Four Nos.

In addition, with the help of an attached Special Forces civil affairs team, the task force worked with the villages in setting up a local government and police force. Once stability was achieved at a village, the battalion would move on to other villages and return periodically for a show of force. Twice, it responded to the situation in Kismayu, traveling more than 800 kilometers round trip, to curtail rampant bandit

activity and clan fighting.

The battalion remained at Marka, restoring stability and hope for the entire lower Shebelle Region, until it returned home on 15 April, after four months in Somalia.

Accomplishing all of these tasks required flexibility and imagination on the part of the logisticians. Initially, my concerns involved sustaining the force in its two diverse modes of operation—combat and humanitarian assistance. The battalion was simultaneously conducting cordon and searches, raids, ambushes, convoy security, port security, site security, security patrol, and home base support. Moreover, I had to ensure that the unit's supply, medical, and maintenance needs were met. As the mission extended, quality of life for the soldiers became increasingly important.

To support all of this adequately, we operated in many different ways. Initially, we had the combat trains forward and the field trains in the rear with the brigade support area. Later, we used the unit trains concept and, after the area was relatively secure, brought elements of the forward support battalion (FSB) to our location.

Before the Army logistic system (corps support) was fully in place, we coordinated directly with the Marine Corps task force in Mogadishu for all support. To perform the required missions, we had to request certain assets not normally found in a light battalion. Attached to the task force were two reverse osmosis water purification units (ROWPUs) with crews for water supply. We also requested and received additional water and fuel storage assets; two additional truck platoons; dedicated UH-60 Black Hawk logistic support; a chemical platoon for showers; and, on various occasions, an engineer company for construction and quality of life projects.

In Baledogle for the latter half of December 1992, the task force used the unit trains concept. At this stage, all of our support came from the Marines in Mogadishu. The 10th Mountain Division's FSB convoyed to Mogadishu daily for resupply. At times, to spur the system, I organized CSS convoys to establish a relationship with the Marines in Mogadishu.

This period was marked by disorganization. The Marines' logistical systems were not designed to support Army units, and the process was painstakingly slow. Initially, our main concerns were food, water, fuel, and medical supplies. Because of the unsanitary environment, hot food was not authorized, and MREs (meals, ready to eat) were the main issue. In the early stages of our deployment, our water came from Marine ROWPUs, but it was used for personnel hygiene and direct consumption only. Showers were not authorized.

As the battalion field ordering officer, I entered into contracts with local Somalis for manual labor around the base camp and for interpreters. The laborers, supervised by the Command Sergeant Major, helped clean, clear, and improve the battalion area, which freed the soldiers to concentrate on the mission. Interpreters were used to help the maneuver elements in their direct dealings with the Somalis.

