



# MOGADISHU, OCTOBER 1993: A Company XO's Notes on Lessons Learned

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the second in a two-part series on one battalion's operations in Somalia, which culminated in its breakthrough to Task Force Ranger on 3-4 October 1993. The first part, "Mogadishu, October 1993: Personal Account of a Rifle Company XO," was featured in INFANTRY's September-October 1994 issue. This second*

*article details the lessons learned during those operations, from Captain Ferry's perspective as XO of Company A.*

In the summer of 1993, the United States' only combat force in Somalia was the quick reaction force (QRF)—made up of one light infantry battalion, one attack and assault heli-

copter battalion, and a brigade headquarters. My battalion, the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, assumed the infantry battalion QRF mission on 1 August, and Task Force Ranger deployed to Somalia at the end of August.

By the end of September, every company in our battalion had been involved in several sustained firefights with Somali guerrillas and had suffered casualties. The culminating battle for the battalion was a breakthrough to the embattled Task Force Ranger on 3-4 October. For my company, this was a nine-hour battle in which we led the battalion attack into the surrounded Rangers' position, assisted in evacuating all casualties, and fought back out the following morning under continuous enemy small arms, RPG, and mortar fire.

During combat operations in this five-month period, I learned many lessons that I want to share with other units. These lessons apply specifically at company level and below:

### Leadership

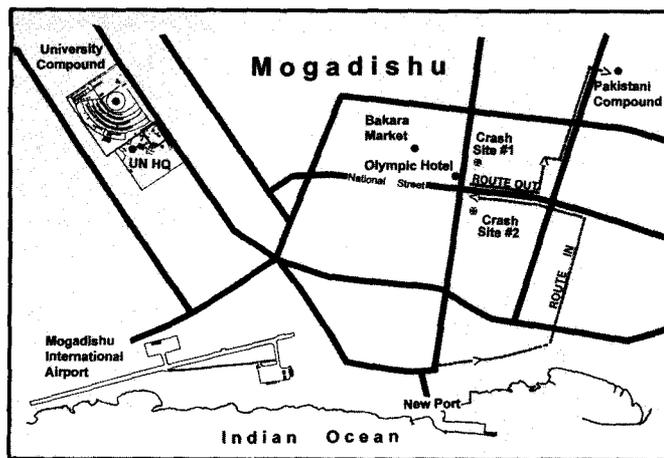
Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, states that the most important element of combat power is leadership, and I am convinced that this is true. It was the officers and NCOs in the company who kept our attack moving during the breakthrough to TF Ranger, despite heavy enemy fire and casualties. Squad leaders and platoon leaders were most often at the very front of their units, leading the way. During many operations, the company commander was at the point of attack when the situation required it.

The soldiers saw the example of their leaders and never hesitated to follow them, often taking the initiative to act at great personal risk. The battalion commander was always with the companies on the ground, exposing himself to enemy fire like the rest of us, coolly directing the action by radio, when it may have been safer or easier to control the fight from a helicopter.

When leaders are convinced they can accomplish a mission, the soldiers will also be convinced. Despite taking several casualties during the fight into the Rangers' position, the company's junior leaders and soldiers knew we would break through, because the battalion and company commanders knew we could, and we didn't want to let them down.

A key part of leadership in the close fight is the ability to remain calm and influence subordinate leaders to do the same. When bullets are whizzing over your unit's head, and soldiers are being wounded or killed, it is imperative that leaders remain calm and forceful. Anything less and a unit could panic and lose the will to press the fight.

When giving directions on the radio, leaders should speak slowly and deliberately. Instructions are best, of course, given face to face when you can look a subordinate in the eye and know that he understands. Leaders must be prepared to show by example what they want done; when they are cool and calm, it spreads throughout the unit and reassures subordinates. Our battalion commander taught us that when under fire, we should stop, take a deep breath, calm down, figure



out what's going on and where the fire is coming from, then forcefully direct our unit's actions to deal with the situation.

