



OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA CHANGING THE LIGHT INFANTRY TRAINING FOCUS

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Earlier this year, the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, deployed from Fort Drum, New York, to Somalia to conduct security operations as part of a United Nations effort. The U.N. had intervened to gain control of the population and food distribution assets to prevent widespread starvation. The major problem was that Somalia did not have a centralized government; instead, it had various "warlords," none of whom controlled enough of the resources to ensure stability.

To stabilize an area such as this—according to Field Manual 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion*—a commander must control both the people and the resources that are valuable to them. In this case, the resources that contributed to feeding the people consisted of seaports, food storage warehouses, field kitchens, food distribution centers, and the roads on which the food convoys traveled.

Initially, our battalion was responsible for a large sector in

which we conducted critical site security at the port of Marka, escorted the food convoys of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and secured checkpoints and roadblocks. We responded to security threats throughout the sector and ensured that critical relief supplies reached the food distribution centers. Later, we would become the theater's quick-reaction force based in the city of Mogadishu.

These first operations in Somalia were totally new to the battalion; they provided us with our first opportunity to execute real-world contingency combat operations. We conducted peace enforcement operations within the spectrum of low-intensity conflict and found that our training back at Fort Drum had not fully prepared us for the realities of a peacetime contingency operation. This deployment involved us simultaneously in security missions and offensive operations.

Our experiences raised certain questions about our training programs. One of these questions concerned the development

of scenarios at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), because it was these scenarios that had determined our training focus, which was on operations in low- to mid-intensity conflicts. Clearly, we needed to reconsider our mission essential task lists (METLs) so we would be better prepared for future contingency operations. And the same is probably true of other light infantry battalions as well.

Although Somalia was a low-threat environment, the bandits, clans, and civilians in general presented us with a wide range of situations—from providing medical assistance and security for food distribution centers to potentially dangerous urban house-to-house clearing operations.

Initially, it was easier for us to deal with the most dangerous of these missions—entering and clearing a room or knocking out a bunker—because these were battle-focused tasks in which we had trained extensively. It was considerably harder for us to handle the low-threat tasks of running a checkpoint or securing a seaport, because these tasks involved dealing with various types of civilians in ways we had not encountered in training.

Our combat infantry soldiers had to deal with civilian crowds that could turn into unruly mobs at any moment. In such situations, they had to use less force and more persuasion to maintain control. For example, they had to keep Somali women and children from stealing cartons of cooking oil from the food transfer points. Such attempts to keep people from interfering with the assistance efforts required both firmness and compassion.

In our follow-on mission as quick-reaction force out of Mogadishu, the overall mission was to ensure that a system was set up to get the food and medical supplies to the people. The civilian NGOs were responsible for the system, while the military units were responsible for security. Our combat infantry soldiers now faced a requirement to enforce security measures while also trying to convince Somali civilians of their good intentions, and this required diplomacy.

Providing security was not a major problem, because the battalion had conducted extensive squad and platoon training the previous year. The focus of this training was on such battle drills as conducting a squad attack, reacting to contact, and knocking out a bunker. As a result, the units had the basic building blocks for tougher tasks, but these tougher tasks were not the complex collective tasks normally associated with infantry training. Instead, they often involved controlling a volatile crowd or reacting to a sniper in a group of women and children.

In these situations, the measure of success was not the volume and accuracy of fire but the discipline, control, and level-headed thinking the soldiers displayed. Fortunately, our earlier training at Fort Drum had given our soldiers the confidence they needed to deal with stressful situations without overreacting.

Another factor that contributed to the battalion's success was a firm understanding of the commander's intent. That intent was simple and unchanging: Protect the force, and enforce the four *Nos*. These two simple statements appeared in every commander's intent in every operation order, and they greatly improved the performance of the soldiers and allowed them the flexibility they needed to deal with unexpected situations.

To protect the force and preserve the available manpower for operations, every leader strictly enforced the wearing of flak jackets and helmets and inspected to make sure the soldiers complied with the rules of sanitation. And everyone knew the four *Nos*: No technicals (armed Somali vehicles) or weapons, no banditry, no Somali roadblocks, and no looting.

In our role as the quick-reaction force, we were prepared to reinforce coalition units that needed help in their areas of responsibility. This occurred several times, but our first two operations were especially significant: Reinforcing a Belgian battalion in Kismayu and conducting combined operations with the Pakistanis in Mogadishu.