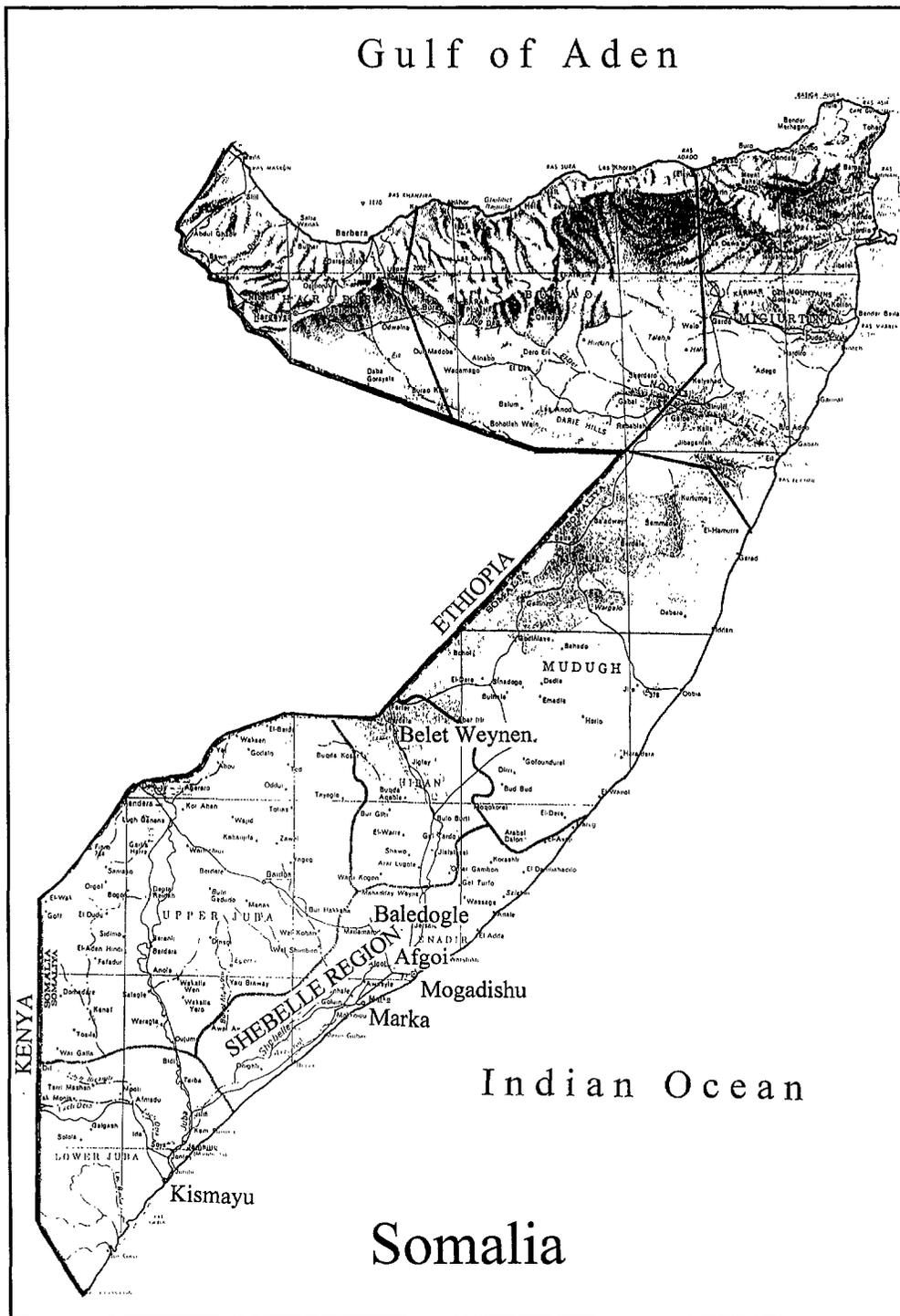
No Self Service Supply Center (SSSC) items were available (we had deployed with a 15-day supply); we obtained

JP-4 fuel and motor gasoline (MOGAS) directly through the Marines at Baledogle; full Division Ready Force (DRF-1) combat load at FSB; a 15-day supply of Class VIII, on hand; tires and inner tubes for our high mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) became a problem. The only Class IX we had was what we could scrounge.

In early January 1993, I had the combat trains forward at Marka, while the S-4 NCO in charge ran the field trains at Baledogle. To support our operations in Marka, in addition to our internal assets, we deployed with a truck platoon and tank petroleum unit (TPU) from the FSB and two additional

water trailers we had acquired from the Marines.

At Baledogle the S-4 NCOIC coordinated daily with the brigade S-4 and the FSB's support operations officer, passing on my concerns and needs at Marka. The headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) commander was forward as a separate maneuver commander with the TOW, mortar, scout, engineer, and air defense artillery platoons task organized under him. Having the HHC commander in this role gave the battalion task force more flexibility in dealing with convoy and convoy security operations. In addition, because of their mobility, the HHC elements were well suited for the cordon



portion of the battalion's cordon and search operations.

At this point, all supplies were being flown in by Black Hawk helicopters, which were also used to evacuate non-mission capable vehicles for third-echelon maintenance at Baledogle. The S-4 NCOIC pushed forward the available supplies on the logistics helicopter once a day and came forward personally once a week.

At this point, we also began convoying independently to Mogadishu to try to establish a direct-support relationship with the Marines. The support we received from them augmented what we received from Baledogle.

We still had no showers, no SSSC, and no Class IV (except for the limited wire and plywood we had brought from Fort Drum). JP-4 and MOGAS were obtained through our convoys to Mogadishu; the unit level logistics system (ULLS) was still not in place; and we still had to scrounge for the Class IX.

During the last two weeks at Marka, our convoys to Mogadishu met with some success, and we were able to get some milk and fruit. The convoys, along with our daily logistics helicopters, allowed us to maintain a green status in our critical classes of supply—I, III, VIII, and IX.