### Preparations for Combat

The single best preparation for combat is tough, realistic live fire exercises (LFXs), starting at individual level and working up to company level where indirect fire and close air support (CAS) assets are integrated. Our battalion had conducted a series of squad, platoon, and company level LFXs in the few months before our deployment. These exercises included squad *react to contact/attack* drill; squad *enter and clear room*; platoon *react to contact/hasty attack* (day and night, integrated with mortars); and company *deliberate attack on a strongpoint* (both day and night phases, integrated with 60mm and 81mm mortars).

My company also conducted numerous LFXs while in theater, including a reflexive firing course, close quarters battle courses, platoon ambush, and deliberate attack. LFX training is best when all weapon systems can be fired—40mm HEDP (high-explosive, dual purpose), M72A2 light antiarmor weapons (LAWs), AT4s, bangalore torpedoes, and fragmentation grenades. Indirect fire assets are best when fired on the objective. During this training, the commanders took acceptable risks in allowing weapons to be fired danger-close; as a result, every soldier knew the feel of indirect fire as close as 70 meters and bangalore torpedoes as close as 15 meters, and they could tell the difference between hearing fire and receiving fire. LFXs give soldiers and leaders the best taste of what combat will sound and feel like. The extensive LFX training conducted by our unit saved lives and enabled the company to perform well under fire.

Discipline and esprit de corps are two factors that go hand-in-hand with leadership and are crucial in combat. Discipline was developed through tough physical training, road marches, field training, and military courtesy. One reason our unit was successful in combat was the excellent discipline and pride in the unit. Soldiers never questioned orders but did as they were shown or told, despite their fear. To some leaders, seeing a soldier doing pushups for a small infraction or a

junior NCO standing at parade rest may seem extreme, but it is that kind of discipline that makes soldiers react quickly to orders, and quick reactions save lives on the battlefield.

Tough, physically and mentally demanding physical training, road marches, and field training should bring soldiers to the brink of their endurance. It was routine for our battalion to conduct 25-mile road marches and eight-mile runs. These events were not popular with everyone, but they built up our mental and physical endurance. Tough, realistic training forged teamwork and our own confidence in our ability to do anything—regardless of the conditions. It developed our will to fight and never quit.

### **Hearing Fire vs. Receiving Fire**

There is a very distinctive sound when enemy fire is coming at you. I observed or heard of several support or Allied units hearing fire and thinking they were receiving fire. The result was a one-way engagement with a lot of ammunition wasted and sometimes needless civilian casualties. On several occasions, our battalion received friendly fire from nearby support units guarding UN compounds; thinking they were receiving fire, they failed to make sure where friendly troops were or to control their fires. Fortunately, none of these incidents resulted in casualties to our unit, but they could have.

After many realistic live fires and our first firefight, everyone in the company knew the difference. Most important, when receiving fire, we would take that extra second or two to determine where it was coming from and then engage its actual source. Once you begin to engage a target, it is difficult to find where the enemy fire is coming from, particularly in military operations on urban terrain (MOUT). Fire control then becomes crucial when in contact.

### **Fire Control**

Thousands of rounds fired down range won't do any good if they are not engaging the right targets. Worse still, it wastes precious ammunition and makes things even more confusing when leaders are trying to determine the source of enemy fire and identify targets. Friendly fire can also kill, and you must keep control of the situation to prevent fratricide, particularly in close combat. Leaders and soldiers identify targets and engage them, and then everyone nearby engages those targets.

Targets can be marked and identified with tracer rounds; M203 smoke, high explosive, or illumination rounds; voice and hand or arm signals; laser and infrared pointers; and the like. Our SOP was for fire team leaders to carry a 3:1 tracer mix; squad leaders to carry at least a 2:1 tracer mix; and platoon leader, platoon sergeant, XO, first sergeant, and commander to carry a 1:1 mix. I used a 1:1 tracer mix day and night to mark targets and direct fire effectively. It is well-placed suppressive fire, not the volume of fire, that silences the enemy and keeps his head down. Ineffective—or worse, no—suppressive fire allows him to engage your unit effectively and with impunity.

Fire discipline means using and directing your fires wisely. When an element is in contact, everyone seems to want to get in on it. During my first firefight, the platoon I was with fired a third of its basic load in the five minutes before we broke contact; in each engagement afterwards, our squads and platoons got better and better at fire control and discipline. None of our soldiers ever fired their M16s on burst—we found this wasteful, and semi-automatic fires were much more accurate and effective.