The first of these operations required that we deploy over



200 miles by C130 and UH-60 aircraft and five-ton trucks. A Somali warlord had attacked the city of Kismayu with the intent of recapturing it from an opposing warlord. The Belgians blocked several hundred militiamen who were trying to infiltrate the city at night. About 70 Somalis were killed and an unknown number wounded, and one Belgian soldier was wounded.

Our force was to conduct a search and attack operation in the area immediately outside the city. The concept of operation included locating any militiamen who might be contemplating another assault. This operation ended without any contact.

The U.N. headquarters then tasked us to relieve the Belgians in providing security in the city. The Belgians moved out of the city to conduct security operations in the northern part of their area of operation. As a result, we had to pick up responsibility for the NGOs and ensure continued stability in the streets of Kismayu.

This part of the operation was not without problems. The company commanders were faced with a mission of operating on urban terrain without much preparation time. Patrolling unfamiliar streets was a challenge in itself, and providing security for the civilians operating the relief efforts required the best from our soldiers and small-unit leaders. During this ten-day operation, we conducted cordon and search missions in an urban environment—patrols, roadblocks, checkpoints, and civilian disturbance control—requiring a high degree of flexibility and discipline among the soldiers and leaders. This operation emphasized mission-type orders, a firm understanding of the commander's intent, and a restraint of combat power to prevent undue civilian casualties.

The challenges we faced in Kismayu led us to shift our training focus. Since the United Nations headquarters required that only one rifle company be immediately available for reaction, we developed a training cycle that allowed one company each week to focus strictly on training.

After analyzing the actual missions required in peace enforcement operations, the commanders revised their METLs to show the following:

- Conduct a cordon and search.
- Assault a built-up area.
- Conduct an air assault.
- Establish a roadblock/checkpoint.
- Reconnoiter.
- Conduct a movement to contact/hasty attack.
- Conduct convoy operations.

Again, the battalion focused on training scenarios that involved civilians and unclear situations. They used helicopters to a great degree and conducted live fire assaults to prepare for an eventual call-out to help another coalition force.

Our second significant operation involved helping the Pakistanis in Mogadishu clear a warlord's headquarters and unauthorized weapon strongpoints. This operation required that the battalion react quickly, work with a coalition force, and execute several other tasks as well. The battalion operated in a MOUT environment, executed a cordon and search, patrolled streets, and set up roadblocks and checkpoints. This

operation also required platoons to react to snipers and clear pockets of resistance.

In both operations, rifle companies and platoons executed missions with varying degrees of difficulty. The missions succeeded, but only after much concern and preparation.

Peace enforcement operations of the future are likely to be similar to those we faced—such operations as protecting the force, enforcing arms restrictions, knowing detailed rules of engagement in dealing with civilians, and ensuring that humanitarian relief efforts are secured. To meet those needs, we will have to have forces available that can quickly respond to emergencies or requests for reinforcements. The very nature of protecting the force and responding quickly will require us to reshape our METLs and the way we train on them.

In Somalia, we operated in a role of populace and resource control, conducting both security and offensive operations simultaneously. The typical light infantry evaluation scenario, however, takes a battalion from a low-intensity conflict to a conventional fight. Typical scenarios involve such training tasks as search and attack, defend, and infiltration attack. Although these are important missions, other tasks will be more in line with future operations—conducting cordon and search, operating in an urban environment, providing security for critical sites and NGOs, with the emphasis on rules of engagement and force protection. These missions will place great emphasis on dealing with civilians, processing prisoners, confiscating weapons, and attacking strongpoints within a built-up area.

We incorporated the tactical lessons we had learned in the first months of the deployment into our subsequent operations. I believe the light infantry training tasks we practice in our Army also need to change to reflect what we actually do. Instead of focusing on search and attack operations, we should train on peace enforcement operations that present a wide range of situations requiring leaders to think and solve difficult problems. This training would involve them in operations around cities, along roads, and in isolated areas where base camps might be located. We need to develop operational or evaluation scenarios that require units to secure populated areas and control resources. In these scenarios, units would use minimum force but would also be flexible enough to react strongly to armed aggression.

Training programs that focus on fundamental battle drills are right on target. When it comes to instilling confidence in soldiers, there is no substitute for realistic live fire training. But peace enforcement scenarios in low-intensity conflict are the ones we are most likely to face in future operations, and we must be ready to meet this challenge.

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