For equipment requiring third-echelon maintenance, the company executive officers (XOs) flew back to the FSB at Baledogle. For vehicle maintenance, we had two options—if the needed part was available, we flew the contact team with the part forward to Marka to do the repairs; when this was not feasible, we sent the vehicle back for repair.

The logistic system still needed a jump start; I had to make numerous trips to Mogadishu, still relying mostly on the Marines. The 548th Army Corps Support was coming on line, but a lot of their assets were still on the way.

My contracting efforts at this stage were aimed at getting interpreters for the battalion and supplies (such as limited amounts of Class IV) that were difficult to get through the system but could be found locally. Interpreters contributed to the battalion effort by enabling the maneuver elements to communicate with the local populace. They were a valuable source of intelligence as well.

I also planned and coordinated logistic support for combat operations in sector, as units now conducted daily separate company and platoon missions geared toward bandit interdiction and convoy and route security. Each separate element that deployed was supplied with a CSS package intended to last for the duration of the mission. A UH-60 was on strip alert for medical evacuation and emergency resupply. The logistic package usually required five-ton trucks to move the unit, water, food, and ammunition. Communication was usually through retransmission or multichannel tactical satellite.

On 30 January the battalion conducted a three-day cordon and search mission on the town of Afgoi. The cordon element, along with the combat trains, moved by ground, while the search elements conducted an air assault. To support this operation, the combat trains split, leaving a small element at Marka and pushing forward its major support. The support platoon leader operated forward, while the HHC XO and the assistant S-4 NCOIC remained at Marka to ensure an open

supply line. Since Afgoi was about 20 kilometers from Mogadishu, we were resupplied directly by corps.

The supply situation was much the same, except for Classes II, V, and VIII. SSSC supply was now critical. Combat load was at the companies and emergency resupply at combat trains. Full DRF-1 combat load was at the FSB in Baledogle. At this point, M203, 60mm, and 81mm illumination rounds were being expended daily, but only a limited amount of small arms ammunition. Class VIII resupply was now available through the medical company at Mogadishu.

Corps support in Marka became operational during February. A captain from the 548th Corps Support made direct contact with me, and we decided to by-pass the FSB at Baledogle and deal directly with corps. This plan was more feasible because of our location some 70 kilometers south of Mogadishu. For two more weeks, we convoyed to Mogadishu for supplies; later, corps began pushing them to us every four days.

Around this time, the Army contractors visited our base camp at Marka. They proposed a plan to attach a civilian contracting firm to our base camp to help us coordinate such key services as laundry and waste and garbage disposal with the local people. We were notified that this plan could be in effect within 30 days.

For the first two weeks in February, most of the battalion was away from Marka, moving through the entire lower Shebelle region, conducting cordon and search missions at all the major cities. Although the battalion was forward, security operations at the Marka port and the surrounding area still had to be maintained.

We supported this operation as we had the January cordon and search of Afgoi, with the field trains still in Baledogle, while the support platoon leader, the HHC XO, and the assistant S-4 NCOIC remained at Marka. The support platoon leader ran the daily logistical package forward and maintained the forward elements. This mission forced us to operate on two fronts, but with careful planning and execution we were successful. We traveled more than 800 kilometers during this operation.

At this point, plans were also being made to improve the quality of life at Marka. A construction company from the 43d Engineer Battalion at Fort Benning was tasked to accomplish this mission. The plan included building latrines around the camp, roofs over the existing buildings on the base camp, an electrical grid with lights, a gravel pit and sanitary facilities for mobile kitchen trailer operations, a running track around the base camp (protected by triple strand concertina), a mess hall, a battalion recreation room, a post exchange, and volleyball courts. In addition to improving the soldiers' quality of life, the intent was to make the base camp suitable for possible handover to allied forces at a later date. These improvements were therefore a high priority, and the resources were made available to the engineers. In addition to engineer construction efforts, a chemical platoon was attached to establish proper shower facilities by the end of the month.

About three days after returning from our two-week mis-

sion in the lower Shebelle region, we were alerted to growing unrest in Kismayu. There were reports of vicious clan fighting and bandit activity. The Belgian and U.S. Army forces in the area were unable to handle the situation and needed reinforcements. To move the entire battalion task force by ground, I requested and received 20 additional M923 trucks with a maintenance contact team. I also received an additional TPU and wrecker from brigade. Within 36 hours after we were alerted, the battalion had moved 400 kilometers and was in Kismayu. By this point, the entire field trains were at Kismayu, with only a small logistic tail, headed by the S-4 NCOIC, remaining at Marka. We deployed with enough supplies for three days, and corps resupply would be pushed straight from Mogadishu.