During the breakthrough operation, everyone carried a double basic load. Because of disciplined fires, most soldiers had at least some ammunition left after nine hours of sustained battle. In a firefight, leaders continually remind sol-

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diers to watch their ammunition and know about how much they have left. During lulls in the fight, they should reload and redistribute ammunition. Resupply should be requested before ammunition is too low. In MOUT, danger-close is normal for most firefights. Most targets are engaged at 25 to 100 meters with all weapon systems, including close air support from helicopters.

### **Ammunition, Weapons, Equipment**

After our first firefight in August, we found that a normal basic load of ammunition was simply not enough. For years, I had been taught that 210 rounds of ammunition for an M16 would suffice in contact if I used fire discipline. They were right! It might last three or four hours in a sustained battle. But on 3-4 October, we were in contact with the enemy for more than nine hours, and the Rangers were in contact for more than 12.

Our basic load for Somalia included the following:

**M16A2**—210 rounds (including tracer) plus extra bandolier of 140 to 210 rounds. Some soldiers had extra magazines already loaded, while others carried speed loaders in their helmet bands and would reload during lulls in a fight.

**M60 Machinegun**—1,000 to 1,200 rounds per weapon. Assistant gunner carried rucksack with additional ammunition, and some of the rounds were often split among the squads if necessary.

**M249 Squad Automatic Weapon—800 rounds.** The M249 is an excellent weapon, but gunners and armorers need to pay close attention to keep the weapon in top operating condition. Areas such as the bipod legs, the feed tray cover, and other moving parts need to be checked and replaced before they become loose and cause jams. Using the M249 with magazines instead of belts of ammunition requires prac-

tice, and soldiers must be thoroughly trained with magazines if this is to be done smoothly and without losing fire power. Since the weapon is so light—compared to the M60—gunners need practice to deliver accurate fire at ranges beyond a few hundred meters. Mounting brackets must be carefully checked; otherwise, worn or broken ones will cause the 200-round magazine to fall off at the worst moment. In the absence of M249s, the M16 with an old attachable bipod can be used in the burst mode to provide accurate, reliable fire, although at a lesser rate than the M249.

**M203**—Gunners carried 20 rounds of HEDP, two red and green smoke, two illumination, and two rounds CS (tear gas). Sometimes, grenadiers carried additional bandoliers of HEDP rounds. The company commander's radio telephone operator (RTO) carried an M203 with extra red and green star clusters and smoke rounds for signaling and directing fires. Because of its light weight and its capabilities, the company commander may want to consider carrying the M203 himself.

In a MOUT environment, our M203 HEDP round was highly effective. In contact we would try to put red smoke on the area where enemy fire was coming from to designate targets for the company and attack helicopters. Our gunners put luminous tape on their leaf sights to use at night, and this was effective. M203 gunners rarely, if ever, get an opportunity to fire live rounds on live fire exercises. It takes a lot of range time for a grenadier to be able to consistently put rounds through windows at 50 to 75 meters at night and under fire. Our current qualification standards, which call for grenadiers to qualify every six months (Category 1), is not good enough. We spent lots of extra time with our grenadiers in theater to make them really good, and it paid off during enemy contact.

**MK19 Grenade Launcher**—We used HMMWVs mounted with the MK19 in the same way doctrine says to use tanks or Bradley fighting vehicles in the support-by-fire role. This was our most devastating weapon, and it was highly effective in suppressing or destroying enemy positions. During operations, elements attached to us from the antiarmor platoon were equipped with the MK19. The weapon's HEDP rounds can level unreinforced concrete buildings, or at least put large holes in them. Each vehicle carried at least seven or eight cases of ammunition. MK19 fires must be tightly controlled because of their destructiveness, and because a gunner will quickly run out of ammunition if his fires are not controlled. We delivered MK19 fires as close as 30 meters to friendly troops.