Over a four-day period, the maneuver elements were involved in fire fights and skirmishes with bandits and rioting clans. The aid station was split to support the maneuver elements. The medics were overwhelmed by the number of wounded Somalis, most of them victims of clan fighting. Seven days later, we made the return trip to Marka. No vehicles were lost during the mission, and when we returned from Kismayu, we were happy to learn that hot showers were finally available.

Since the entire field trains were now once again at Bale-dogle, I asked to have a third-echelon maintenance team with wrecker permanently at Marka. I also requested and received a 20,000-gallon water blivet and a purification unit to support our water requirements. The construction progressed smoothly; it would have been finished except for the lack of supplies in country. The contractor's waste and garbage disposal services were now in place, and the standard interpreters attached to the companies were paid through the contractor. The intent was to reduce the contracting burden on the unit and to provide some additional services.

Some Class IV supplies were available for construction, along with some wire. Class VI sundry packs were available at the rate of one per platoon every 15 days, and even HMMWV tires and tubes were now in the system.

In Marka, from 1 March to 15 April 1993, the system was still unresponsive to certain supplies, such as SSSC. In addition, the battalion commander wanted some recreational and comfort items to improve the soldiers' morale and quality of life. Initially, I requested these items through brigade to division contracting, but received no satisfactory response. Consequently, the battalion commander decided that I should personally travel to Mombasa.

Division policy stated that no individual field ordering officer was authorized to travel outside of Somalia for local purchasing for units in Somalia; a Marine Corps team in Mombasa was to take care of these supplies. Centralized control had its merits, but for the units on the receiving end the system was too slow to be effective.

To bypass this loop, the brigade commander made a personal trip to Mombasa with me and the assistant brigade S-3 to link us up with the Marine team. A week later, we returned with five refrigerators, a 30-day SSSC supply, board games,

footballs, volleyballs, a facsimile (FAX) machine, a video camcorder, and some construction tools. The FAX was needed to expedite communications with higher headquarters, and the camcorder proved invaluable for reconnaissance efforts.

About two days after my return from Kenya, the battalion received a mission to return to Kismayu, where there were new reports of vicious clan fighting and bandit activity. The 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry—the 10th Division unit in Kismayu—had already returned to the United States, and the Belgians were the only forces on the ground.

This time, the main body air-assaulted in, and the CSS elements made the 400-kilometer trip by ground. Once again, with additional military presence, stability was reestablished in Kismayu. Logistically, the operation was handled exactly as it had been the first time—no changes, no major problems. Upon returning from Kismayu, we were glad to hear that the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry, would be on the ground in about two weeks to execute property sign-over and a complete relief in place. On 15 April, after four months in Somalia, we returned home.

In Somalia, we had to be flexible enough to shift rapidly from one mode of operation to the other, or to operate in both modes at the same time. Success required a huge, well-coordinated logistic effort and initiative and versatility on the part of the logisticians. The task force was indeed successful, and the following key observations stand out in my mind as a result of that experience:

Future joint training exercises should include and stress logistic involvement between services, which would give us an opportunity to work through some of our compatibility problems while taking full advantage of our similarities. In addition, in deploying an FSB with a light brigade, careful thought needs to go into the number of airframes allocated to the FSB for deployment. The FSB needs to be able to deploy with enough assets to support the brigade immediately. In this particular case, due to the number of available aircraft, most of the FSB's CSS assets deployed by ship.

The ability to enter into contracts and to conduct local purchasing proved invaluable in Somalia. This is a critical asset to S-4s, and in it we have a glimpse of an established system that is worth a great deal.

The use of the HHC commander as a separate maneuver commander proved highly effective. As the battalion S-4, I was opposed to the idea at first, but with an experienced S-4 NCOIC at the field trains, having another separate maneuver commander gave the battalion task force more flexibility in dealing with a constantly changing situation.

Finally, being involved in Operation RESCUE HOPE was a valuable experience for the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry. We were there, and we made a difference.

Captain Stephen Michael, in addition to serving as S-4 in the 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry, also led a line platoon and a mortar platoon and served as executive officer. He is now assigned to the Columbus Recruiting Battalion, in Columbus, Ohio. He is a 1988 graduate of the United States Military Academy.