**AT4 or M72A2 LAW**—Since there was no armor threat in Mogadishu, we preferred carrying the LAW and usually kept our AT4s on a vehicle or carried them only for specific missions. The LAW is small and compact, and a soldier can carry three of them in place of one AT4. The LAW has a smaller backblast and is a bit safer to use in the tight quarters of MOUT. The effects of both weapons are good if correctly employed. If fired through unreinforced concrete, they create only small holes eight to 16 inches in diameter, but they can easily rip doors and windows off their frames, cre-

ating tremendous shock effect and an instant breach into a building.

**Grenades**—We used both concussion and fragmentation grenades for entering and clearing rooms. The fragmentation grenades were normally issued to leaders from fire team level on up. Because of the rules of engagement (ROEs), we preferred to use the concussion grenade. It has the same shock effect—only not so lethal; it doesn't cause as much damage to the structure; and it is safer to employ around friendly troops and noncombatants. Concussion grenades are also lighter to carry, and extras can be carried in M16 bandoliers.

### **Soldier's Load and Equipment**

As light infantrymen, we had trained with heavy rucksacks on long road marches and infiltrations and always wore our Kevlar helmets. But we had not trained much wearing body armor, and the toughest thing to adjust to in Somalia was the

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added weight and heat of both the body armor and the basic load of ammunition.

If we are going to train wearing helmets, we should also train wearing body armor. In addition, we should use any available training aids to simulate loaded magazines, grenades, additional M60 ammunition, and the like, to get the soldier accustomed to carrying a combat load. For units whose missions call for rapid deployment to combat on short notice, this training should be mandatory.

The technology and equipment are also available to equip all soldiers with *real* bullet-proof body armor, such as that available to the Rangers. It is a bit heavier, but it saved the lives of several Rangers in Mogadishu. One Ranger during the early October battle was reported to have been hit three times in the chest by small arms fire, and each time he was able to get back up.

An infantryman's speed is his survival in close combat, and leaders must make hard choices in deciding what they need in the fight and what they can afford to have delivered later. Leaders always talk about lightening the soldier's load, but continue to overload him by not making the necessary support arrangements. To compound this problem, most light infantrymen tend to distrust their field logistical system, so they end up packing more than they can carry and still fight effectively.

The only things a soldier should have to carry into a fire-fight are ammunition, water, a small squad radio, night vision goggles, and maybe a butt-pack. Along with helmet, body armor, protective mask, and rifle, this load already weighs 60

to 85 pounds. Rucksacks with warm clothing, extra water, ammunition, batteries, sleeping bags, and so on should be pushed to the unit on call by the company supply sergeant or the support platoon. In Mogadishu, we kept most of this additional gear on the two HMMWVs we had in the company. Our company supply sergeant pushed our logistical packages (LOGPACs) out to us in the field or during many operations in the city. In some operations, we kept our company trains (two HMMWVs and one front-line ambulance) with the company. The intent was always to keep the soldier's load as light as possible.

Load bearing equipment (LBE) should be worn high up around the waist to allow the legs freedom of movement. The belts should be adjusted so they can be buckled comfortably. Protective masks should be worn strapped over the shoulder up high. This allows a soldier to run fast, perform individual movement techniques (IMT), or help carry casualties without his gear beating him to death. Nothing should be attached to the LBE shoulder straps (such as first aid pouches or flashlights) that interferes with firing the weapon and the comfortable wear of a rucksack. Everything on the LBE should be tied down or "quick-taped." This applies especially to grenades, which should be loaded onto the LBE low around the pistol belt, with pull pins checked regularly and the cotter pins properly butterflied. The pull rings must be secured so they cannot be snagged during IMT. The opening on the protective mask carrier should also be secured in the same manner (I used an extra helmet band to do this). M203 gunners should quick-tape all of the M203 rounds in the vest and adjust the vest snugly around the body. All weapons should have slings on them to leave a soldier's hands free to move casualties or equipment under fire. We preferred to use top slings so the weapon remained in the ready position.

Night vision goggles (AN/PVS-7 and AN/PVS-4) were vital to our operations, most of which were at night. In training, many soldiers and leaders do not like to wear the AN/PVS-7s on the head harness; they are uncomfortable and it takes some time to get used to using them this way. But in combat, everyone in our company used them with the head harness, and this gave us a big advantage against the Somali guerrillas, who had no night vision capability.

In a firefight, the goggles easily pick up small amounts of light and are excellent in determining where fire is coming from. Friendly soldiers are easier to identify, especially if marked with infrared chemical lights or luminous tape. Leaders can better direct their fires and detect the impact location. At night, a soldier without the goggles can tell where tracer rounds hit on hard targets, but the AN/PVS-7 enables him to see where regular ball ammunition hits against hard targets or buildings. With some practice, a soldier can aim his weapon and engage targets at close ranges while wearing these goggles. Many soldiers, including me, became adept at running and performing IMT while wearing them.

### **Demolitions**

We used demolitions on many operations in Mogadishu. Typically, a light engineer squad attached to the company

was our primary demolitions team. The squad's favorite charge for breaching the walls of compounds or houses was the "picket charge," a three-foot engineer stake packed with four to 12 pounds of C4 explosive. The flat edge of the picket was placed up against the wall and held in place with another stake until detonated with a non-electric charge. The backblast was about 50 meters straight back, and there was some danger of flying projectiles or pieces of engineer stake. Because most of the blast went forward and backward, however, a soldier could stand safely to the side as close as 20 meters. The blast made a hole about four feet wide and eight feet high on unreinforced concrete, and produced a good shock effect on the enemy inside.

For times when we did not have an engineer squad with us, we trained leaders on demolition tasks specific to MOUT. We made a company demolitions kit, which I normally kept on my vehicle, containing at least 20 to 25 pounds of C4 at any given time. After experimenting, we fabricated several general-purpose charges of two, five, seven, and ten pounds. The C4 was packed in old M60 bandoliers so it would be easy to carry.

Non-electric firing devices were made with 30-second fuses and a quick-attachment device. Several NCOs in each platoon were trained on their employment. When the company was called on alert, I issued the charges and firing devices for the two-pound and five-pound charges, and kept the larger ones at company level. On unreinforced concrete, the most common construction in Mogadishu, the two-pound charge made a small mouse hole; the five-pound charge made a hole large enough for one man to get through; the seven-pound charge made a hole big enough for two men at once; and the 10-pound charge made a hole big enough to drive a HMMWV through and could have destroyed an entire building.

We also used our demolition kit to clear stumps from helicopter landing zones and to dispose of unexploded ordnance on training ranges or old duds found in our area of operation. These instances were always training opportunities, and the soldiers enjoyed setting the charges and watching their handiwork. After a while, the use of demolitions became second nature.

### **Command and Control**

FM communications within the company during combat operations were generally good, because we were normally close to each other, but communication with battalion was often difficult. This problem was usually resolved when the battalion commander moved his tactical command post close up behind or between the companies during operations.

Often, the reason we could not talk to someone on the radio was that he could not hear us over the sound of incoming and outgoing fire. We then made it standing operating procedure that on contact each RTO or leader carrying a squad radio immediately put his hand mike up into his ear, clipped the helmet straps, and kept it there. This improved responsiveness during a fire fight. Another excellent piece of equipment that is already in the Army system is an earpiece transmitter.

Our company commander's RTO had one, and it allowed him to keep his hands free to copy messages or defend himself with his weapon. In the end, when in contact, the best means of relaying instructions is in person, but this is not often possible.

In a close fight in a MOUT environment, it is extremely difficult for a company commander to maintain complete control of everything. The fight is a series of close actions involving squads and platoons.

On 3-4 October, under fire, my commander had to fight his own three platoons, plus seven or eight Malaysian armored personnel carriers and four Pakistani tanks. He was also talking to battalion, coordinating with TF Ranger on the helicopter crash site, directing helicopter gunship strikes, and giving instructions. He used me extensively as second-in-command to help him control the fight, and used the first sergeant to solve problems quickly or to go to an element that needed extra help.

I mirrored the commander's communication ability with one radio on the company net and the other on the battalion net. If I needed to talk on the battalion administrative-logistical net, I would switch to it. This was the way all rifle company XOs operated in the battalion. Often, the commander would be up front near the lead platoon trying to find out what was going on, and I would be with the other two platoons, ready to maneuver them when called for or when I knew what my commander wanted.

If the commander was too busy fighting the company to talk to battalion, I would send situation reports to keep the battalion commander informed in the meantime. During one firefight in September, I directed the withdrawal of the company under pressure for a short time while my commander directed helicopter air strikes into the area from which we were taking fire.

Again, the first sergeant normally stayed with the commander and was his immediate problem solver, while I normally went to the second most critical point. We always accepted the fact that the commander could go down, so I always backbriefed him on the entire company plan after the platoon leaders finished their platoon briefs. All the company XOs in our battalion attended battalion briefbacks and listened to every commander's brief so we knew the plan as well as the company commanders did. This was also important in helping me anticipate what my commander would need done.

The duties and responsibilities of the rifle company XO—as shown in FM 7-10, *The Infantry Rifle Company*—worked well in my company. A company XO must be with his company in a fight; there is no way he can be second-in-command if he is supervising the combat trains or running LOGPAC operations.

### **MOUT Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures**

In all our operations in MOUT, we followed doctrine by isolating the objective, gaining a foothold (breaching), and

then attacking to clear the remainder of the objective. In several cases, outside isolation was performed by a mounted element. This mounted element—HMMWVs equipped with MK19, .50 caliber, or M60 machineguns—could move fast to blocking positions and also had a lot of firepower.

A foothold was seized in several ways, the immediate problem being to get into a building or compound. In addition to the picket charge, general purpose charges, and the effects of LAWs and AT4s (more often during our attack-to-clear missions), we entered buildings using bolt cutters, sledgehammers, or picket pounders. The MK19 and M203 can also create breach points in buildings.

Once inside a compound or building, a unit clears the rest of the objective by entering and clearing rooms and buildings. This is where fire teams and squads execute battle drills, which should be well rehearsed and aggressively executed. Our company leaders received close-quarters battle (CQB) training from a TF Ranger mobile training team in September. The company then conducted three days of reflexive firing and CQB live fires, adopting the CQB enter-and-clear-room battle drill as our company SOP. We adopted it partly because the ROEs required us to selectively engage targets that we considered a threat. We were not allowed to enter a building and clear it as described in the FM 7-8 drill manual, in which a fragmentation grenade is thrown and then the room sprayed and cleared. The CQB battle drill is a basic set of plays; with training, any man in the company could be paired up with other soldiers and still know what to do. The drill also is better when dealing with possible non-combatants and is more controlled, which helps prevent fratricide or injuries.

These CQB techniques have been used by Special Forces and Rangers for many years, and we successfully employed them after only three days of intensive live fire. We did make a few minor modifications to accommodate the specific weapons we had. Fire teams were broken into support and assault elements. The M249 gunner usually remained in the hallway as the support element; we preferred not to assault a room with the M249 because of ricochet problems and the need to fire selectively.

The assault element consisted of the team leader, the M203 gunner, and a rifleman. This element fired on semi-automatic only and could initiate the assault with a concussion grenade if the team leader felt it was necessary. The assault team then quickly entered and gained control of the room using reflexive firing techniques. Because the rooms were usually small and cramped, most of our squads liked to clear a room with only two men. The drill is flexible, however, and can be done with two, three, or four men. Since the buildings were usually dark inside, we used flashlights attached to our weapons as pointers. Most of us used the smaller "Mini Mag" flashlights. We became very good at hitting targets like this during our train-up, and in some ways it is easier than daytime, because it focuses the shooter. The flashlights are also convenient for conducting prisoner searches.

### Helicopter Close Air Support

The ROEs did not allow us to use any of our mortar systems during most operations, and we had no artillery in theater until after mid-October. The only fire support element available was the attack helicopter company that was part of the quick reaction force. These scout weapons teams normally consisted of one OH-58 Kiowa and one AH-1 Cobra. This support is most responsive when the helicopters are released to the company commander, operating on the company command or fire support net. Targets are marked with colored M203 smoke or illumination rounds, tracer fire, or using verbal directions. Friendly positions are marked with infrared strobe lights, glint tape on every soldier's helmet, colored smoke, and VS-17 panels. At times, air strikes with 20mm cannon fire and 2.75-inch rockets were brought to within 50 meters of friendly positions.

We normally had the Cobra pilots do a dry run first and then come in "hot." Once the initial strike was made, adjustments for subsequent strikes were given to the pilots. The pilots would not fire from stationary positions because of enemy ground fire, but would execute "running" gun runs, engaging targets while flying on a line perpendicular to our forces. "Running" fire is not as accurate as "stationary" fire, which is a big reason for the dry run.

Air strikes are still only suppressive fire, however, and did not completely destroy enemy positions or buildings. Many buildings that were struck were reoccupied by Somali guerrillas within minutes. Scout weapons teams are also excellent scouts and can provide a lot of information on what is happening just outside the immediate area. (It should be noted, though, that the pilots are not always accurate in their reporting, because they are flying fast and do not really have a feel for the situation on the ground; and, in a close fight, they have trouble distinguishing between friendly and enemy soldiers and fires.) The pilots can also assist a ground unit with navigation. One of our sister companies had a Cobra put an infrared beam on the road and followed it into an objective. Best of all, helicopters have a fast response time, and the pilots who fired for us were always eager to help.

### Casualty Evacuation

Handling casualties quickly becomes a critical task. As the company XO, I normally wrote the service and support paragraph of the company operations order that included casualty evacuation. I planned in detail how to mark casualties—where they were to be taken, and who was responsible for taking them. I designated the location of the company casualty collection point (CCP) in accordance with the commander's guidance, who would be responsible for it, and primary and alternate means of moving casualties to the battalion CCP.

Each of our platoons was assigned a medic, and each squad had at least one combat lifesaver. The medics and lifesavers received regular training sessions from our battalion surgeon and physician's assistant in theater, focusing on combat

wounds. This training saved lives in fire fights. The lifesavers were often able to assist the platoon medics and bought time for a soldier until the surgeon could get to him. Often, they could deal with minor wounds and quickly return the soldier to duty.

A forward medical treatment team (FMTT)—consisting of the battalion surgeon, a senior medic, and usually one other medic—was attached to the company for every operation. Since our operations or engagements were always 360-degree fights, it could take some time for the tactical situation to allow a vehicle or aircraft to evacuate a casualty. The combat support hospital (CSH) was also located nearby in the city, alleviating the need for a battalion aid station in the combat trains. The medical platoon leader and battalion S-4 normally set up an ambulance exchange point with the combat trains, and transferred casualties from the engagement area to the combat trains, particularly during the fight on 3-4 October. The FMTT therefore played a vital role for us and saved the lives of many soldiers forward with the company. The company senior medic and the surgeon were primarily responsible for the CCP.

An injured soldier received initial attention from a combat lifesaver or platoon medic and was then moved to the CCP. For this reason, the platoon medics *must stay forward* with the platoon. At the CCP, our surgeon and medics stabilized and evaluated casualties, prioritizing them and letting me know whether they needed immediate evacuation or could wait. The tactical situation most often determined whether or not they were evacuated immediately. Several times, lightly injured soldiers were returned to duty. (Almost every soldier wanted to return to his platoon, whether he was able or not.)

I would inform the commander of the casualty and then send the battalion commander a brief casualty report, consisting of last name, type of wound, and status. I would then switch to the battalion A-L net to coordinate a medical evacuation. Casualties were usually evacuated by front-line ambulance to the ambulance exchange point and then to the CSH by vehicle or helicopter. (In our experience, most of the wounds were gunshot or shrapnel to the extremities and neck. Gunshot wounds in legs or arms most often shatter or break a bone, so a soldier with a gunshot wound to the leg cannot be expected to do any walking.)

Identification tags are vital when soldiers arrive at the CSH, both for identification and for blood type, and leaders must see that all soldiers wear them. It was not possible to fill out our Casualty Feeder Reports (DA Forms 1155) or Witness Statements (DA Forms 1156) during an operation. I usually kept track of casualties in my head and then sorted them out once back in our compound. We also kept several body bags on our front-line ambulance and used them for those killed in action.

The battle roster number method of accounting for casualties did not work for us. A soldier's battle roster number changes every time he changes position on the Unit Manning Report (UMR), and it is unrealistic to expect the S-1 to keep

up with these changes in the UMR during sustained combat operations. We always identified soldiers by their Social Security numbers, which enabled the S-1 to obtain any information on the soldiers and to render reports to higher headquarters.

### **Enemy Prisoners of War**

Along with a casualty evacuation plan, units must plan for enemy prisoners of war (EPWs)—or detainees, as we called them. In our situation, we also had to plan what to do with noncombatants. Prisoner/search teams were designated in the platoons. A dedicated element, usually the mortar and fire support squad, handled the movement of detainees and noncombatants to company or battalion collection points. These teams should have plenty of flex cuffs and EPW tags. The first sergeant and I carried extra cuffs and tags, because somebody always seemed to need them. We stapled these tags onto shoe tags with string to tie them on the detainees or sometimes just stapled them to their shirts. Captured equipment or documents were normally tagged back in garrison, then turned in to the S-2.

Initially, we did not tag the detainees well, and battalion had a hard time telling who was hostile and who wasn't. We then made tags using a code system. For example, B1/B meant that the detainee was taken from building number one and resisted being taken. Any code can work, so long as it is quick and everyone understands it. We captured detainees on almost every operation, and our prisoner search teams soon became proficient at searching individuals, houses, and vehicles.

Units should train to expect a prisoner to resist, not simply put his hands up and comply with all instructions. Often, a Somali would resist being flex-cuffed and had to be manhandled. Leaders had to make sure their teams were prepared for this and that excessive force was not used once the person had been subdued. Everyone had to be searched, including women and children. To avoid problems that could arise from touching the women, we used small, hand-held metal detectors with great success and made them part of our basic load.

### **PSYOPS and Interpreters**

Psychological operations (PSYOPS) personnel and interpreters were invaluable to us. Two to four interpreters were attached to the company at any one time. All of our operations were conducted in a crowded, MOUT environment. When a rifle company surrounds an objective before first light and initiates a raid, panic from non-combatants is to be expected. The interpreters, along with the PSYOPS loud speakers (either mounted on a HMMWV or backpacked), could keep a crowd from panicking, issue instructions, and do on-the-spot interrogations of detainees to try to take advantage of immediate intelligence.

### **Rules of Engagement**

The rules of engagement were always being updated while we were in Mogadishu, as the Somali guerrillas escalated their actions. The commander always briefed the rules, as

they specifically applied to each mission, in layman's terms so that each soldier understood what he could do and could not do, and leaders were able to ask how to deal with specific situations they might encounter. The company commander also set the tone in the unit by making it clear that soldiers would be the ones to make the final decisions and he would not second-guess them. He stressed that he did not want the men to hesitate because they were worried about the rules and said he would back up their decisions. This attitude gave the soldiers the confidence to execute missions aggressively and protect themselves.

We used a graduated response technique to accomplish many operations. The best way to explain this is with an example:

During a pre-dawn battalion raid in early August, we surrounded a block of four houses in which we suspected there were several Somalis who were responsible for the ambush and death of four military policemen. With an outer cordon established and assaulting elements in place, a PSYOPS message was played telling the occupants they were surrounded and had two minutes to come out or be killed. After several Somalis did come out, my company entered and cleared two buildings that were next to the two target houses.

First, we had interpreters tell the occupants to open the door. The door on one house opened, but the other had to be sledgehammered open and the occupants forced outside. After a group of about 25 Somali men, women, and children were cleared out of the area, the same message was played again. After two minutes, CS gas was put into the two target houses with no one coming out. As this was happening, crowds began to build outside the cordon and were broken up by warning shots. After another two minutes, a final message was played, followed by a picket charge blasting a hole in the house. Another company then assaulted the target buildings, taking more detainees who were in shock from the blast, and the battalion withdrew off the objective.

The key to this technique is that the operation can immediately escalate into a full assault if any fire is received, and the force is protected. The benefit in our case was that non-combatants could be removed from the objective, and we often captured guerrillas without a shot.

Most of the tactics and techniques we used were already published doctrine (in FM 90-10-1, *An Infantryman's Guide to Urban Combat*), but with a few modifications based on an analysis of the situation. Many of these lessons learned simply confirm those from other recent conflicts. In several hotspots throughout the world, there remains a real possibility of future conflict in a MOUT environment, and we should train realistically to be prepared for it.

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